

INSPECTION REPORT

PRINCETHORPE INFANT SCHOOL

Weoley Castle, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103245

Headteacher: Mrs L Richardson

Reporting inspector: Mr C R Phillips
15941

Dates of inspection: 12th – 15th June 2000

Inspection number: 191913

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:	3 – 7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Princethorpe Road Weoley Castle Birmingham
Postcode:	B29 5QB
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P Johnson
Date of previous inspection:	18 th November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr C R Phillips	Registered inspector	Science Geography History Religious education	Characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements Leadership and management Key issues for action
Mrs M Morrissey	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
Mrs J Coop	Team inspector	English Information technology Physical education Special educational needs English as an additional language	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
Mrs M Phillips	Team inspector	Mathematics Art Design and technology Music Under-fives Equal opportunities	Teaching and learning

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	13
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	15
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	17
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	18
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	19
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	21
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	22
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	26

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is an average-sized community school for boys and girls aged three to seven. It draws pupils mainly from the Weoley Castle estate in Birmingham, an area of mainly rented housing. Its numbers have remained fairly steady, and there are currently 174 full-time pupils in the main school, with the equivalent of 39 full-time children in the nursery class. Although there are some variations in the ability levels of the various year groups, overall levels of attainment on entry are below the average found nationally, with many children well below average in their language skills and physical development on arrival at the age of three. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals (42.8%) is above the national average. Forty-five pupils are currently identified as having special educational needs, which is broadly in line with the national average, and two pupils have statements of special educational need. There are seven pupils for whom English is an additional language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school. Standards in national tests in reading and writing were disappointing in 1999, although in mathematics and science they continued to improve. Indications from the most recent assessments are that there has been significant improvement this year in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Standards of attainment by the time pupils are seven are currently above the level expected nationally in mathematics and science, and in reading and writing are in line with the levels expected for pupils of this age. The school now has in place systems to ensure that individual pupils achieve their full potential, and levels of achievement are improving throughout the school. The quality of teaching is good overall; it is often very good or better, and the pupils respond very well to this. They display very good attitudes to their work, are encouraged to be responsible and become increasingly independent. The quality of relationships across the school is very good. The headteacher, governors and all staff work together well to improve the school and are striving for high standards. In common with other schools in similar situations, its costs are high, but it clearly provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards of attainment in English, mathematics, science and most other subjects have improved significantly.
- The quality of teaching and the support provided by the classroom assistants are good, and the whole staff work together very well as a team.
- Literacy and numeracy are emphasised well within a well-planned, stimulating and lively curriculum, which provides appropriate levels of challenge for all pupils and encourages them to become independent.
- The pupils respond very well to the learning opportunities provided, and their behaviour, attitudes and personal development are very good.
- There are very good relationships between pupils of all ages and between pupils and staff.
- The school has a clear educational direction because of the excellent leadership provided by the headteacher, the quality of the other managers and co-ordinators, and the support of the governing body.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

What could be improved

- Provision for physical development throughout the school.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

When the school was inspected in November 1996, standards of pupils' attainment were in line with those expected in most subjects, but below the level expected in mathematics, in speaking, in the writing of the more able pupils, and in aspects of design and technology. Computers were under-used. In some areas, such as mathematics and science, more able pupils were insufficiently challenged. The school was seen to be improving. The overall quality of teaching was sound, although some lessons were unsatisfactory. The school has continued to improve. Key issues identified in the report have all been addressed well. The teachers have high expectations of all pupils, including the more able. Provision for information technology and the pupils' capabilities in it have improved significantly. All pupils are given many opportunities to engage in investigative work and creative writing, and they become increasingly independent in their work as they go through the school. Levels of attainment have improved substantially. In reading and writing they are now in line with the national average, and in mathematics and science they are above average. Standards of attainment in national tests, which had declined in reading and writing in 1999, but showed continuing improvement in mathematics and science, appear to have improved significantly in all of these subjects in the most recent tests and assessments. Standards in all other subjects are now at least in line with national expectations, and in most they are above that level. The standard of teaching is now usually good or better. The school's accommodation has been improved recently by the development of its library.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by seven-year-olds based on National Curriculum test results.

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

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

The teachers' assessments in science in 1999 indicated overall standards that were below average. The numbers of pupils attaining Level 3 were average in reading and mathematics, above average in science, but below average in writing. When compared with schools of similar intake, the numbers of pupils attaining the higher grade were average in writing, and well above average in reading, mathematics and science. The indications from the recent tests and assessments are that there has been significant improvement in all of these subjects, with standards in reading and writing likely to be in line with the national average, and those in mathematics and science above average. These results will help to ensure that the overall trend in recent years is upward. Based on its judgement of the ability levels of the groups to be assessed in 2000 and subsequent years, the school has set realistic targets, which for this year have already been exceeded. Standards on entry are below average generally, and well below average in language and physical development. Standards by the time the pupils are five are still a little below average, but have clearly improved. Inspection findings indicate that standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 are currently in line with national expectations for English, and above that level in

mathematics and science. The pupils' levels of achievement in information technology and physical education are in line with expectation, and in religious education and the remaining subjects are above the level expected.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Almost all pupils are keen to attend, and show very good attitudes in all aspects of school life.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Their behaviour is very good, and pupils of all ages work and play well together.
Personal development and relationships	The pupils' personal development and the quality of relationships throughout the school are very good.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory, and there are few unauthorised absences.

The quality of relationships, the personal development of the pupils and their attitudes to all areas of school life are particular strengths of the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching in all subjects, including English and mathematics, is good overall. The skills of literacy are taught well and numeracy skills are very well taught. Good provision is made in each of the classes for the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, or for whom English is an additional language, and the higher attainers. Of the lessons observed during the inspection, nearly 29 per cent were very good or excellent, more than 59 per cent were good, and all were at least satisfactory. The teachers' subject knowledge and classroom management are good, they have high expectations, teach basic skills very well, and provide a good range of interesting and often stimulating learning activities. They show enthusiasm for teaching. The pupils respond very well to the experiences offered and are keen to do well. They concentrate very well, show good understanding of what they are doing, and are becoming increasingly independent in their work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a broad, relevant and stimulating curriculum, based on practical experience. Many opportunities are provided to enrich the pupils' learning through visits and extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good, and they make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision for these pupils is by way of the school's general programme of learning, and they make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes very good provision for the pupils' personal development. Provision for their moral, social and cultural development is very good, and for their spiritual development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares well for its pupils.

There is a very good partnership between the school and its parents. Almost all parents believe the school is doing a good job in encouraging their children to do well and to develop well personally and socially, and that they are informed appropriately about the work their children are doing and the progress they are making. The school offers a broad and stimulating range of learning experiences for all pupils, within and beyond the school, and provides many activities for pupils outside lessons, which often involve parents. The quality of its provision for pupils with special educational needs is a strength of the school. Very good use is made of outside agencies and of the resources of the community. All pupils are known well and are well cared for. They are treated with respect and respond very well to being valued.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides excellent leadership and is supported very well by the deputy headteacher and other senior managers. Subject and other co-ordinators show excellent management.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors undertake their responsibilities well, are thoroughly committed to the continuing development of the school, and have a good awareness of its needs.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher, governors and all staff review the school's performance constantly and look for ways to improve it.
The strategic use of resources	All resources are used efficiently for the benefit of the pupils in the school.

The school is well staffed with teachers and is very well supported by its nursery nurses and classroom assistants, and by the wide range of other adults working in the school. The accommodation, which has

recently been improved by the development of the library, is still limited because of the size of its classrooms and the quality of the surfacing of hard play areas, but the school makes good use of all the space available. Learning resources are good. The school has a very clear educational direction, and, under the leadership of the headteacher, is proving very effective. The governors and headteacher review all development priorities regularly, evaluate all spending decisions, and the school applies the principles of best value in the deployment of resources.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and make good progress. • Behaviour is good, pupils are expected to work hard, and they are helped to become mature and responsible. • They feel able to approach the school with questions, and feel they know how their child is getting on. • The teaching and management are good. • They feel that their children receive appropriate work to do at home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A significant number of parents feel that the school could provide more activities outside lessons.

The inspection team found that, in the main, the parents' concern was not justified. There is a very good range of out-of-class activities, particularly at lunchtime, although more opportunities for physical activity could be provided. The inspectors support the very positive view of the school provided by the substantial majority of parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. When they enter the nursery at the age of three, the children's standards of attainment are below average overall. Their language skills and physical development are well below average, and a significant proportion are identified as having special educational needs. Almost all of the pupils in the reception classes have experience of some form of pre-school education, and a majority enter by way of the school's own nursery class. By the time they reach the age of five, many of the reception children have not quite attained the desirable learning outcomes (DLOs¹), which is below national expectations. During their time in the nursery and in reception, however, the children make good progress in all areas of learning, and begin to work and play well together in a variety of situations. They become increasingly confident in their relationships with each other and with their teachers. (¹*DLOs - 'Desirable learning outcomes' are goals for learning for children by the time they enter compulsory education at the age of five.*)
2. The results of the National Curriculum tests and assessments for Key Stage 1 in 1999 were below average overall for reading and well below average for writing, mathematics and science. These results represented a decline on the previous year's results in reading and writing, but an improvement in mathematics and science. The numbers of pupils attaining Level 3 in these subjects in 1999 were below average in writing, average in reading and mathematics, and above average in science. When compared with schools of broadly similar intake, overall standards in reading and mathematics were average, in science were well above average, but in writing were below average. However, although the numbers of pupils achieving Level 3 in writing in this comparison were average, those achieving that level in reading, mathematics and science were well above average.
3. Preliminary indications of the pupils' performance in the most recent national tests and assessments suggest a significant improvement in each of these subjects, with overall attainment in reading and writing at least in line with the 1999 national figures, and in mathematics and science above that level.
4. Inspection findings indicate that the attainment of the oldest pupils is currently in line with national expectations in reading, writing, speaking and listening. The pupils' overall standards of literacy are also in line with expectations. In mathematics, the pupils' standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 1 are above average, including their ability in mental mathematics. Standards of numeracy overall are good. In science, levels of attainment are above average, in terms of both the pupils' knowledge and understanding and their ability in the investigative element of the subject.
5. Standards of attainment in information technology are in line with the level expected nationally by the time pupils leave the school. Pupils show, for example, developing skill in handling the computer and awareness, by the end of the key stage, of how to retrieve information and operate simple control apparatus. In religious education, attainment is above the level expected by the locally agreed syllabus, with pupils developing good knowledge of the aspects of religion they study, as well as acquiring a good awareness of the world around them and of their own feelings and those of others. In all of their other subjects, the pupils' achievements are at least in line with the level expected by the end of the key stage, and in most cases are above that level. At the time of the previous inspection, standards were in line with national expectations in most subjects,

but below expectations in mathematics, speaking, the writing of more able pupils, and the designing and evaluating element of design and technology. There has, therefore, been considerable improvement in all subjects since then.

6. The pupils generally make good and often very good progress. Pupils with special educational needs achieve good standards throughout the school in relation to their previous levels of attainment and make good progress towards the targets described in their individual education plans. Pupils for whom English is an additional language also make good progress and are integrated well into all aspects of school life. The potentially higher-attaining pupils are now doing well, and, particularly in areas such as mathematics and science, are being challenged to attain at an appropriate level.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

7. Children under five have very good attitudes towards school and learning. They are happy to be in school and settle quickly in a supportive atmosphere. They work well together in a variety of activities, as when sharing toys and equipment in the role-play area. They react favourably to the constant dialogue with each other and with their teachers. All children share and take turns and there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere in the classroom.
8. All pupils are keen to come to school. They feel safe, confident and valued by staff and their peers. They show positive attitudes to learning at all times, and both pupils and parents say they enjoy their time in school. Even the youngest children are keen and willing to take responsibility in what they are doing, and the range of responsibilities gradually develops through the school. By the time they are in Year 2, pupils are helping with reception children at lunchtimes and generally around the school.
9. In all lessons, the pupils concentrate very well on their work and on what they are being told by the teachers. The pupils take real pride in their work, are keen to share their achievement with each other, and applaud other good work spontaneously. They are well motivated, become thoroughly absorbed in their work and can sustain their enthusiasm throughout the whole lesson. This was evident in all lessons, including those in the nursery, and extends to the numerous lunchtime activities. Pupils are very interested and enthusiastic in their support for extra-curricular lunchtime clubs. The library club, recorders and art club were all well attended and provided an interesting range of activities, which were enjoyed by the pupils.
10. Parents are very happy with the attitudes and values the school promotes. They agree that attitudes and values are promoted in a positive way, and with sensitivity and pleasantness. They say that if children want to get on they are able to do so, because of the good opportunities provided by the school.
11. Behaviour is very good and is a strength of the school. It is very good in lessons and throughout the school day. Pupils understand and observe the code of conduct expected for classrooms, around the school and in the playground. This confirms the views of parents, who have a strong appreciation of the positive strategies used to promote good behaviour, such as the issuing of certificates and the use of a special lunch table.
12. The school has a very good ethos, and relationships among pupils and between pupils and teachers are very good. This builds confidence, supports the pupils' attainment and progress and prepares them well for their move to the junior school. The teachers and the other adults working in the school relate well to the pupils, in a friendly and relaxed manner. Pupils are listened to and treated

as equals by teachers, who are still firm and in control. This enables pupils quickly to learn right from wrong and sets the ethos of the school. The very few pupils for whom behaviour is a problem soon learn what is acceptable in the life of the school. Pupils with special educational needs generally have a positive attitude to work. Pupils with more complex learning difficulties are supported well by caring staff to ensure that they can join fully in the life of the school. This is particularly successful when additional classroom assistants support the class teacher, especially in additional well-planned teaching sessions.

13. Pupils show very good levels of initiative and are very quickly developing independence, both as learners and in relationships. Since this was identified as an area of concern in the last inspection, there has clearly been significant improvement. All pupils are given a range of responsibility within the classroom, selecting their own resources, progressing in their work and tidying up at the end of the lesson. The older pupils in Year 2 are able to give a degree of help and support to reception pupils at lunchtime and in paired reading activities.
14. Attendance is slightly below the national average, mostly due to pupils' illness. Any poor attendees are well supported by the school. Targets are set in the school development plan to improve attendance: these are regularly monitored by the headteacher and are helping to raise attendance levels. There have been no exclusions in the last year. Punctuality is good, and is helped by the continual reminders parents receive in newsletters and at meetings.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

15. The overall quality of teaching is good, and there are frequent examples throughout the school of very good or excellent teaching. Of the lessons observed during the inspection, 29 per cent were very good or excellent, 59 per cent were good, and all were at least satisfactory. In all subjects, the standard of teaching was good. In English, lessons were consistently good. In mathematics, all lessons were at least good, several were very good, and one excellent lesson was observed. An excellent lesson was also seen in science, where the overall standard is also good. The teaching team works together well and receive high quality support from the non-teaching staff. There is an enthusiasm for teaching across the school, and all adults work well with the pupils, particularly in small groups, monitoring their progress well. All of the teachers bring particular strengths to their work, so that all pupils participate in an interesting and varied range of experiences as they go through the school. There has been significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection.
16. The teachers throughout the school show good knowledge and understanding of the various subjects of the curriculum. In science, the use of investigative and experimental work is a strength. A strong subject knowledge is developing in mathematics, where teaching in the areas of using and applying mathematics and mental mathematics is much improved. Team teaching and teaching in groups formed according to prior attainment have a positive impact on teaching and learning. A lively and imaginative approach is taken in subjects such as geography and history, including very good use of the locality and of visits further afield. As a staff team, the teachers share much subject expertise and experience and make the most of this by planning their work jointly in their year groups. All teachers work hard in preparing their lessons, and their planning is good, including clear intentions about learning. The teachers always provide clear explanations of the tasks required of the pupils and work very well at developing the vocabulary needed. Their planning takes very good account of the range of capabilities in each class, including those times when the pupils are divided into groups according to their attainment level. Pupils of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, those for whom English is an additional language and the higher-attaining pupils, are challenged well by the work provided. There is an

effective pace to most lessons, which is achieved because of the clear identification of learning targets for the lesson, which are often shared with the pupils, and sometimes by the completion of short, timed tasks, the regular completion of which provides pupils with a sense of achievement as well as ensuring that they make good progress in their learning. In the best lessons, while retaining a brisk pace, time is found for the clarification of work, sensitive help, fun, and for pupils to reflect on their learning. In these lessons, as in most, teaching is confident and enjoyable, and motivates the pupils. All of the teachers use a good range of questioning skills and generally reinforce learning well when they review work with the pupils. The teachers know and manage their pupils well and this is a strength.

17. Throughout the school, a good range of approaches to classroom organisation is employed, and class, group and individual working are used appropriately to suit different tasks. The pupils show good independent learning skills and work very well with a partner, or in a group, in lessons such as mathematics, English, science and geography. All pupils respond well to opportunities to organise the necessary resources for their work. Good work habits are encouraged in all classes and the pupils respond well, showing attention to detail, working carefully and completing their work diligently. From the nursery onwards, they are given many opportunities to show initiative and a mature approach to learning is developed. Throughout the school, the teachers communicate well with the other adults in the classroom, who make a valuable contribution to learning. The resources available are used effectively to support the pupils' learning.
18. In the most effective lessons, such as a science lesson in Year 2, and a numeracy lesson in Year 1, the teaching is inspirational and there is a high level of challenge for all pupils throughout the lesson. In these and other lessons, the teachers teach the basic skills of literacy and numeracy very well and assess the pupils' progress carefully, monitoring them as they work, and manage the class well. Expectations are high in all lessons, and particularly so in the very best lessons. The teachers know when to intervene and challenge the pupils by asking the right questions to develop their understanding and knowledge. In all lessons, the teachers' organisation and subject knowledge are good, and they engage the pupils' interest fully, providing high expectations for work and behaviour for pupils of all attainment levels. As a result, the pupils are keen to learn. By the time they leave the school, most have a clear understanding of what they are learning and are beginning to talk about it in a mature way.
19. Good teaching ensures that pupils with special educational needs have work that is well matched to their needs and that they make good progress. The very good additional support given by classroom assistants, together with good class management skills, ensures that pupils with more profound difficulties are able to join fully in the life of the school.
20. The literacy hour and the numeracy strategy have been very well introduced, and that for numeracy is proving particularly effective. Throughout the school, the teachers have a good knowledge of the requirements of the National Curriculum, and also encourage and teach very well the development of basic skills, using interesting and effective methods. In most lessons, the teachers share the objectives for learning with the pupils, in a way they can understand. They reinforce these well throughout the lessons, using the necessary vocabulary well. They make regular assessment of the pupils' work during the lessons, and give positive feedback about the progress the pupils are making, with much encouragement and praise. Work is marked regularly, often with the pupil, and usually indicates how improvement can be made. The pupils themselves are beginning to evaluate their own learning in some subjects, such as mathematics and design and technology. Since teaching is generally confident, enjoyable and motivating, the pupils respond very well to the experiences offered and are eager to work and make maximum effort. Individual targets are identified for pupils for their personal and social development and in English and

mathematics, and there are some group targets for science. The assessments made by teachers, and often shared with the pupils, are important factors in the good progress made.

21. Homework is set regularly, and most parents are satisfied with the provision. All pupils take home reading books on a regular basis and have spellings and mathematical tables to learn. Pupils are also given further tasks to complete, linked with their other work, and receive appropriate feedback about what they have done.

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

22. The school provides a broad, relevant, stimulating and challenging curriculum, which is well balanced to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum, the local agreed syllabus for religious education and the aims of the school. The quality and range of opportunities for learning provided by the school are good overall for children under five, and very good in Key Stage 1. The areas of English and mathematics are given considerable importance, with literacy and numeracy having particular prominence. The school has ensured that all subjects, as well as those that form the core of the National Curriculum, remain an important part of the curriculum, and carefully linked cross-curricular topics provide an enjoyable educational experience for the pupils.
23. Provision for the under fives in the nursery class and two reception classes is good. These children experience a well-structured and well-organised curriculum. A clear planning system is based on the desirable learning outcomes and on the approaching National Curriculum requirements when applicable. The children make an efficient and smooth transition, according to their individual needs. The school has identified the need to develop still further the planning in the nursery, and closer liaison between the two stages, to provide further consistency between the experiences for children in the nursery and the reception classes. Planning in the nursery is generally good, and is detailed and thorough, but is occasionally insufficiently specific about what it is intended the children should learn. Details from the initial assessment, made when the children enter the nursery, are used well, and are then built on in the rest of the school to ensure the needs of individual children are met.
24. The curriculum for children under five is good, covering the recommended areas of learning for children of this age, although some aspects of provision for outdoor play are less well developed. In the nursery, opportunities for extending the experience of the children outdoors are not always fully used, and reception class children do not have sufficient access to a suitable outdoor play area in which to use large apparatus or wheeled toys to develop their ability to climb and balance.
25. In Key Stage 1, the curriculum is very good overall. It is broad, balanced and very relevant to the particular needs of the pupils. The strategies for teaching literacy are good and for numeracy are very good. Both the literacy and numeracy strategies have been implemented successfully and are having a positive impact on standards. Opportunities are provided regularly across the curriculum subjects for pupils to develop further their literacy and numeracy skills. The team teaching and setting arrangements, together with the effective support provided by classroom assistants, part-time teachers and additional helpers, ensure effective provision for pupils of all attainment levels.
26. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular lunchtime activities, including art, library skills and music. In addition, a play-leader organises a good range of team games and physical activities for pupils with behaviour problems. However, the school does not offer sporting or a range of physical activities as part of the extra-curricular provision for all its pupils on a regular basis. The school welcomes many visitors to enrich the curriculum, including live theatre

experience, magic and puppet shows, health education mobile classrooms, and animal experts. Staff are also involved in a 'practice pals' reading initiative for those pupils who need additional reading support. In addition, a 'Play and Stay' group has also been started for two- and three-year-olds with the aim of supporting and improving children's overall development before entry to the school's nursery. A wide range of educational visits take place, which make a significant contribution to the pupils' personal development, as well as to their learning in subjects such as science, geography, history and English.

27. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum and the school makes very good provision for pupils with special educational needs, fulfilling the requirements of the Code of Practice. The pupils are fully included in all aspects of school life. In addition to specific help in order to develop their skills in literacy and numeracy, pupils with physical difficulties have an additional, specific daily programme of exercise matched to their needs. Pupils with specific speech and language difficulties also receive effective additional weekly language sessions, which have been implemented and supported by a speech therapist. A wide range of outside agencies is used effectively to support, develop and enhance the curricular opportunities for these pupils. Pupils' individual education plans are used to inform planning and ensure that class work is appropriate to the pupils' needs and attainment levels. Appropriately identified and specific targets are reviewed regularly, and parents are fully involved in the process. Provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language is by way of the school's general teaching programme and is effective, with extra support from teachers and classroom assistants. There is a challenging curriculum for higher-attaining pupils in English, mathematics and science, and all of the pupils are challenged, in each curriculum area, by work that is well matched to their levels of attainment and within which they are given many opportunities to show initiative and take responsibility.
28. Pupils develop good personal and social skills through their everyday encounters in school and the school places great emphasis on personal development through normal day-to-day relationships. The school has developed a warm and caring ethos. Teachers and all staff set high standards and are very good role models, rewarding good behaviour and achievements and making it clear when behaviour is unacceptable, which the pupils respect and respond to positively. Circle time is a regular feature of the curriculum, enabling pupils to discuss their feelings in a safe environment. During the inspection, pupils were observed talking about their problems and feelings in one such session, which was handled sensitively by the teacher, who showed a lot of personal insight into her pupils' feelings. This consistent approach throughout the school ensures that pupils feel secure and confident and know that they are valued as individuals. Provision for health education is equally good.
29. The provision made for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall. Many opportunities are provided throughout the curriculum for the pupils to experience wonder and to be challenged to reflect on themselves and the world around them. Some opportunities are also provided through the programme of collective worship, but, although always well planned and thoughtfully delivered, and often involving pupils, these sometimes lack the spark and sheer enjoyment often seen in infant assemblies. Provision for all aspects of the pupils' moral and social development is very good, with all pupils encouraged constantly, through the way the whole school works, to be aware of right and wrong and of the feelings, beliefs and rights of others. Their study of the local community, other communities, and of people who help them, all help them to develop very good awareness of the world in which they are growing up. Very good provision is also made for their cultural development through activities such as poetry, art, music, dance and drama. This includes many opportunities for the pupils to be aware of the richness of cultural diversity, through activities such as the visit of an Indian dancer, the delight of a

dramatised Caribbean story presented by a visiting theatre group, and the range of ideas they encounter in books, and through subjects such as religious education, geography and history.

30. The contribution of the community to the pupils' learning is very good and contributes towards the quality of learning in many curriculum areas. Pupils visit senior citizens at harvest time, sing carols in the square, and use the community facilities such as the local wildlife area to support their learning. The school's links with partner institutions are also very good. Pupils from the junior school come regularly into the school to help with reading, while regular visits and links are also maintained with nurseries and playgroups. The local special school is also very supportive of the school and provides an effective outreach support for pupils with more profound special educational needs. Local industries and businesses are also very well linked to the school and have, for example, supported the design and technology curriculum by making the outside notice boards for parents to pupils' own designs.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

31. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained its caring and supportive environment. The educational and personal development and guidance provided for pupils are very good and are effective in raising pupils' achievement. All pupils are well known to teachers and all staff, and their personal welfare needs are provided for sensitively and effectively. Pupils thrive on the understanding of their attainment and are given guidance in all lessons and through homework on how to improve their academic attainment and make progress.
32. Arrangements for child protection are very well organised, and an appropriate person is identified as responsible for the area. There are clear procedures for all members of staff, who have been made aware of their individual responsibilities. There is good liaison with the education welfare officer and good working relations with many other agencies. The school uses its policy and procedures well. Pupils with special educational needs and those with disabilities are very well cared for.
33. The health and safety policy is comprehensive, well used and monitored by the governing body. Risk assessment in all areas is up-to-date, and equipment is well maintained. The headteacher works effectively to keep a daily check on the building and the site. There is a regular pattern of fire drills and checks on equipment. During the inspection no health and safety concerns were noted. Overall, the school and the grounds are a safe place for pupils and staff. There are clear notices in classrooms and corridors to support procedures and to promote health, safety and first aid. Two members of staff are trained first-aiders. All accidents are recorded correctly in a designated book.
34. The monitoring of the pupils' academic performance and personal development is good. There are very clear, detailed and comprehensive systems for identifying and monitoring pupils' performance in English and mathematics. Good procedures are also being developed in science. Approaches to assessment in the other subjects are in varying stages of development, but their completion and implementation are already identified as a priority by the school. The school monitors the results of national tests well and uses the information gained to improve progress. It also monitors very closely the progress made by individual pupils. The initial assessments made in the nursery are carefully built on in the reception year and subsequently. Work is planned well and the teachers look specifically at the learning and how they will know if it has been successful. The knowledge gained is used well when the teachers are planning further work.

35. The teachers and all adults know their children well, work with them in a very supportive way, much of the time in small groups, and the quality of the relationships between the adults and children within the school is a contributing factor to the successful monitoring. In lessons, the progress each pupil makes is monitored closely, and the teaching assistants play an important part in this. The procedures for assessing the pupils' attainment and progress are good. The teachers mark work regularly and positively. They use targets for improvement very well, and share these with the pupils and, in English and mathematics, with their parents. Assessment is less well developed in the foundation subjects, but a useful and manageable system for this is now in place and there are some examples of good assessment being developed in the planning for music, design and technology and occasionally in other subjects. Assessment opportunities and the monitoring of progress have still to be developed in information technology, physical education and religious education. The pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own work and this is well developed in the core subjects and in design and technology and physical education.
36. The school has very good procedures for the early identification, monitoring and tracking of the progress of pupils with special educational needs. As a result, the needs of these pupils are well met, and curricular and extra-curricular activities ensure that the needs of these pupils are met in a caring and secure way.
37. Good procedures are in place to ensure health and safety in all lessons and on school journeys. This helps to build a safety-conscious attitude in pupils and contributes well to their personal development in taking responsibility for themselves.
38. There are very effective procedures to promote discipline and good behaviour. Staff and pupils are fully aware of expectations and procedures to maintain a well-behaved school, where pupils feel secure from bullying or harassment.
39. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. Working targets are set in the school development plan. Registers are correctly completed at the beginning of both morning and afternoon sessions, and are returned to the school office. The education welfare officer monitors registers regularly. Parents and pupils are aware of the responsibility to comply with legislation and fulfil their obligations successfully, with continual reminders in the school newsletter.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

40. The partnership with parents makes a good contribution to the quality of education and the progress made. Since the last inspection, there has been considerable work done to develop liaison between parents and the school. The parents' growing commitment to supporting pupils' learning at home has a positive impact on their attainment. The school has very good links with parents. Parents are very positive in their support for the school and feel they are valued as true partners in their children's education.
41. Parents' views of the school are very good. They feel the information they now receive is greater and more detailed. They also feel there is a more relaxed atmosphere in the school, that they can come in whenever they want and that all adults are more approachable. Most parents attending the pre-inspection meeting were very pleased with the homework system and felt the reading diaries provided a good dialogue between home and school.
42. The quality of information provided for parents is very good. The school's prospectus is informative and easy to read. All parents have signed the home-school agreement. Parents feel the termly letter showing what work their children will be doing is very useful. A wide range of

booklets and curriculum meetings is provided, with parents encouraged to be involved in curriculum 'walk-about' while the school is in action. Reading books and spellings are sent home regularly. Both the school and nursery have behaviour handbooks. These have been instrumental in helping parents understand the school philosophy about specifically changing children's behaviour, but not the person. Two notice-boards, made by members of the community to the pupils' design, are placed where parents will see them each time they bring their children into the playground. Up-to-date information is provided on the boards. Parents find the annual reports very useful, as they do the termly parents' evenings. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting feel that they are able to approach the school with any queries or problems, confident they will be promptly and sympathetically heard. The parents of pupils with special educational needs are fully informed of the schools strategies and are involved in the regular reviews. This close liaison ensures that parents are aware of their children's progress and learning targets.

43. Parental support for the school is very good. A number of parents provide valuable help during the school day. Several are currently involved in an accredited training course run by the school, and are seeking further qualifications, to enable them to become more involved in education. They have also produced book sacks to aid the pupils' enjoyment of reading.
44. The Friends of the Princethorpe Schools raise considerable amounts of money to support pupils' education. They have provided listening centres and are now looking at games for the garden area and computer software.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

45. The school has a very clear sense of educational direction. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and is very well supported by the deputy headteacher, the senior management team and the governors. Systems and practices are effective in ensuring that the school's day-to-day life is well ordered and provides a very good context for learning. The headteacher and the subject and other co-ordinators undertake detailed and careful monitoring of teaching and learning and of the school's performance. All staff carry responsibility for areas of the curriculum, and they discharge these responsibilities very well. All of the co-ordinators have clear ideas about the continuing development of their subject or the nursery, early years or year team for which they are responsible. They play an excellent part in supporting their colleagues and in the school's decision-making and planning processes.
46. All key issues identified in the previous inspection report have been addressed very well. Greater emphasis has been placed on creative writing, with resulting improvements in that area. The teachers have extended their range of teaching strategies, so that all pupils, including the potentially higher attainers, are challenged at an appropriate level. The pupils' information technology skills are developing well, because of the significant developments that have taken place in provision for this aspect of learning. The consistent emphasis on investigative approaches to learning and the constant encouragement for pupils to become independent have led to remarkable success in the development of the pupils' attitudes to learning and to all aspects of school life.
47. Although several governors have only recently been appointed, following the re-constitution of the governing body, all governors have a good knowledge of the school and are strongly committed to its support and development. They discharge their duties effectively through an appropriate structure of committees, the members of which are well informed about the relevant aspects of school life. Responsibility for monitoring and supporting the provision for pupils with special educational needs and of literacy and numeracy has been allocated appropriately to individual

governors, each of whom provides a useful link with developments in these areas. Many governors also have useful links with particular subject areas. These and other governors have regular contact with the daily life of the school. Several are members of the governing bodies of both this and the neighbouring junior school, and some of the committees are run jointly by the schools, providing valuable continuity. Statutory requirements for the National Curriculum, the locally agreed syllabus for religious education and other aspects of school life are met.

48. The quality of financial planning is good. The school manages its budget efficiently, and spending is related clearly to the raising of educational standards. Careful records of expenditure are maintained, and the recent audit report indicated that systems of financial control are in order. The school is addressing the matters of detail identified in the audit. The governors and headteacher monitor the school's financial position closely, are well supported by the school secretary and finance officer, and evaluate the cost-effectiveness of spending decisions. With the support of the local education authority, they apply the principles of best value in their planning and expenditure. All specific grants given to the school, including those for the provision for pupils with special educational needs and for the support and training of teachers, are identified appropriately.
49. The school development plan is a practical and exemplary document, which is clearly focused on the raising of standards, whilst also including matters related to areas such as staffing and premises. It provides considerable detail about the priorities agreed, and its progress is regularly reviewed. Responsibility for the approval of the plan and its subsequent evaluation lies clearly with the governing body, and governors are well informed about its progress. There is an appropriate system of consultation during the preparation of the plan, with, for example, the full involvement of subject co-ordinators in the identification of priorities for their areas.
50. The teaching and non-teaching staff support each other very well and have a clear sense of common purpose. Relationships between the staff and the pupils are very good. The management of special educational needs provision is very good. The school's provision for special educational needs is well led by the special needs co-ordinator, who is also the deputy headteacher. She liaises effectively with staff, parents and a wide range of outside agencies. She has developed appropriate targets for improvement in training and resources, in order to develop further the already very effective provision. The school complies fully with the Code of Practice. The governors' annual report to parents does not contain specific information about the success of this provision or a financial statement about special needs.
51. The school has sufficient, suitably qualified teachers to teach the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education effectively and to meet the needs of all pupils. The teachers have a good balance of expertise and experience. Good support is provided to new members of staff. The qualifications and experience of the support staff are well matched to the demands of the curriculum. Teachers and classroom support staff work very well together to provide very good support to pupils throughout the school, and particularly for pupils with special educational needs. This partnership has a positive impact on learning, is contributing to the continuing improvement in standards at the school and ensures that pupils make good progress in their learning. The administration of the school runs smoothly and unobtrusively, and all the adults involved in the life of the school work very well together as a supportive team for the pupils.
52. The school has satisfactory arrangements for meeting the professional development needs of staff. The training undertaken is clearly focused to support the priorities of the school development plan and improve the quality of teaching and provision. For example, the school has made very effective use of training opportunities to prepare staff for the current national initiatives in literacy and numeracy, which are helping to raise standards in these areas. New initiatives are

taken on with enthusiasm. In common with many schools, the scheme for the appraisal of teachers is awaiting further national developments, but all staff have regular professional development interviews and all have appropriate job descriptions.

53. The school makes efficient use of the resources available to it. The school's accommodation is adequate for the present numbers of pupils. Although the classrooms in the main building are small, the school compensates well for this by making creative use of all the space available in corridors and other areas to ensure that the range of learning experiences is not limited. The quality of displayed pupils' work enhances the learning environment throughout the school, and the buildings are kept well. They are carefully maintained and are in good decorative order. The pupils take pride in and look after them, and take care of the resources available. Recent improvements have provided extended and very useful library facilities. The outdoor area includes pleasant areas of seating, where pupils can talk quietly together, but the use of the outdoor play area is limited by the poor quality of the surface and continuing delay in approval for the re-laying of the hard play areas. Children in the reception classes who are under five do not have ready access to the kind of outdoor play recommended nationally, and opportunities for outdoor play are not always used systematically in the nursery.
54. The school's resources for learning are good overall, and for some areas of the curriculum are very good. The book and other resources used for supporting literacy and numeracy, many of which are produced in school, are good overall. The library is well stocked, with a good range of books to support the curriculum. All pupils have regular access to computers. Very good use is made of visits and of visitors, and of the school's immediate environment, to extend the pupils' learning.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

55. In order to improve the school further, the headteacher, staff and governors should develop a whole school approach to the pupils' physical development, to include:
- regular opportunities for outdoor play in the nursery and reception classes;
 - ensuring adequate curriculum time for physical development in the nursery;
 - providing further physical activities outside lesson times for pupils in the main school;
 - and reviewing long-term planning for physical education. (see paragraphs 24, 26, 53, 116, 117).

Other issues which should be considered by the school for possible inclusion in the action plan:

- ◇ Ensuring a more consistent approach to the development of handwriting, including the earlier introduction of a cursive style (see paragraph 69).
- ◇ Seeking to use information technology in more ways across all subjects (paragraphs 80, 91).
- ◇ Developing further and implementing approaches to assessment in the non-core subjects (paragraphs 34, 35, 91, 96, 103, 108, 112, 121).
- ◇ Ensuring consistency in planning across the early years and closer liaison between the nursery and reception classes (paragraph 23).
- ◇ Including all required elements in the governors' annual report to parents, particularly about the success of the policy for special educational needs (paragraph 50).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	52
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	35

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	25	59	12	-	-	-

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)	39	170
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	-	83

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	-	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	3	42

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.0

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6

National comparative data	5.4
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National comparative data	0.5
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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	33	27	60

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	22	20	28
	Girls	23	20	21
	Total	45	40	49
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	75 (82)	67 (82)	82 (73)
	National	82 (81)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	23	24	26
	Girls	21	21	23
	Total	44	45	49
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	73 (83)	75 (81)	82 (79)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	-
Black – African heritage	-
Black – other	-
Indian	-
Pakistani	-
Bangladeshi	-
Chinese	-
White	197
Any other minority ethnic group	13

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	-	-
Black – African heritage	-	-
Black – other	-	-
Indian	-	-
Pakistani	-	-
Bangladeshi	-	-
Chinese	-	-
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)	9.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.1
Average class size	28.3

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	5.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	91

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	39

Total number of education support staff	2.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65

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

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	502274
Total expenditure	507235
Expenditure per pupil	2177
Balance brought forward from previous year	11508
Balance carried forward to next year	6547

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	233
Number of questionnaires returned	78

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64.1	26.9	5.1	3.8	-
My child is making good progress in school.	55.1	41.0	2.6	1.3	-
Behaviour in the school is good.	53.8	33.3	5.1	1.3	6.4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	41.0	44.9	10.3	-	3.8
The teaching is good.	69.2	28.2	2.6	-	-
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	53.8	35.9	10.3	-	-
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	75.6	20.5	2.6	1.3	-
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73.1	25.6	1.3	-	-
The school works closely with parents.	56.4	37.2	6.4	-	-
The school is well led and managed.	65.4	30.8	2.6	1.3	-
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66.7	30.8	2.6	-	-
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	42.3	21.8	16.7	2.6	16.7

Other issues raised by parents

All issues raised related to the areas identified above. The only area of significant concern was the school's provision for extra-curricular activities. The inspectors' response to this concern is to be found in the summary of the report and within the relevant sections of the main report.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE

56. Almost all children entering the reception classes have experience of pre-school education, the majority in the school's own nursery. Careful arrangements are made for their entry, providing them and their parents with time to make the important transition from home to school effectively. The children's time in nursery ends in a graduation ceremony, which is enjoyed by children, parents and staff. Transition to the reception classes is handled very sensitively. The school makes good provision overall for children under five in the nursery and in two reception classes, with very good provision for personal and social development and the outdoor curriculum less well developed. Their learning is based on first-hand experiences of high quality and there is a strong ethos for learning, with considerable commitment shown by all those involved. The children's levels of attainment are assessed within the first few weeks of entry and, although these vary slightly from year to year, they indicate well below average competency and confidence in speaking and listening and general language skills and in physical development, and below the expected levels in all other areas. A significant minority of the children show well below average personal and social development on entry to the nursery. They develop their skills well and make good gains in learning in all areas, but, by the time they are five, many still do not achieve the desirable learning outcomes. All make a smooth transition to the National Curriculum programmes of study. At the time of the inspection, all pupils in the reception classes were working to National Curriculum programmes of study. The previous good progress and quality of learning have been sustained. The quality of teaching is slightly improved and is now good overall and the attitudes of the children continue to be very good.

Personal and Social Development

57. By the time they are five, the personal and social development of most children is close to the level expected, but, in spite of the very good work done within the school, the children find it difficult to initiate ideas and solve simple practical problems. All of them respond very well to the teaching and non-teaching staff, who establish very good relationships with them. A very secure and trusting relationship is quickly built up between the children, their parents and the team of adults in the nursery and reception classes. The children are polite and friendly to one another and to adults. They enjoy being together, and, with much encouragement, learn to share equipment and take turns increasingly well. They work well in groups. Because the activities are interesting and matched to the children's needs, they settle to tasks quickly, concentrate well and sustain their interest for lengthy periods, in the nursery and the reception classes. They move around the nursery to use the activities with confidence and show independence. At the close of sessions, the children show good levels of confidence and independence when returning resources to their proper places. They have many planned opportunities to work at an activity of their choice, and, because these are introduced initially with good explanations and supervision, they use them responsibly and with independence.
58. Behaviour is very good, and the children develop a clear understanding of right and wrong and show respect for their environment. Lunchtime in the nursery is an enjoyable and impressive occasion, when many social skills are developed consistently and progressively, and this has a positive impact on the development of the personal and social skills of each child. The children are helped to behave well in class by the use of a large 'smiley face' chart, which encourages and rewards good responses. Teaching, learning and provision in this area of learning are very good,

because of the many quality experiences provided by all adults, with careful attention to detail. This leads to the creation of a happy and secure atmosphere of trust, where the staff have good knowledge of the children and the way they learn, and in which learning is enjoyed and achievement flourishes. Good role models are always to be seen, and so relationships between the adults and the children and between the children themselves are of consistently high quality in the nursery and reception classes.

Language and Literacy

59. When the children start school, many need extensive help in this aspect. The limited speaking skills that many children have on entry to the nursery mean that their response to adults and to the activities provided is restricted, and many only respond when prompted to do so and given much support. The sessions are planned so that adults can share closely in the children's learning in groups, working with them, listening to them and extending their language constantly, as when a small group of children played lotto with the teacher and developed good speaking and listening and social skills. There is close monitoring of the children's listening skills, and all of the staff work very hard to build up the children's confidence through sensitive handling. Times are provided for children to talk and to listen, and these are reinforced regularly and successfully with good strategies, as when the children take it in turns to hold Humpty Dumpty as the signal for talk. By the time they are five, most children do not achieve what is expected nationally in this area of learning, but each child makes good, and sometimes very good, progress. With careful encouragement and perceptive questioning, they listen carefully and respond well to the speaker, and follow instructions well. They are becoming confident in talking about the many interesting experiences that are planned for them, such as looking together at a big book made up of photographs based on their transport day. All respond well to stories, such as 'The Hungry Giant' and enjoy the repeated letters of 'Bim! Bam! Bash!'. A few can recognise familiar words and sounds and some can re-tell favourite stories to an adult, such as 'Goldilocks' or 'The Owl and the Pussy Cat'. The children enjoy looking at books in the comfortable atmosphere of the quiet room and share them eagerly with friends, dolls and adults in the nursery.
60. By the time they leave the nursery, about a quarter of the children recognise and write their name independently. By the time they are five, attainment is still a little below that expected, although some children are beginning to communicate meaning with emerging writing, and most use carefully formed letters. There are good resources to support writing, and opportunities such as a post box in one reception class, where letters can be posted to a scarecrow, ensure a purpose for writing is clear and motivation is strong. Facilities for role play are good. In the nursery, a well-equipped home play corner is always available and a steering wheel and other resources spark off imaginative play linked to the current transport topic. In the reception classes, opportunities include home corners such as an optician's shop and a doctor's surgery. The provision made for the children to develop their language skills is generally good and is regarded by staff as of crucial importance. The provision of books for these sessions is very good, with a good range of interesting and attractive books, which are regularly changed. Other resources to aid language and literacy are good in nursery and reception classes. Sometimes, however, too much time is spent on colouring activities in small group time in the nursery, and the pace of learning then becomes a little slow. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good, because of the strong emphasis on the acquisition of speaking and listening skills and also those for reading and writing. This is delivered clearly through interesting, well-planned, first-hand experiences, and with the use of perceptive questioning.

Mathematics

61. Attainment in mathematics by the time the children are five years of age is below what is expected nationally, but the children make good progress. Most have the necessary language of number and can order numbers practically and make and recognise simple patterns. A few can compare and sequence numbers and count to ten. However, many cannot easily recognise and use numbers to ten or solve practical problems. A few are beginning to understand the processes of addition and subtraction. In the nursery, most know the elementary two-dimensional shapes and some are recognising and writing numbers and beginning to develop and use the comparative language of 'more' and 'less', 'big' and 'small' with support. The adults use planned and incidental opportunities very well to develop the children's mathematical skills and concepts. Farm animals, teddies and 'Hungry Caterpillar' activities are used effectively. Rhymes are sung and the home corner items counted and checked. A game was played, led well by an adult, where the children took turns in throwing coloured dice and matched circles and balloons successfully. Well-planned teaching is matched carefully to the children's needs and the planning defines clearly what is to be learned. There is a balance of support and opportunities for independent work, as when selecting numbers and putting them in order. Good resources are used well and the pupils have time to consolidate their learning, as when sorting, matching colours and making patterns. The language of mathematics is developed carefully, and praise and encouragement given to the pupils. Their confidence develops well because of this. Teaching is generally good, although opportunities to challenge the highest attaining pupils are occasionally missed. Provision is good, and a good supply of resources is available in both the nursery and the reception classes.

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

62. Teaching and learning are good and standards are close to what is expected nationally. However, many children do not find it easy to talk about the similarities and differences they notice and raise questions about why things happen and how they work, even though they are encouraged to do so. This was seen in the children's limited response when looking in a book they were sharing at why the hungry caterpillar ate such a lot of food. The children are introduced to a world of meaningful experiences, which they enjoy immensely and from which they learn well. For instance, they become aware of the different environments of the parkland and open space on their hike, of the sea and shore at the seaside, and the woods on their teddy bears' picnic. They are encouraged to show curiosity as they investigate. For instance, they were visited by a farm roadshow and met a duck, hen and other animals. They chose their favourite animal, the duck, and most cuddled the lamb and discovered it was soft. They explore and select materials as they cut and stick gummed paper and material to make houses and doors for the house of the three bears. When celebrating a birthday the children make a celebration train and then have a special time outside. They enjoy the regular opportunities to use the computer and can match items of transport by pointing and clicking, and show developing control in their use of the mouse. This activity extends learning well for the higher-attaining children. All of the adults are readily involved in the planned experiences and enjoy them with the children. The children are encouraged to use their imagination and pose their own questions. Work in this aspect is lively, interesting and motivating, and challenges the children. At present, outdoor provision is insufficient to provide regular opportunities for observation and investigation, such as monitoring the growth of plants, and there are some small gaps in resources in both the nursery and reception classes. Provision overall is good.

Physical Development

63. Although the overall standard of attainment is still below that expected by the age of five, the children make at least satisfactory and sometimes good progress. They move with confidence and good spatial awareness in the familiar environment of the nursery. Commercial construction kits and jigsaws are used with increasing confidence and tools such as scissors, pencils, different types and sizes of painting brushes and clay tools are handled increasingly well. Adults provide cutting activities for each session and target carefully those children who need daily practice to develop their cutting skills, providing the higher-attaining pupils with further challenge. The children in the nursery have some opportunities to move to different kinds of musical rhythms, such as that of a drum, a tambourine or pop music. However, they do not have sufficiently regular and systematic opportunities to increase control, co-ordination and an awareness of space or to develop their skills progressively, with or without apparatus; therefore this area is underdeveloped. No teaching was seen during the inspection, but from the scrutiny of teachers' planning and discussions held it is clear that teaching and learning are at least satisfactory. During the summer term, activities such as transport week with its obstacle course, hiking week with a planned walk, and sports week to include running, athletics and ball games, show that there is a clear and imaginative focus on the development of physical skills. There is no direct access to an outside area for the under fives in the reception classes and no resources for crawling, climbing, or other outdoor play facilities, but provision overall in this area of learning is broadly satisfactory.

Creative Development

64. Attainment in creative skills is a little below what is expected nationally. The children make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in expressing their feelings and ideas through a range of experiences in art, craft, music and some imaginative play. For instance, they sing about being the sunshine in someone's life and listen to Louis Armstrong's 'Wonderful World', listing the things he found wonderful. They enjoy greatly the singing of nursery rhymes, songs and action rhymes, such as 'I'm a Dingle Dangle Scarecrow', where they sing tunefully and with enthusiasm. The parents appreciate the weekly song sheets that they receive and enjoy sharing in the singing of many familiar songs with their children. The children experiment and practice in a range of art media, as when they blew bubbles to make their colourful paintings and drew cars and lorries carefully following their transport day. However, they have too few planned opportunities to show imagination in their art work. They roll and cut playdough to make pretend cakes that they want to share, but some have little language to develop this further. Good use is made of role play in the classroom. A permanent home play corner provides a well used and constantly needed opportunity for children to play and be secure in this setting in the nursery. The children's imaginative play is developed well with further role play provision linked to the topics followed in both the nursery and reception classes. Provision and the quality of teaching and learning are generally good.

ENGLISH

65. Standards of pupils' attainment in the 1999 National Curriculum tests were below average overall in reading and well below average in writing. When compared with the results of pupils in schools of broadly similar intake, the numbers of pupils attaining the national average for reading were average, and were below average for writing. The number of pupils attaining Level 3 in reading was average when compared with national figures and well above average for similar schools. In writing, the numbers attaining the higher grade were below the national average, but in line with the average for similar schools. The results indicated a decline in both reading and writing

compared to those of the previous year. Reading had previously been improving, but standards in writing had declined over recent years. However, indications from the most recent tests are that there has been significant improvement in both reading and writing, with results this year likely to be in line with the previous national average. This is confirmed by the findings of the inspection. In line with the national picture, girls have usually done better in the subject than boys, but the school has not yet identified ways in which to address this difference.

66. The school has shown good improvement overall in English since the last inspection. The introduction of the literacy strategy, the effective team teaching and ability grouping arrangements have ensured that pupils are now making good gains in learning in all aspects of the subject. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress towards the targets set for them and those for whom English is an additional language are also making good progress.
67. The pupils' attainment in speaking and listening on entry to the school is well below average, but because of effective early identification and the provision of specific teaching programmes, the pupils' attainments by the time they reach the age of seven are in line with those expected for pupils of that age. The pupils speak with increasing confidence as they move through the school. Pupils in the reception class could talk enthusiastically about their trip to a country park and describe in simple terms what they saw and experienced. Older pupils could talk with confidence in assembly about their work on animals. All pupils have regular opportunities to talk about their work, and the visits of the Language Alive theatre team are successful in encouraging pupils to develop their imagination and improve their vocabulary in lively and exciting drama sessions. Some drama activities are used across the curriculum, and in English lessons, in order to develop and improve pupils' spoken language skills further. Pupils throughout the school listen carefully to each other and their teachers and have opportunities to discuss their work and feelings in circle time, which is making a positive contribution to supporting and improving pupils' self-confidence.
68. Across the school, pupils develop a love of reading and achieve good standards by the time they reach the end of the key stage. Pupils develop confidence in handling a range of books through well thought out library skill activities. In Year 1, pupils can read a range of simple texts, use letter sounds to aid word recognition, and say what they like about the books they are reading. By the time they reach the age of seven, most pupils can read with reasonable fluency, enjoy reading and have developed more advanced reading skills. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress because of good teaching, well planned additional activities and experiences such as 'practice pals'. Pupils use their reading skills increasingly to undertake research in other subjects, such as history and science, and the use of computers to develop pupils' research skills is also beginning to have a positive impact on standards. This is an improvement from the previous inspection findings.
69. By the time they reach the age of seven, the pupils' standards in writing are now in line with those expected nationally. This is also an improvement from the previous inspection. In Year 1, for instance, pupils make good progress and are able to write simple poems using word banks. They are beginning to use simple punctuation, and spell a range of simple words correctly when writing about Princess Victoria's dog in history and reporting on the life cycles of animals in science. In Year 2, these skills have progressed, and pupils are able to produce writing of increasing length and accuracy, as when writing accurately about insects in science, and are beginning to develop their imagination when writing stories and poems. This has been developed successfully in an additional extended writing lesson each week, which helps to provide valuable opportunities for creative writing, as indicated in the last inspection report. Higher-attaining pupils become increasingly independent and can use simple dictionaries and thesauruses to help their writing. However, although these pupils make good progress, their limited imagination and inability to

sustain their effort often prevents them achieving even higher standards. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress in relation to their ability, because of the well-planned additional support they receive. The development of handwriting through the school, however, is inconsistent, and, although some examples were seen of pupils using a cursive style, no pupils were observed using this in the course of their normal work.

70. The teaching of English is consistently good and no unsatisfactory lessons were observed. The team teaching that takes place, together with the arrangements for the grouping of pupils by prior attainment and the successful additional creative writing lesson, have led to an overall improvement in academic standards. The teachers' good knowledge and understanding, very good relationships, class management skills, and well established routines that maximise teaching time, ensure that pupils are eager to learn, have a positive attitude and want to do well. This, in turn, enables teachers to support and involve all class members, encouraging all to succeed. The teachers generally use a brisk pace in lessons, and use questions effectively to move learning forward. The quality of pupils' learning is good. Occasionally, the plenary sessions lack pace and pupils can lose interest, especially when these sessions always concentrate on evaluating the work of a particular group of pupils. Classroom assistants are used well consistently to support group work and are very skilful and well trained in this. There is a very good scheme to support struggling readers. The teachers' planning is very good, lesson plans identify learning objectives clearly, and all pupils know what they have to achieve. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and these pupils are very well supported both within class and in additional withdrawal sessions to ensure that they achieve the very best they can.
71. The school has implemented the literacy hour successfully, and literacy skills are developed well in other subjects. In geography and science, for instance, pupils undertake research activities from non-fiction books, and are given many opportunities to write in a variety of ways about the topics they are exploring. The subject is led well by the recently appointed co-ordinator, who has a very good understanding of the subject and has made a significant impact on improving the performance of both teachers and pupils. She has identified further areas that need to be developed, such as improved opportunities for drama to develop pupils' imagination and the need to develop and improve the school handwriting policy. There is a very good shared commitment by all the staff to improve and develop the subject. The resources for the subject are good and these are well managed and accessible. The recently refurbished library and combined information technology room has made a considerable contribution to the subject and is a bright and interesting environment that all pupils enjoy visiting.

MATHEMATICS

72. In the 1999 National Curriculum test results, standards of pupils' attainment were well below the national average overall, and were average when compared with results in broadly similar schools. The number of pupils attaining Level 3 was average when compared with national figures and well above the average for similar schools. These results indicated a continuation of the improvement seen in recent years. There is no significant difference in the results of girls and boys.
73. Results in the recently completed tests indicate that the improvement has continued, with a significant leap in the standards likely to have been attained, which should now be above the national average for the previous year. The number of pupils attaining the higher grade is also expected to be above the national average. The present inspection confirms that standards of pupils' attainment by the end of the key stage are now above average. Since the last inspection

judged standards to be below national expectations, this suggests remarkable improvement in the subject, and is indicative of the higher profile the subject now has in the school.

74. Standards in shape, space and measure are much improved, and pupils have improved substantially in their ability to use their knowledge to solve problems. All pupils, including the higher attainers, and pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, are now making good progress. The teaching of mathematics is consistently good or better, and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. This is partly due to the combination of effective training, the monitoring of the quality of teaching, and improvement in the supply, quality and use of resources. All teachers show confidence and even exuberance in their teaching, and the pace and challenge in all lessons retain the interest and motivation of each child and every adult. The monitoring of pupils' progress is now very good. The guidelines used and the introduction of arrangements for teaching in attainment groups either within class or across year groups continue to improve standards.
75. Work completed in exercise books by pupils in all year groups provides clear evidence that the majority of pupils attain successfully. Most are achieving at or above the level expected for their age. Nearly a third of the Year 2 pupils are achieving above the level expected nationally. On few occasions is the work incorrect, proving too difficult for any pupil or left unfinished. By the time they are seven, most pupils calculate mentally with increasing accuracy and speed, organise their work well and choose their own methods of recording. They tackle problems with increasing confidence and accuracy. Many can count on from 200 in tens and in twenties and, though less confidently, back again, and are able to put amounts of money such as £1.22 and 103 pence in the correct order on a line. Most use a good vocabulary as they explain their work, some check their results, with encouragement, and are increasing their speed of calculation. A few of the higher-attaining pupils are beginning to transfer their knowledge from one area of their mathematics work to another. In Year 1, many pupils understand and can identify the hour and half-hour on clocks. The higher-attaining pupils can solve problems about length of time. In the reception classes, the pupils consolidate their growing knowledge about the number ten as they thread beads and play games. Some are able to recall addition facts with ease and use mathematical language, using addition symbols with meaning. They can make repeating patterns and see symmetry in pictures and their painted numbers.
76. The quality of teaching is good overall, with many examples of very good or excellent teaching. All teachers have good subject knowledge and plan their work well, using the guidance provided by the National Numeracy Strategy. Because of this, the pupils understand the work, are clear about what they have to do, and are taught a variety of strategies to use in an understandable way. The teachers refer to the learning objectives, at the beginning of the lesson, in a way that the pupils can understand, and usually look at their development by the end of the lesson. The development of the numeracy strategy has provided staff with greater confidence and enjoyment in teaching. This is imparted to the pupils who, in their turn, enjoy the subject immensely, are well motivated, work hard and have gained substantially in confidence. The teaching and learning of all pupils is at least good and often better, and are matched by the attitudes of the pupils, which are consistently very good. In each lesson, there is a good working atmosphere, which helps to promote learning. Lessons are hard work for the pupils and their teachers, but are challenging and stimulating for all pupils, including the higher attainers, and provide numerous opportunities for wonder. Learning is fun. Because the work is well matched to the needs of the pupils and is always very carefully explained, the pupils understand the way number or measure works.
77. All of the teachers make very good use of a suitable variety of resources and this helps the visual reinforcement of concepts. For instance, each pupil in a Year 1 lesson uses a small clock face to

tell the appropriate time during a story. The reception pupils are helped to consolidate their knowledge of number, for instance, as ten bean bags are aimed at a bucket. The number in and outside the bucket help them to see the concept visually. In Year 2, visual reinforcement is provided by the use of a wooden pole divided into tens, which helps the pupils to order numbers and money successfully. All of the teachers encourage the pupils to explain their thinking to one another and to the class and this is an important factor in their understanding. For instance, in a very good lesson in Year 2, which challenged the lower-attaining pupils, they were enabled to see and explain the link between equal addition and multiplication. The pupils have high self-esteem and show increasing independence in the way they work, because of the opportunities they have to work practically, following clear teaching at the beginning of the lesson. They are very well supported in each lesson by teachers, teaching assistants and parents, who reinforce learning in small groups. The progress of each pupil is monitored extremely well. In several lessons, the teaching, learning and attitudes of the pupils were very good or excellent. The teachers use imaginative and innovative ways of ensuring the pupils are well motivated, challenged and inspired to learn at a high level. The pupils are enabled to feel that they can achieve anything. In each lesson, expectations are high and the lively pace ensures a most effective use of time, so the pupils show much effort and are so busy that they sustain their concentration throughout the hour-long sessions. For instance, in a Year 2 lesson, two teachers and a teaching assistant worked together to handle the response of the pupils, which they did impressively. Each pupil made very good progress and had high self-esteem, and wonder was shown at the endlessness of number. In all lessons, enthusiastic mathematicians are beginning to develop because enthusiastic teachers are clearly enjoying their teaching and passing their enjoyment on to the pupils. The teachers use the end of lessons to review the learning that has taken place and this is usefully done, but further development could focus on specific aspects and so be more valuable in consolidating and improving progress. The teachers mark pupils' written work well and help the pupils to improve.

78. The teaching and learning of the lower-attaining pupils, those with special educational needs and with English as an additional language, is also at least good and often better. In a Year 2 lesson for lower-attaining pupils, their skills in investigating the number qualities of five were developed well and each was challenged. The teacher allowed time for the pupils to think and to investigate the numbers, and each pupil showed independence in using their own method for recording the facts discovered.
79. Numeracy skills are very well developed across the curriculum. A specific vocabulary for mathematics is taught effectively in all classes and reinforced at every opportunity. Understanding of the mathematical language is seen to be important and each teacher expects the pupils to explain their thinking and to solve story problems from an early age. In science, the Year 1 pupils record their findings following their snail race. In Year 2, the pupils use information technology to order their numbers successfully. In design and technology, careful measurement and use of rulers is expected and the pupils increase their ability to estimate correctly as they move through the school. They design in two- and three-dimensions and gain in knowledge about the properties of each. Each class keeps weather records, and Year 1 pupils have a variety of interesting clocks, including a system for the use of yoghurt pots as a timer.
80. The subject is very well co-ordinated, with skill and perception, and the National Numeracy Strategy is well established. Staff training has been particularly effective and the thorough monitoring of planning, teaching and the learning that takes place, is one of the reasons why the subject shows such an improvement. The improvement in resources and their use has had a considerable impact on teaching and learning, and many of these resources have been produced within the school. The effective monitoring of standards has led to a necessary focus on shape, space and measure, since work in this area was less successful at the last inspection. The use of

team teaching, within the groups arranged by prior attainment, is most effective and uses teaching and non-teaching staff very effectively to support learning. The use of marking, other assessment in lessons and the recording of this key information is very good and the close monitoring of the pupils' progress is an important factor in the improvements currently seen. The further use of information technology in the subject is an area the school has identified for future development.

SCIENCE

81. The pupils' levels of attainment in the 1999 National Curriculum assessments were below the national average overall, but showed some improvement on the results of the previous year. The number of pupils attaining Level 3 was above the national average for pupils of this age. When compared with the results achieved by pupils in schools of broadly similar intake, results in science were well above average both overall and for the number of pupils attaining the higher grade. Assessments recently completed indicate a significant improvement in the overall levels of attainment this year, with results likely to be above the national average. This is confirmed by the findings of the inspection, with standards in the subject judged to be above average by the time the pupils are seven, with girls and boys doing equally well. There has been significant improvement since the previous inspection, when standards were judged to be broadly in line with national expectations but below average in pupils' investigative skills. Pupils now make good progress in their learning.
82. Throughout the school, there is an emphasis on providing first-hand experience, with many opportunities provided for pupils to explore and begin to understand the world around them, while developing the questioning approach that is the basis for good investigative work. The constant use of investigation as the basis for most work undertaken in science has addressed very well the weakness identified in this area in the previous inspection. In their current work, for instance, the pupils in each of the year groups engage in a varied range of investigations. Pupils in the reception classes search for mini-beasts as they explore different habitats during their visit to a country park, while pupils in a Year 1 class undertake a similar search in the school's own wild area and then identify some of the characteristics of the insects they discover. Other Year 1 pupils undertake a careful study of how snails move on differing surfaces, and Year 2 pupils carry their study of insects further by searching for information about them from a range of books. These activities, and work previously completed, provide clear evidence of how well the pupils' learning progresses as they go through the school, gaining both knowledge and understanding of the themes they explore, as well as developing practical scientific skills.
83. The quality of teaching is good, and there are frequent very good or excellent examples. Many lessons are exciting and imaginative. As a result, the overall quality of pupils' learning is good throughout the school. The teachers have clear objectives for learning, plan thoroughly in year teams for the provision of interesting learning activities and ensure a good match between the activities and the various levels of ability within the class. The teachers are usually secure in their subject knowledge and promote very well the practical and investigational aspects of science. The teachers check pupils' existing understanding before moving further into a topic and make good use of summary sessions to reinforce learning. In the best lessons, the teachers show considerable skill in allowing appropriate opportunity for the pupils to make mistakes in their investigations, then intervening at the right moment to help them learn from what they have done and to move them on in their learning. They also place considerable emphasis on the development of the necessary language, with the result that pupils in Year 2, for instance, are able to display the considerable knowledge they have acquired as they talk quite naturally about the characteristics of insects they have identified, displaying a substantial technical vocabulary. This is impressive, indicating a high level of response to the challenging and very effective teaching, and is typical of

the considerable progress pupils make through the school and of the development that has taken place in science.

84. The pupils' attitudes are very good. They enjoy their work and make the most of the interesting opportunities provided for them, often showing open enjoyment in what they are doing. They collaborate well in groups, sharing ideas and equipment sensibly. They listen very well to their teachers and to each other. They record work in a variety of ways, usually with care, and enjoy the opportunity to discuss what they have discovered. Limited use is made of information technology at present. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' personal development as they explore the world and delight in discovery. It also provides a useful vehicle for the development of appropriate vocabulary, and the recording, analysis and presentation of information.
85. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress throughout the school, and higher-attaining pupils are challenged well to reach their potential. Work in parallel classes is consistent, because of the joint planning that takes place and the guidance provided by the detailed scheme of work, which also ensures clear progression in the pupils' learning. All teachers are very well supported in their planning by the co-ordinator, who has clear ideas about the subject and provides valuable leadership in its continuing development. Work is carefully assessed and a detailed portfolio of assessed work is being developed, although further work is to be done in the development of approaches to assessment. The subject is well resourced, and resources are used efficiently. Particularly good use is made of the school's environment, including the wild area shared with the adjoining junior school, and visits to such places as a country park and a farm. All pupils are encouraged well to be aware of both environmental and safety issues.
86. The subject has improved significantly since the last inspection, particularly because of the emphasis the school has placed on the use of investigative approaches in science and elsewhere in the curriculum, and because of the consistent approach that is now used to the development and reinforcement of pupils' language skills. These have had direct and positive influence on the standards of attainment now evident.

ART

87. The pupils achieve well in art because the development of skills is encouraged progressively, techniques are taught well and the pupils are encouraged to work carefully and with attention to detail. Since the previous inspection, levels of achievement have improved. Progress is now consistently good for pupils of all capabilities, and the pupils' appreciation of art is more developed. The policy and guidelines for art have been updated successfully.
88. By the time they are seven, the pupils show confidence, increasing attention to detail and knowledge of colour in their two- and three-dimensional picture making. They use bright, bold colours well to paint flags of many countries. They use aqua crayons and water, smudging the lines very carefully, to paint flowers in a vase and obtain the desired effect beautifully. In a large picture in the style of Van Gogh, made up of small sections, the pupils use paint imaginatively, becoming aware of how to obtain the desired effect with thick bold applications of paint. Year 1 pupils make pictures of the goldfish they see swimming in a tank and understand a little of the style of Matisse as they paint colourful and bold pictures like his with confidence. The reception pupils draw and paint segments of fruit with accuracy and use bold brush strokes when painting large pictures of people who work in school or in shops seen in the local square.

89. The standard of teaching is now consistently good and sometimes better. In each class, art skills are taught progressively and techniques developed well, so the pupils make good progress. This is, in some measure, due to the fact that the teachers plan well together and are clear about what they want their pupils to learn. The teaching is effective because of the high expectations all teachers have for learning and the enthusiasm they convey. The teachers often link work with other subjects, such as science in Year 2 when making pictures and models of insects in their work on mini beasts, and when making Diva lamps linked with work in religious education. They provide clear explanations of the purpose for the work and of the techniques to be used, so the pupils develop a good understanding, as in the reception class when pupils made clear drawings of fire engines to be used for their monoprints. A calm working atmosphere is provided in all lessons, sometimes with music played softly, in which pupils can practise their skills and they are encouraged to evaluate their work. The teachers and support assistants are well organised and use successful methods, developing the pupils' techniques well and increasing their skills so that they have confidence in what they are doing. Time is given for pupils to reflect on their work, and the teachers take care to monitor the individual progress of the pupils. The teachers intervene well in lessons to remind pupils of the specific learning required, as when remembering to score, join and smooth out their clay. There is a good balance of work, and the pupils develop an appreciation of different styles of work by looking at the work of artists such as Miro in the reception classes and Van Gogh in Year 2. Good use is made of art programs in information technology in the reception classes and is being developed in the other classes, as when Year 1 pupils made colourful animals prior to making their clay models.
90. The response of the pupils is very good and they are confident workers, using a good supply of resources well. They enjoy art, as when they made painted, glittery patterns for the circles of their very hungry caterpillar. They show care and attention to detail and sustain their concentration when working. They show great perseverance to complete their work to a high level of finish, as when pupils in Year 2 completed their clay insects and showed great pride in their work. They show very good creative effort and reflect thoughtfully on their work. They are very well able to organise themselves with resources and with tools and clear up well, and show independence and individual creativity in their work.
91. The subject is well led. The co-ordinator has a clear knowledge of future needs and is developing and monitoring the half-termly planning to ensure progression of skills, the teaching of techniques and the provision of the necessary vocabulary. The use of information technology and of assessment opportunities are areas identified by the school for further development. The monitoring of the teaching of art has not yet begun. An art club is held at lunchtimes and develops skills effectively. Good links with the community are made by the use of artists who used the pupils' designs to make colourful outdoor notice boards and worked successfully with the children to make puppets for a play about 'The Gingerbread Man'. The artwork of all pupils is very well displayed in classrooms and corridors and in the hall. This enhances the school environment and encourages everyone to recognise the importance of art.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

92. The children achieve well by the age of seven because the whole design, make and evaluate process is taught well by means of interesting, relevant and enjoyable activities. Since the previous inspection, there has been considerable development in the subject and the policy and planning now includes more emphasis on the evaluative element. These developments have been well monitored by the co-ordinator. The attainment and progress pupils make, particularly in the designing and evaluating elements, have both improved, and the pupils are finding it easier to generate their own ideas. Their planning and practical skills are now better. Teaching has

improved. The purpose of the subject is always stressed and time given to reflect on ideas before making. Resources are now good.

93. By the time the pupils are seven, they are able to design, make and evaluate successfully with support, but increasingly independently. In Year 2, the pupils show good design skills and originality in their pneumatic models, using plates, balloons and tubes. In Year 1, they make their design proposal for the clay animal they are going to make and label as much as they can with individual sketches of, for instance, a nose and leg. They focus on the practical skills required, by using non-fiction books well and making impressive and detailed pencil sketches of tigers, other animals and birds in flight. A few pupils are already aware of front and side views and of perspective. They use information technology increasingly independently to design their animal or bird and are able to see it as it takes on its particular form on the computer, with good use of colour and shading. The pupils in the reception classes select and use resources to make their bird-scarers and enjoy the noise they make.
94. Although only one lesson was seen during the inspection, it is clear from the scrutiny of the large amount of work and other evidence available that both teaching and learning are good. Teaching is enthusiastic and learning is made enjoyable for the pupils, and the teachers show good knowledge and understanding. They identify clear and specific learning intentions in their planning, which is now of high quality, so the pupils design-and-make skills develop well. They develop the whole process well, and have begun to organise the teaching recently to focus more on the practical skills required in the Year 1 classes, while not losing sight of the other important elements in the process. Because of this, the pupils develop interest and independence, and concentrate very well on their work. All of the teachers encourage the pupils to evaluate and improve their designs in pairs, sometimes in groups, and as a whole class, and this helps improve skills for future work. They are encouraged to see the purpose of activities, as when making bird-scarers in the reception classes and shakers in Year 2. Skills are taught progressively through the school and the pupils are introduced to a range of materials, such as types of modelling clay and junk materials in Year 1 and in the reception classes. They use a good supply of resources well. In Year 2, the links with science are made well, and bulbs and batteries are used, for instance, in the building of their lighthouses. The subject is often linked to other subjects such as art or music and this makes the best use of the time available.
95. The pupils' attitudes are very good. They show consistent care and concentration and a determination to complete their work carefully. They show thoroughness in the way they work and wonder in what they are achieving. Because the teachers allow sufficient time in lessons and encourage a careful way of working, the pupils are reflective and show a pride in their work. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, those for whom English is an additional language, and the higher attainers, are making good progress.
96. The subject is very well co-ordinated. Teachers are supported by helpful guidelines, which have been recently updated. The pupils have a balance of opportunities to explore and apply their skills in interesting topics. The use of other adults, including parents, is good and supports the learning that takes place. Good community links are made, as when an artist came into school and helped the pupils design outside notice boards for children and for parents. A visiting theatre group provided stimulus for work in design and technology built around the story of a scarecrow. The pupils saw the purpose of and delighted in making bird-scarers. The co-ordinator monitors the joint planning of each year group and supports teachers well, but monitoring of teaching has yet to be developed. Approaches to assessment are being developed, but the school has identified that more still needs to be done, with more group records to add to the individual teacher records presently kept. Self-assessment features strongly in the pupils' evaluation of their own work.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

97. The two subjects are delivered in parallel as part of the school's topic-based approach to learning. Within that scheme, equivalent time is allocated and appropriately matching development takes place in each of the subjects, within an integrated approach to the topics being studied.
98. By the end of the key stage, levels of pupils' achievement in both subjects are generally above those expected nationally. Within the lively topics they study, the pupils enjoy the historical elements, with many indications in current and recent work that they are becoming familiar with ideas such as 'new', 'old' and 'older' as they apply, for instance, to kitchen equipment, toys or bath-time. As they undertake useful sequencing activities, they begin to develop an awareness of chronology and an appreciation of how familiar things change over time. They encounter a wide range of historical sources and are beginning to be aware of the sorts of questions to ask about them.
99. Geographical understanding is enhanced as the pupils are encouraged to have a good awareness of their own locality and of the school's immediate environment. They show sensitivity to ecological issues, as when the pupils in Year 1 undertake their study of the local duck pond. They become familiar with simple maps, as well as drawing their own plans and maps. The opportunities offered by activities such as the duck pond study, or the survey of local shops undertaken by pupils in the reception classes, enhance their knowledge of where they live and of how the area has developed. Pupils in Year 2 then acquire a good awareness of life in different localities by way of their study of the village of Feckenham and their comparison of the similarities and differences between Birmingham and Calcutta.
100. The pupils begin to understand the influences that have shaped the world they are now experiencing and even young pupils are developing a good sense of 'now' and 'then' and of the world around them. Within the topics, there are many opportunities for them to explore their own ideas and values and, as they progress through the school, they enjoy the opportunity to discuss these, showing their developing language skills in doing so. Good progress is made throughout the school as pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, acquire the knowledge, skills and vocabulary associated with geographical and historical study.
101. The teaching of both subjects is good. The teachers' subject knowledge is good and they are able to convey well to pupils their own interest in and enthusiasm for the topics being studied. Consequently, the pupils enjoy the topics and respond very well. They acquire quite detailed knowledge of the topics, show increasing understanding, and develop useful skills as they go through the school. The teachers receive help and advice in both subjects from the subject co-ordinator and are supported by well-established and regularly-reviewed policies and schemes of work for both subjects. The teachers plan their work together in year teams in considerable detail, and are very clear about what they want pupils to learn from each of the imaginative activities they provide. The subjects are well resourced in the provision of books and materials within the classrooms and library, and very good use is made of opportunities presented by educational visits, visitors and local studies.
102. In all classes, the pupils work well together, have very good attitudes to their work and enjoy the opportunities provided for them to explore the themes they are studying. They generally take care with their work and present it well. The topics provide many links with other areas of the curriculum, such as the links between work done in geography on differing climates and the work

in science on animal habitats, and the resulting work is then well displayed in classrooms and around the school. This helps to celebrate good work, as well as creating an interesting and stimulating learning environment. Resources provided to support the development of literacy and the approaches to learning encouraged through the literacy strategy are proving to be beneficial also for geographical and historical study. Similarly, these subjects continue to aid the development of pupils' language skills through discussion, the use of appropriate vocabulary and opportunities for extended writing and research. They also contribute to the development of pupils' skills in numeracy, through the analysis and presentation of information gathered in activities such as a survey of parents' favourite toys.

103. Since the previous inspection, the subjects have continued to be developed further, in spite of changing demands being made nationally on the curriculum, and the quality of teaching and levels of pupils' achievement have continued to improve. Approaches to assessment in both subjects, which were previously noted as being in the process of development, have still to be implemented, and this is identified by the school as the next area for improvement.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

104. By the time they reach the age of seven, pupils are attaining standards at least in line with those expected for their age. All pupils, including higher attainers and those with special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language, make good progress in their learning. In Year 1, pupils are confident in logging on and off, and can use the mouse to select a range of commands. They show control in drawing squares, choosing colours and filling the object selected, and can delete and also print out their finished work. Pupils of this age can use word-processing in English and can complete word exercises linked to their literacy lesson confidently on screen, talking easily about their work. Information technology is also used successfully to develop pupils' skills in mathematics. By the time they are seven, the majority of pupils can input instructions in order to direct a programmable toy to follow a pre-planned route through a maze. Many can also accomplish a similar task with a computer program. Some pupils can also use a CD-Rom in order to find out information about their topics on animals, and also create posters and cards using a range of programs in art and design.
105. The quality of teaching is good. All teachers are gaining in confidence in their own skills and subject knowledge, and are to plan for the use of computers and programmable toys as part of many other subject areas, as well as being taught systematically in the new information technology room. This shows clear improvement from the previous inspection findings, when the computers then available were judged to be under-used. The quality of teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' learning, which is now good.
106. Pupils' attitudes to their learning are also good; they are enthusiastic and their behaviour in lessons is good. They co-operate well when sharing the use of a computer, and are proud of their achievements and growing expertise.
107. The subject is well led by two co-ordinators, who share the responsibility of planning and training the staff. They have improved and developed the subject and have identified appropriate developments in a very useful action plan, which identifies targets for the next year. The computer room, which has only recently been linked to the Internet, has now been timetabled effectively in order that the subject can be systematically taught to all pupils. This has enabled the school to address effectively the key issue identified in the previous inspection. The resources are adequate at present and there is a planned increase in software to support teaching across the subjects.

108. The previous inspection report identified that pupils' attainment was not always assessed. Some development has taken place, but the school has identified this as an area for further work.

MUSIC

109. The pupils achieve well in music by the time they are seven years of age, because the subject is seen to be important within the school. Time is provided for enjoyable learning opportunities within a well-organised curriculum, and the pupils' skills are developed well throughout the school. Since the previous inspection, the levels of pupils' achievement have improved, as have teaching and the progress made by pupils of all capabilities, both in their skills and understanding. The appreciation of music has improved and music used for worship has been developed well by the co-ordinator. There is greater use of the available resources and the pupils have more consistent opportunities to use them in lessons.
110. By the time they are seven, the pupils listen well. For instance, each week the co-ordinator introduces a piece of music linked with a topic the pupils are studying, such as 'Carnival of the Animals'. They learn about the composer and by the end of the week are keen and interested to answer questions. The pupils sing tunefully and expressively, with a good sense of rhythm, and can sing songs in two parts, with some singing the rhythm accompaniment. A few Year 2 pupils find keeping a rhythm difficult when clapping or when using instruments, but they try very hard and concentrate well. They have an increasing understanding of notation and some are able to use it well when, for instance, playing recorders or other instruments. They are enthusiastic and confident and enjoy singing hymns in assembly, such as 'He's Got the Whole World in His Hands', where they use actions, and songs in lessons such as 'Splashing Through the Clear Water', linked to the Year 1 topic on mini-beasts. The children in the reception classes notice differences in sounds and are beginning to understand about those that are pitched high and low. They practise a song about granny coming to their house and control their voice well as they pitch their voices higher and higher to sing about going up the stairs to take her a cup of tea. In all classes, they are introduced to a good variety of instruments, learn to appreciate the sounds they make, and have good opportunities to use them.
111. The teaching and learning in music are good, and opportunities are taken well to link music with other areas of the curriculum, as when learning about sound in science, and when developing a sound story in literacy in Year 1, linked with the book 'The Bear Hunt', where the pupils beat rhythms and clapped animal names. The pupils in the reception class reinforce their 'Growing' topic through music and movement. In each class, there is an excellent emphasis on listening skills in all lessons, and these are well developed, so that the pupils are usually attentive, ready to learn, and do so well. Much of the teaching is knowledgeable and confident. Other teachers are gaining in skill and enjoyment and, because of this, skills are taught and assessed well in lessons, and the information gained is used to inform the planning of the following lessons. There is good use of a variety of interesting methods and numerous resources and instruments, which the children enjoy. The attitudes of the pupils are good. They enjoy all aspects of music and are to be heard singing enthusiastically, from a very large repertoire, at lunchtime with their dinner supervisors. They work hard to remember the words of songs. They usually listen well and are appreciative of a wide range of music, as when Year 2 pupils listened with concentration to sixteenth-century music, moon buggy work led to the use of David Bowie's 'Space Odyssey' in Year 2, and gospel singing supported work in religious education. They show interest in the different instruments used to make music and use them carefully and with concentration.
112. The subject is very well co-ordinated, with enthusiasm and dedication. An action plan has been followed and many good developments completed which have improved teaching and learning in

music, including the monitoring of planning and the teaching of music. The co-ordinator and a specialist teacher of music support the staff well in their planning and with the use of resources, and planning is good and well matched to the pupils' needs. The recording of assessments made of learning has to develop further, but there is a clear system for this and some teachers' plans for the half-term show these opportunities used well, with the progress pupils' make beginning to be tracked across the school. The curriculum is enhanced by a number of activities, including an enjoyable recorder club, held at lunchtimes, for Year 2 pupils, who make good progress. Opportunities for the pupils to perform are numerous. They do so in some lessons and assemblies and to other classes, and on more formal occasions such as class assemblies and, at Christmas time, when they sing carols in the local square. Visiting musicians, such as brass groups, come into school and play for the pupils, and parents support learning by helping their children to learn the words of songs and listening to them perform at assemblies.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

113. Standards of achievement have been maintained since the previous inspection and pupils are achieving standards that are in line with national expectations by the time they reach the age of seven.
114. The majority of pupils are developing satisfactory skills for throwing and catching balls, and are learning to catch and bounce them. Most pupils demonstrate satisfactory control as they move and when they throw and catch. They are developing appropriate spatial awareness when marching, running and skipping within the confines of the hall and when on the field. In games at the age of seven, most pupils are gaining satisfactory skills in controlling a ball using a hockey stick. They are beginning to develop an understanding of the need to bend their knees in order to absorb the shock when jumping or landing, showing appropriate body control when attempting a standing long jump. The majority of girls can skip using a skipping rope, but boys found this skill difficult. Most pupils understand the importance of warming up and cooling down before and after activities and enjoy all the lessons, showing a positive attitude. They co-operate well together, take good care of equipment, and show very good attitudes in their work.
115. The additional provision for daily exercises for pupils with special educational needs who in addition have physical difficulties is very good, and is making a very positive contribution to these pupils' overall development. The pupils enjoy these additional sessions that are very well planned with a variety of short well-focused activities.
116. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use the time available for lessons well. Lessons are well structured and conducted at a good pace, ensuring pupils remain busy and make good progress. However, the restraints of the school timetable have meant that changes have been necessary to the planned modules for physical education. These changes are reflected in the short-term and medium-term planning, but not yet in the long-term planning for the subject.
117. The subject is well led by a qualified and experienced part-time teacher, who has monitored teachers' planning and has identified areas for development in some aspects of the subject. It has not been possible to monitor teaching, but the co-ordinator is committed to developing and improving standards in the subject. Although the school provides a range of extra-curricular activities, few physical activities are included in this programme. The range of resources and equipment is wide and varied.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

118. It was only possible to observe two brief examples of the teaching of religious education during the inspection, but scrutiny of other evidence available, such as work previously completed in all classes, suggests that standards of pupils' attainment by the end of the key stage are above the level expected by the local authority's agreed syllabus for religious education.
119. As they progress through the school, the pupils are becoming aware of a range of stories and practices from the major religions. They are also encouraged to relate what they are learning to their own feelings and experiences. The pupils develop a good awareness of themselves and the world around them, and show sensitivity to the needs of others. They also acquire useful knowledge about aspects of several religious traditions, particularly the stories and festivals of Christianity. They show an appropriate knowledge, for instance, of some of the events in the life of Jesus and of the stories he told, such as the Parable of the Sower, which was explored during the Harvest topic in Year 2. They gain an awareness of the significance of festivals such as Christmas and Easter. Their knowledge of aspects of other traditions, including festivals such as Diwali and Hanukkah, is also developing well and as teachers make good use of the range of artefacts available in school to bring alive, for instance, important features of Islam or of Judaism. Younger pupils, in the reception classes, gain an appreciation of people who help them, and of a range of personal and religious celebrations, such as the Chinese New Year, during their topic on 'Our World'.
120. Although little direct teaching of religious education was seen in the course of the inspection, it is clear that the subject is taught as well as the other elements of the topic work undertaken. The teachers are confident in what they are teaching and their subject knowledge is good. They handle the pupils' questions with sensitivity and use imaginative approaches and interesting activities in the topics being studied. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Stories are used well to develop the pupils' religious understanding, and the use of circle time and the quality of the teachers' questioning encourage the pupils to reflect, as when reception pupils thought about how they might support the work of the charity shops seen during their study of the local square. All pupils are developing the ability to share important feelings with their teachers and other members of the class, and they all treat each other's views with great respect. The pupils' attitudes to their work are very good. They respond well to the interesting learning opportunities provided, and enjoy the opportunity to discuss issues that arise in their work. Pupils with special educational needs, those for whom English is an additional language, and those who are higher attainers are equally challenged by the lively and stimulating approach to learning throughout the school, so that the progress made is good.
121. The teachers are well supported by the two co-ordinators, who have a good overview of the subject and its needs, and are committed to its development. Further development is needed in the use of assessment, and the co-ordinators are keen to work on this. The subject is well resourced, with a good range of book and other resources, but little opportunity has yet appeared for the use of information technology. The school has a very good range of artefacts for the principal religions, which are used sensitively and well. Very good use is made of visits and visitors, and a nearby church is used well as a resource for learning. The subject has clearly continued to develop well since the previous inspection.