

INSPECTION REPORT

APLEY WOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Leegomery, Telford

LEA area: Telford and Wrekin

Unique reference number: 123450

Headteacher: Mrs Irene Baxter

Reporting inspector: Mr Hugh Protherough
8339

Dates of inspection: 21st – 24th May 2001

Inspection number: 192249

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 – 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Pool Farm Avenue
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Rob Sloan

Date of previous inspection: 10th – 13th February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
8339	Hugh Protherough	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities Information and communication technology Religious education.	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
15181	Meg Hackney	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20498	Mary Hamby	Team inspector	Special educational needs Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage Mathematics Art and design	
19028	Vanessa Ward	Team inspector	English Music	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
27206	Maggie Debrou	Team Inspector	Science Design and technology, geography History Physical education.	How well does the school care for its pupils?

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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 pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	13
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	14
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	17
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	18
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	20
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	21
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN	

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school has grown in size since the last inspection and continues to expand. There are now 277 pupils on roll, comprising 148 boys and 129 girls. A new building project is planned to accommodate the rising roll. Although the vast majority of the children are of white ethnic origin, a small number of pupils are from other ethnic groups, including Indian, Chinese and Afro-Caribbean. In total there are 19 pupils who speak English as an additional language. The area is socially mixed and the 9 per cent of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national average. The school admits children into its reception classes each term. Currently, there are 31 five-year-olds and 17 four-year-olds in school. The ability of the children entering the school covers the full range, but taken overall is broadly average. There is currently a much larger than usual number of pupils with special educational needs totalling 30 per cent of the school roll, including four pupils with statements of special educational need. There have been considerable changes in the staff of the school. Almost a half of the teachers have arrived within the past two years. Two of the teachers in the Foundation Stage are on temporary contracts and one only began work at the start of this term.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is moving forward steadily under the committed leadership of its headteacher and the new senior management team. Although the frequent changes of teaching personnel have hindered more rapid progress, the quality of education provided is generally secure. With the exception of science, standards have risen at a rate that is in line with the national trend. The children enjoy coming to school and show a good commitment to learning. The school offers satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in English and mathematics have improved at the end of both key stages and are now in line with the national average.
- The headteacher has provided firm leadership and a clear sense of direction for the school through a period of considerable staffing turbulence.
- Effective use is made of the information gained from the national tests in setting challenging targets and helping the pupils to improve.
- The governors have a good oversight of the work of the school and fulfil all of their responsibilities.
- The partnership between home and school is strong so relationships are very positive and the children behave well, work hard and enjoy coming to school.
- Arrangements for the management and support of the pupils with special educational needs are good.

What could be improved

- The organisation and the teaching of the Foundation Curriculum.
- Standards in science, design and technology and music at the end of both key stages.
- The level of challenge in many lessons for the higher attaining pupils 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

The school was last inspected in February 1997. Since then it has set about addressing the issues raised in the last report in a businesslike fashion, but with varying degrees of success. Standards had risen steadily year on year in line with the national trend but they fell last year. However, inspection findings suggest they are improving again this year.

The quality of education has improved since the last inspection because there is far less unsatisfactory teaching. An appropriate set of school aims has been established that contributes strongly to the positive relationships between adults and children. The headteacher and the senior management team make much better use of test and assessment data to chart the progress of individual pupils and set targets for improvement. The governors are far more involved in the management of the school and now fulfil all of their responsibilities. They carry out a regular review of the school site and buildings so that these are now used to maximum effect. However, although the school has developed a far wider range of policies and is introducing a tighter framework for its curriculum, these arrangements are not yet securely in place, especially in relation to the Foundation Curriculum for children under the age of five. Taken overall, the school has made satisfactory improvement since that last inspection.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
English	C	C	D	E	well above A average above B average average C below average D well below E average
mathematics	D	D	B	B	
science	D	D	D	E	

Over the past three years, the school's results have generally improved in line with the national trend. In last year's national tests the school's focus on improving standards in mathematics was effective because the pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 achieved results that were above the national average and those of similar schools. However, following two years of solid performance in English last year's results dipped to below the national average and were well below the results achieved by pupils in similar schools. This was due to some disappointing performance in writing. The school is very aware that results in science have been below average for some considerable time. The frequent changes of staff mean that the subject has

not benefited from sustained leadership and the priorities of the school development plan have focused on the national priorities of literacy and numeracy.

This year the school has renewed its focus upon improving the children's writing and in sustaining last year's good results in mathematics. The inspection findings suggest that whilst the proportion of pupils achieving the expected levels in English and mathematics is in line with national average and on course to meet the school's realistic targets, standards in science, design and technology and music are unsatisfactory.

There was a sharp drop in last year's national test results at the end of Key Stage 1. This was because there were an unusually large proportion of pupils with special educational needs. This year the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics is close to the national average. However, standards in science, design and technology and music are still lower than they should be.

The majority of the pupils in the Foundation Stage are on course to achieve the early learning goals expected of children at the age of five. However, the current arrangements offer few opportunities for the children's personal development, which leads to some under achievement.

Throughout the school few of the higher attaining pupils are being consistently challenged in lessons to reach the higher levels they are capable of achieving.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The vast majority of the children enjoy school. They work hard and are eager to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The pupils are mostly polite and helpful to each other, their teachers and visitors to the school.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils of all abilities and ethnic groups learn to feel good about themselves, and get on well together because the teachers set a good example and encourage them to accept a range of responsibilities around the school.
Attendance	Good. Above average.

These aspects are less developed in the Foundation Stage. The current organisation of the programme for the pupils under the age of five does not help them sufficiently either to become independent learners or to collaborate with each other.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

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 the teaching has improved. At the time of the last inspection, almost one in five lessons was judged unsatisfactory. This time 5 per cent of the teaching was very good, 34 per cent good, 51 per cent satisfactory and 10 per cent unsatisfactory. It is satisfactory overall.

The teachers have successfully introduced the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. These lessons are thoroughly planned. The teachers are generally clear about what they want the children to learn and make effective use of a good range of interesting resources to support these objectives. A particular strength is the way that the teachers are enabling the pupils to make regular use of the new computer suite to support their learning in English, mathematics and subjects such as history and geography.

The pupils with special educational needs are effectively supported. The teachers write helpful and informative individual education plans and ensure that the learning support assistants know what to do. There is similar good quality provision for the few pupils for whom English is an additional language. However, in many lessons the teaching pays insufficient attention to ensuring that the higher attaining pupils receive work that challenges them and extends their learning.

The teaching in the Foundation Stage is unsatisfactory. Too much time is spent with the whole class listening to the teacher and there are few opportunities for the children to make their own choices and develop

independence. Although group activities frequently offer interesting starting points, the teachers do not always spot how they might extend the children's learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	With the exception of the arrangements for the Foundation Stage, the school offers a broad and reasonably balanced curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The co-ordinator has a diligent and thorough approach supported by well-trained assistants that help the pupils to make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The few pupils whose spoken English is at an early stage of acquisition receive appropriate support from the staff and visiting teachers.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The provision for moral, social and cultural development is stronger than that for spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has good procedures that successfully ensure the health, safety and welfare of the pupils.

The school's policy and long term plan for the Foundation Curriculum is not securely in place within the classrooms. There has been considerable improvement in the way that the school now uses the information gained from test results and other assessment data to keep track of the children's progress. The partnership with parents is strong because the school strives hard to consult and involve them fully in their children's education.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership for the school. She takes good care of her staff and the new senior management team is developing well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors have a good oversight of the work of the school and meet their responsibilities in full.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The headteacher, senior management team and governors collect a good range of evidence that successfully informs their accurate evaluations of what

	needs to be done each year.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes full use of its delegated budget, linking its decisions carefully to priorities of its development plan.

The school has a satisfactory number of suitably qualified and experienced teachers to meet the demands of the National Curriculum. The accommodation is well maintained and attractively displayed. There is a good number of books and the recently opened computer suite is having a very positive effect upon the teaching of information and communications technology. The headteacher and governors are good at comparing the quality and cost of services and equipment, but strategies for assessing how far purchases are helping to improve the quality of education are less well developed.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoy coming to school. • The teaching is good so the pupils work hard and do their best. • The teachers are concerned for the children's all-round development. They help them to accept responsibility and behave in a mature fashion. • The leadership takes the views of parents seriously so it is easy to approach the school with queries and comments. • The headteacher provides strong leadership and always sets a positive tone. • The school has improved a lot in recent years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework. • Information about their children's progress. • The range of extra-curricular activities. • The level of challenge in lessons for the higher attaining pupils.

The inspectors agree with the positive views of the vast majority of parents. Although some parents want more homework, last year's thorough consultation between home and school ensured that a consensus was reached before the policy was drawn up. The inspectors found that teachers are setting homework in line with this agreement. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities that involve well over a half of the children at the school. However, the inspection team agrees that some aspects of the information to parents could be further improved and that the higher attaining pupils require greater challenge.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. In last year's national tests, the pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 achieved results in mathematics that were above average in comparison with both the national picture and the results of pupils in similar schools. Standards in English and science were below the national average and well below the average of similar schools. However, when comparing the pupils' results with those achieved when they were seven years old, the data suggest that there has been satisfactory progress in English and science and very good progress in mathematics. This fits in well with what we know about the upward trend in the pattern of the school's results in recent years.
2. Between 1996 and 1999, the school's results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 improved steadily. In 2000, this continued to be the case in mathematics and science, but there was a fall in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels in English due to some unexpectedly poor performances in the writing test. Throughout this period, the results in English have generally hovered around and slightly above the national average and those in mathematics have caught up from a below average starting point to being above the national average last year. The results in science, although gradually improving, have stayed stubbornly beneath the national average. Nevertheless, taken overall the school's results during this period have improved at a rate similar to the national trend.
3. Closer analysis of the test data shows that there is little difference in the performance of girls and boys in English, but in mathematics and science the boys achieve slightly better results than the girls. This issue was explored during the inspection process, but the team found no evidence of any gender bias within the teaching of these subjects. For instance, the teachers are careful to involve boys and girls in any discussion and the teaching materials are appropriate for both groups of pupils.
4. Last year the results achieved by the children taking the national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 were much lower than usual and well below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. This was because there was a large proportion of pupils with special educational needs who took the tests. This year the picture is brighter, and the proportion of pupils working at the expected level in all three subjects has risen to be close to last year's national average.
5. The level of attainment of those children entering the reception classes varies from term to term, but taken overall is broadly average. Despite the current shortcomings in the provision for these children, the vast majority are on course to meet the early learning goals set out within the national guidance. However, the children do not make the achievement they could, particularly in

their personal, social and emotional development, which is only just within age-related expectations.

6. The headteacher's systems for charting the progress of individual pupils throughout the school are useful and increasingly effective. For instance, by analysing the test and assessment data for the pupils with special educational needs it is apparent that these children are making good progress; a judgement that is supported by the inspectors' analysis of their work. Similarly, the headteacher is starting to check on the progress of other groups of pupils, such as those for whom English is an additional language. The picture here is far more complex, but the headteacher can clearly demonstrate that these pupils, no matter what stage their acquisition of English, are encouraged to achieve appropriately. For instance, some children who currently struggle to write English are achieving the expected levels for their age in mathematics.
7. The inspection findings suggest that at the end of both key stages standards in English and mathematics are broadly average, but that standards in science, music and design technology are not as good as they should be. **This is a key issue for action.** The reason for this is that whereas the school has spent a great deal of time ensuring that the national strategies for literacy and numeracy are given appropriate priority, there has been less emphasis on many of the other subjects of the National Curriculum.
8. A further reason why standards in these subjects are unsatisfactory is that the school's approaches to extending the higher attaining pupils currently lack coherence. **This is a key issue for action.** Although the levels of support for those with special educational needs and English as an additional language enable these pupils to make generally good progress in their work, many teachers struggle to provide a consistent challenge for the more able. This is because the school is still getting to grips with providing appropriate curriculum frameworks in these subjects, something that is further complicated by the wide range of age and ability found within each class.
9. The quality of the pupils' work in art, information and communications technology, geography, history and physical education is in line with the expected levels at the end of both key stages. Their work in religious education meets the standards suggested within the locally agreed syllabus.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. The vast majority of pupils in both key stages, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language have a positive attitude towards school. They are keen and interested to learn. They understand the school's rules, and respond well to their teachers' high expectations for good behaviour. One of the main reasons for this is that the school works hard to develop the educational partnership between home and the school. Frequent consultation about issues such as homework, home-school agreements and the home-school diary mean that the vast majority of

children are well-aware that both their teachers and their parents are working together to help their all round development.

11. In most lessons and in particular where the teaching is good, pupils of all abilities and cultures co-operate willingly. They listen carefully to their teachers and to each other. They are keen to answer questions and to share their ideas and suggestions. A particular strength of the school is the way that the teachers are developing an ethos of mutual respect and tolerance about the different cultures and religious groups within the school community. For instance, in one Key Stage 2 religious education lesson the different routines and preparations for prayer adopted by Sikh and Catholic pupils were successfully shared. The children's learning was enhanced because the lesson was firmly based upon the experiences of their own classmates. In a very few lessons where the quality of teaching fails to motivate or interest pupils sufficiently a minority of pupils lose interest and their attitude to learning deteriorates. The children in the Foundation Stage play happily together when given the opportunity to do so. They are developing a sense of identity with their class and their school. The children are usually patient when waiting for their teacher's attention, but do become restless and noisy if the activities that they are asked to do lack interest and challenge.
12. Behaviour in lessons is generally good, and many parents rightly feel that this is a strength of the school. The pupils are polite, behave well and have a clear sense of the difference between right and wrong. They respond very positively to their teachers and listen carefully to what they have to say. Incidences of bullying and racism are very rare. However, conversations with the pupils revealed that they are confident that the school handles any such occurrences fairly and effectively.
13. Relationships at the school are good. Pupils of all abilities and ethnic groups are encouraged to feel good about themselves and have a high self-esteem. They work and play together harmoniously. The teachers, learning support assistants and all other adults in the school set a good example and present themselves as positive and approachable role models. Part of the reason why relationships are so good is that in most of the classes the teachers take care to provide plentiful opportunities for the children's personal development. Most pupils enjoy helping with special jobs, and they take their responsibilities seriously. Nominated boys and girls in Years 5/6 are identified by badges and coloured bands to act as mentors for younger pupils, assisting them at lunchtime and with any problems in the playground. Other pupils help confidently as classroom monitors and take responsibility for setting up equipment in preparation for assemblies. The pupils frequently seek to develop their own ideas and show good initiative. For instance, two older boys recently started a school magazine, and last year the children in Year 6 had the idea of planting a hundred trees to commemorate the Millennium. Regular opportunities are provided for the pupils to visit places of educational and cultural interest and to take part in a range of extra-curricular activities. Their experience and personal development are also extended effectively through the opportunity for residential visits in Years 5 and 6.

14. Attendance at 95 per cent is good and above the national average. Unauthorised absence is low at 0.3 per cent. The vast majority of pupils are punctual and keen to come to school. Registration and lessons generally start on time and there is an efficient and well-ordered start to the day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

15. Despite the recent and rapid turnover of staff, the quality of the teaching has improved since the previous inspection when almost 20 per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory. On this occasion, 5 per cent of the teaching was very good, 34 per cent good, 51 per cent satisfactory and 10 per cent unsatisfactory. Almost all of the unsatisfactory teaching was observed in the Foundation Stage.
16. There is a strong commitment amongst the staff to continue to improve the quality of education they provide. This is evident the moment a visitor enters the school because the classroom walls and corridors are attractively displayed with a wide range of the pupils' work drawn from all subjects of the National Curriculum. There is good provision of books, computers and other resources that are well cared for by the children and used effectively in lessons to support their learning.
17. The teaching in key stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory, with some good teaching in English and mathematics. This is because the school has made a successful start to the introduction of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. In these subjects, the teachers' detailed planning sets out clearly what they expect the pupils to learn, especially in the case of the average and lower attaining pupils. In Years 2, 4, 5 and 6 in particular, the teachers make increasingly effective use of the structure of these lessons to ensure that the learning progresses with a brisk enough pace for the pupils to extend their knowledge. For instance, in mathematics the pupils' agility in mental calculation is improving as result of the brisk pace and careful questioning of these teachers during the opening part of the lesson. Similarly, in the concluding section of the better English lessons the teachers take good care to pull together the key points by getting each group of pupils' to state what they have learnt. In consequence, this assists the teachers in assessing what the pupils had learned in the lesson, and helps the pupils by providing an effective summary.
18. The teachers have devised a detailed and appropriate policy for marking the pupils' work. However, the inspectors' analysis of the children's books revealed inconsistencies throughout the school in the implementation of the policy, sometimes within the same class. For example, the marking of English in one Year 5 / 6 class was thorough and detailed, providing the pupils with both praise and a clear indication of what they need to do to improve their work. However, the exercise books for mathematics contained some unmarked work, and some had marking that gave the pupils little indication of either how well they had done, or what they should do next.
19. Information and communications technology is another subject where the quality of the teaching is clearly improving. In this case, as a result of the successful implementation of the school's well-considered development plan for the subject, the teachers are confident in what they wish to convey to their pupils. The recent upgrading of the school's equipment and the creation of the new computer suite has raised the profile of information and communications technology, and had a consequently beneficial effect on the pupils' learning. A programme of intensive staff training has rapidly increased the teachers' skills and knowledge in the subject. The children enjoy their lessons in the computer suite and appreciate the benefits of fast and reliable machines. The pace of their learning is often good because the teachers' lesson planning is clear

about the skills and techniques to be taught and the context for this work is meaningful and interesting. This was evident, for instance, when Years 5 and 6 were asked to use their desktop publishing skills and knowledge of persuasive language to create posters for the school summer fair.

20. The school makes good provision for the support of the pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. This is achieved through the effective use of the well-trained learning support assistants who work closely with the teachers. For example, during the opening of English and mathematics lessons the whole class, with a wide range of age and ability, is seated together. The learning assistants generally sit close to those pupils with special educational needs and check that these children understand what is going on by quietly asking supplementary questions and offering help by reminding them of strategies for spelling or mental calculation. Their presence during group work is just as valuable because they always take responsibility for supporting a group of pupils. They know what to do because the teachers share their planning with them in advance of the lesson.
21. Before the start of the inspection, a few parents expressed their concerns that the mixed age classes and the wide ability range made it difficult for the teachers to stretch the brightest pupils. The inspection findings confirm that although there are occasional examples of the teachers setting challenging and demanding work for these pupils, this practice is not yet established firmly and consistently across the school. This is particularly the case in the teaching of science where the levels of the pupils' attainment have been below the national average for several years. This is largely due to the fact that in most lessons pupils of all abilities are set similar work. There has been little staff training in the subject in recent years and so the teachers lack confidence in knowing how to plan lessons to cater for all abilities present in their class. This is particularly the case for the higher attaining pupils, many more of whom are capable of achieving the higher levels outlined within the National Curriculum programmes of study. **This is a key issue for action.**
22. The current arrangements for teaching the children in the Foundation Stage are unsatisfactory because the school is at a very early stage in getting to grips with the new national guidance. **This is a key issue for action.** The temporary nature of recent teaching appointments and the movement of pupils between classes in mid-year have also hindered progress. The teaching does not take enough account of the needs of the children and is too formal. It does not sufficiently encourage the children to be increasingly independent or dispose them to learn and find things out for themselves. Most of the teaching is geared towards the children of average ability, but those of higher ability are not catered for so well, and in consequence, they do not achieve all that they could. Some of the younger children need more time to play, and to have their teachers supporting them in this play, rather than having to sit and listen for long periods of time. Furthermore, the teachers' questioning tends to be too closed, and they accept the children's first answer rather than encouraging them to develop their initial thoughts. Written work, particularly on worksheets,

is inappropriate for the developing needs of the children. Some of the better teaching during the inspection helped the children to make connections in their learning and included opportunities for them to reflect on what they had learned. In the instances when the teaching was either satisfactory or good, the adults showed great patience with the children and helped them to acquire skills that supported their learning in both freely chosen play and adult-directed activities.

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

23. The curriculum is broad, reasonably well balanced and meets statutory requirements for the National Curriculum and for religious education. This reflects the findings of the previous inspection. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is now well established within the curriculum. A considerable amount of time is currently spent in teaching English and mathematics, partly in response to the national focus on these subjects and partly as a result of the school's own need to improve standards in writing. This bias of effort is, however, having a negative effect on some other aspects of the curriculum, in particular science, music and design and technology. The school has already identified the need to review its rationale for how it organises the curriculum and the current balance of time between subjects.
24. The school is conscientiously updating its written subject guidance in line with national recommendations, and nearly all subjects now have up-to-date policies and schemes of work to support the teachers' planning. Most of these have been completed recently and are in the early stages of implementation. Careful consideration is given to planning in the long term to provide a suitable curriculum for the mixed age classes at Key Stages 1 and 2. At times, the lower attaining pupils are withdrawn from classes to receive additional teaching in literacy. Sometimes this takes place during lessons other than English, such as mathematics or religious education. Although the school has planned carefully to ensure that the pupils do not miss the same lesson each time, the current organisation means that they sometimes miss their full entitlement to mathematics, for example, in exchange for extra teaching in English.
25. The provision for health education, drugs awareness and sex education is good and links appropriately to work in science. The school has particularly effective links with outside agencies, such as the school nurse and dentist and the police, to support this work. The curriculum for information and communications technology is developing successfully following the recent installation of new hardware and an improved focus on teaching and learning. There is good use of information and communications technology to support the pupils' learning in English and mathematics.
26. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage has a clear policy, which identifies a suitable long-term plan. It takes appropriate account of the recent national guidance, and includes the recommended areas of learning.

However, the weekly timetables do not make reference to the areas of learning, and in some instances it is not clear what is to be taught. Some of the activities are not relevant to the needs of children in their reception year, and the way that the curriculum is organised does not enable all the children to learn as much as they could. For example, lessons lasting an hour described on the timetable as English and mathematics are unsuitable for such young children, particularly the new entrants to school. Too much of the children's time is spent watching and waiting, instead of being actively involved in structured play experiences. There is a small area for play outside, but this is insufficient for the number of children the Foundation Stage.

27. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and meets their needs well. The school follows the guidance in the code of practice effectively. The pupils are thoroughly assessed and their progress is monitored throughout the school so that support can be matched to their needs. When assessing the pupils, who are learning English as an additional language, the school is particularly careful to identify whether each pupil's needs stem from the challenge of language acquisition, from learning difficulties or from both. The provision for these pupils is good. The school is keen to make its whole curriculum accessible to all pupils and the teachers are mindful of this in their planning. They take good care to ensure that those pupils for whom English is a second language receive good support and often make effective use of the cultural diversity of the school to enrich the curriculum. However, the planning and provision for higher attaining pupils is not always as challenging as it should be and this sometimes slows the rate at which these pupils learn.
28. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities and all but the very youngest pupils are invited to take part. Boys and girls are encouraged to join these clubs and almost half of the pupils attend one or other. The pupils speak positively of the lunchtime homework support session, because they appreciate the peaceful environment and the opportunity to seek help from a teacher.
29. The school has good links with local secondary schools. Visits from secondary school teachers and special needs co-ordinators, and visits to the secondary schools by the pupils help to promote a smooth transfer when the pupils leave the school. Contributions from visitors to the school and links with local businesses, institutes of higher education and the church are all used successfully to enrich the curriculum. Both pupils and parents appreciate these purposeful links with the wider community.
30. The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good overall and makes a significant contribution to the school's good ethos. It continues to be satisfactory overall. However, the provision for the moral, social and cultural aspects is better than that for the pupils' spiritual development. Acts of worship provide pupils with opportunities for reflection on their own lives and experiences and give time for thought about the less tangible aspects of life. A particularly good example of this was seen in a reception class, where the lighting of a candle established a very calm and

thought-provoking setting. There is less evidence in lessons of opportunities being provided to cultivate aesthetic awareness or to encourage the pupils to experience a sense of wonder.

31. The development of moral values continues to be given high priority and the pupils are encouraged to make careful choices. For example, values and attitudes are agreed between staff and pupils and are expressed as 'caring rules'. The focus during acts of worship often poses the question, 'Did that person do the right thing?' Issues that concern pupils are often raised during assemblies so that all pupils can share and understand the implications and outcomes. Such an instance took place when the pupils selling drinks complained about the behaviour of certain other children.
32. The provision for the pupils' social development has improved since the last inspection and is now good. The teachers encourage their pupils to co-operate with each other in small groups, taking turns, sharing resources and deciding on the best ways to proceed with tasks. Good examples of this were seen in some literacy work where the pupils played appropriate games or collaborated to write a piece of persuasive writing. The school provides a good range of opportunities to enhance the pupils' personal and social development, such as giving older pupils responsibilities for looking after younger ones and their play equipment during lunchtimes. When equipment to be used at playtimes was being chosen, the pupils were involved in organising a sponsored event to raise money for this initiative and in choosing equipment that would be durable, safe and affordable. Fund raising for different charities, delivering parcels of harvest produce and involvement in the recycling of paper all help to raise the pupils' awareness of social and environmental issues.
33. The school makes good provision for the pupils' cultural development. This has also improved since the last inspection. In worship, they are made aware of celebrations in other cultures, such as Diwali. The school makes very good use of the expertise of parents from different cultural backgrounds, in particular those from Asian and Japanese communities. The reading books include stories from many different cultures. A range of cultures is explored through work in English, history, art, design and technology and music. The children had good experiences, for instance, in writing about and drawing pictures of sculptures observed during a visit to a local park. Similarly, their understanding was enhanced by making and evaluating a wide range of different types of bread from around the world as part of design and technology, and by studying stories about life in Africa.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

34. The school provides good pastoral care for the welfare all its pupils, and pays good attention to their academic and personal development. Most parents are happy that their children are safe and well cared for whilst in school. The pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are well supported by specialist staff who are sensitive to their needs. This support enables pupils to make good progress and to take

full advantage of all opportunities the school has to offer. This school provides a very safe and secure learning environment for pupils. The headteacher in particular knows the pupils and their families well, and close attention is paid by all staff to the children's individual, physical and emotional needs. The clear focus on the provision for personal and social education includes a good programme of sex and drugs awareness, and this promotes the pupils' awareness of the need to care for themselves and for others.

35. The child protection procedures are good and any concerns are monitored effectively in accordance with the school's policy. Despite the considerable turn over in staff, the headteacher has ensured that all members of staff, including the lunchtime supervisors, are fully conversant with the child protection procedures. The school has developed appropriate links with outside agencies to support these aspects of its work.
36. Health and safety issues are carefully monitored and recorded. The governors, teacher representative, headteacher and caretaker are vigilant in their completion of regular risk assessments and identification of potential safety hazards. Pupils in all classes are alerted to safe practices during lessons and whilst outside in the playground. Good procedures are in place for First Aid with a number of qualified staff on site. Regular fire drills are held when the building is evacuated.
37. Baseline assessments are completed for all children shortly after they enter the school. They give broad indications of each child's ability. However, the teachers do not use this baseline information well enough to identify learning priorities and to plan relevant and motivating learning experiences for each child. In contrast, the assessment procedures in English and mathematics are good and have improved considerably since the previous inspection. This is having a positive effect on raising standards throughout the school. The head and deputy work closely together and carry out comprehensive analysis of national and county test results to help them identify strengths and weaknesses in these two key subjects. This information is then put to good use and action is taken to tackle underachievement. For example, last year's disappointing results in writing were carefully analysed to find out what happened and what needed to be done about it. Plans were adjusted and more resources, including the targeted use of learning support assistants, were put in place. As a result, standards in writing have picked up again this year.
38. Good use is also made of this information to help teachers set targets for individuals and groups of pupils in literacy and numeracy. These targets identify what the pupils are expected to learn and are discussed with parents at the beginning of the year. Most parents feel that these targets and the end of year review are a good idea. The home-school diaries provide a channel for dialogue, but some parents would appreciate a mid-year meeting to review progress face to face with the teachers. A further good example of the imaginative way that the teachers are attempting to support the pupils' academic progress is the translation of each of the National Curriculum attainment targets in mathematics and English into pupil friendly language. This helps the children to identify the level they have achieved and what they need to do next. The teachers also keep useful class records that summarise individual achievement in English and mathematics. These are passed on to

the next teacher and this helps them to plan appropriately for the pupils as they move through the school.

39. Currently, because of the appropriate emphasis given to English and mathematics there has been very little development of systematic approaches to assessment in any of the other subjects of the National Curriculum. However, the school development plan sets out clearly the way forward. For instance, next year there are plans to address the weaknesses in science. The assessment co-ordinator recognises that an important part of this work will include ensuring that all teachers know how to assess science work accurately and then use this information to make sure that work is matched more closely to the pupils' abilities.
40. Satisfactory procedures are followed for monitoring and improving attendance. The registers are monitored daily by the school secretary, and computerised data is recorded on a weekly basis. However, the procedures to follow up any unauthorised absence are presently insufficiently prompt to ensure that clear information of pupils' whereabouts is available on a daily basis. Appropriate procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are consistently followed throughout the school. There is a good system of reward and celebration, such as the sharing assembly, that encourages the pupils to do their best, both academically and socially. In accordance with the anti-bullying policy, good procedures are followed to eliminate harassment of any kind. Personal and social education emphasises the need for good relationships and care for others, and any incident of either bullying or racism is dealt with quickly and appropriately.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

41. The school has developed a good partnership with parents and works hard to encourage them to become fully involved in their children's education. The majority of parents feel welcome in the school and able to approach the staff with any concerns or questions. Many parents speak highly of the headteacher's role in developing a close home/school partnership. The headteacher and staff are readily available to parents on a daily basis, and during the inspection teachers were seen speaking informally with parents at the beginning and end of the school day. From the time when the children start school, the staff strive to support and involve parents as much as possible through a well-organised programme of visits and discussions.
42. Good support and encouragement is provided for parents of pupils from different ethnic groups. The Asian 'Mums' Discussion Group held in the school is well attended and is successfully extending the involvement of this group of parents. The home/school agreement is regularly reviewed and discussed with parents. As a result, it is valued and signed by all families. A number of parents helped to write targets for these agreements in straightforward language. A very good example of this is, 'Keep your arms and legs to yourself.' Many parents contribute comments and observations and the pupils

write their own personal targets. However, a few parents would like more contact with the teachers to discuss whether these targets have been met.

43. The majority of parents agree that their children make good progress and they are satisfied with the quality of education provided by the school. Most make a good contribution by listening to their children read at home and by assisting with research. The parents of the pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed and involved in their children's progress; they are invited to attend all review and assessment meetings. A group of parents provide valuable regular help in classrooms, preparing resources and organising extra-curricular activities such as the cycling proficiency, trampolining and gardening clubs. The school provides training for parents wishing to help and this has included a session on group reading and the national literacy strategy. The parental partnership and the school's open door policy make a strong contribution to pupils' progress and attainment.
44. Although a few parents would like more homework for their children, the inspection team feels that the school has done a good job in this area. There was full consultation with all parents last year and a mixture of teachers, governors and parents drew up the current policy. Homework is being set in line with that policy and parents are encouraged to communicate with the school through the home/school diaries and Key Stage 2 maths homework books. The pupils also have the opportunity to attend a homework club one lunchtime each week.
45. The quality of information for parents is generally good and most parents feel they are kept well informed. The headteacher sends out regular friendly and helpful newsletters to parents, which provide them with good information about activities and organisation. At the start of the academic year, parents receive a detailed list of the topics that each class will be studying. Regular curriculum evenings and workshops are held for parents, and these have included literacy, numeracy, national tests and special educational needs. Consultation evenings are held twice a year when parents meet teachers to discuss progress, and these are well attended. In addition, the teachers are readily available to parents on an informal basis.
46. The prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents meet the statutory requirements and provide a good amount of information about organisation and the curriculum. However, the pupils' annual reports do not always provide a clear picture about pupil progress. Most reports provide good information about what pupils have been taught, but insufficient detail about progress within areas of the curriculum and each child's performance in relation to the nationally expected levels.
47. The Friends of Apley Wood School (FAWS) is a small active group of supportive parents that organise regular fundraising events. The pupils benefit from this valuable support that provides a variety of additional learning resources for the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

48. Over the past four years, the headteacher and governing body have set about addressing the issues raised in the last inspection report in a business like manner. Many aspects of the school's work have been improved as a result of their effective teamwork. However, the frequent changes of staff have hampered the energetic and enthusiastic headteacher in her desire for a more rapid pace of change.
49. It is quite clear that the strong personal example of the headteacher and her committed leadership has the strong support of the entire school community. The comments of the parents at the pre-inspection meeting and several notes returned with the questionnaires show that the vast majority of families are in tune with the school's aims and values. They appreciate the fact that it is easy to meet the headteacher and the staff and that important issues such as homework and the home-school agreement are negotiated openly and face-to-face rather than imposed by the school.
50. One of the major improvements in the school's management has been the development of the systems by which the headteacher checks both the quality of education and the standards achieved by the pupils. The rigorous approach adopted in the collection and collation of test and assessment data means that individual pupil progress is closely monitored. There are good arrangements to check the performance of the pupils who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs. The information gained from these analyses is used sensibly to inform the school development plan. For instance, following disappointing science results and the appointment of a new co-ordinator, the decision has already been taken to make science a priority for next year's plan. Similarly, the headteacher has refined her own approaches to checking the quality of the teaching in lessons with the assistance of her local authority adviser. As a result, a clearer picture is emerging of where the strengths lie in the teaching, and what needs to be improved. The positive ethos created by the leadership within the staff team means that the teachers are very open about their work and willingly share ideas and expertise. This has also supported the successful introduction of Performance Management within the school.
51. Apart from the headteacher, most of the senior management team and the subject co-ordinators are either new to their jobs or are taking up fresh responsibilities. They all have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. For instance, a sound start has been made to checking the teachers' planning and analysing the standard of the children's work. Nevertheless, much remains to be achieved to ensure the coherence of the school's approaches to the Foundation Curriculum, science and the non-core subjects of the National Curriculum. Action is also required to ensure that the school's policy for marking is applied more consistently.
52. The management of provision for the pupils with special educational needs is good. The school clearly follows the guidance in the most recent Code of

Practice for pupils with special educational needs. The provision enables the requirements in the statements of special educational needs to be met, and the administration of other documentation for pupils on the register of special educational needs is efficient. Communication at all levels is a strong feature of the management of the provision, and is perceived by staff to have been an area of improvement since the previous inspection. Regular meetings enable the learning support assistants to keep abreast of what is happening in the school, and to help each other with an exchange of views and advice. The team is helped enormously by their mentor who is a long serving member of staff. The co-ordinator for special educational needs leads the meetings and is keen to improve on her existing good practice. She has a small amount of non-contact time to liaise with her colleagues, and this follows a clear and appropriate programme outlined in the policy on special educational needs. However, there is not sufficient time for her to monitor the teaching and learning of the pupils, and this might be considered as a logical next step to improve provision further.

53. The governing body has a far better oversight of the work of the school than at the time of the last inspection. With the support of the headteacher, the governors have developed sensible approaches to the management of their many responsibilities so that a small number of sub-committees meet regularly to support the work of the full governing body. This has contributed to the significant improvement in the governors' monitoring of standards and the school's curriculum. Individual governors are appointed to oversee the school's approaches to literacy and numeracy. They visit lessons with the headteacher, talk with the teachers and provide written notes of their impressions. A further good example of the effective way that the governors now operate was when the sub-committee responsible for the school's curriculum discussed last year's poor results in writing. Their proposed change to the school development plan to address this issue was agreed by the next full meeting of the governors and appropriate adjustments made to the school's budget to ensure effective action.
54. The school's programme for planning for school improvement is appropriate and involves the senior management, staff and governors. The plan sets out clearly the priorities for improvement and purposefully guides the work of the school. It is viewed sensibly as a working document so that progress is checked at each meeting and any necessary adjustments made. The distribution of the school's annual delegated budget and other additional funding is included appropriately within the development plan along with rudimentary criteria against which success can be measured. The day-to-day administration of the school's finances runs smoothly so that the headteacher and governors receive good, accurate information about how money is being spent. There are good systems to compare the price and quality when purchasing equipment and services. However, the headteacher and governors have yet to find ways of checking whether or not the money they spend is providing best value in improving the quality of education and the standards achieved by the pupils.

55. The last inspection report expressed concern at some aspects of the school's accommodation and the inefficient use of its buildings. This issue has been fully addressed. The governors now hold an annual review of the school site and the ways that space is being used. This process is further facilitated by the expertise of the headteacher and a governor who have attended asset management training. As a result, there have been some important improvements. They include, for instance, the creation of a new computer suite that has raised considerably the profile of teaching and learning in information and communications technology.

56. There are sufficient qualified and experienced teachers to meet the demands of the National Curriculum and a good number of learning support assistants. The good range of learning resources, including books and computers that have been developed through the prudent use of the school's budget over several years, further supports their work.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

57. In order to improve further the quality of education and to raise standards to higher levels, the staff and governors should:
1. Improve the teaching, learning and curriculum organisation for children in the Foundation Stage so that:
 - More emphasis is put on the Personal, Social and Emotional area of learning
 - The teaching is matched more closely to the needs of all the children
 - The children spend more time in active learning situations
 - More challenges and investigations are included to extend learning
 - Better use is made of the school grounds to enrich learning
 - Lessons are inspiring and learning more interesting.(Paragraphs 22, 60, 61, 62, 63, 66, 72)
 2. Raise standards in science, design and technology and music by:
 - Improving the teachers' knowledge of these subjects.
 - Identifying more clearly what the pupils need to learn each year as they move through the school.
 - Matching the work in lessons more closely to the abilities of the pupils; extending the more able as well as supporting those with special educational needs.(Paragraphs 7, 8, 96, 107, 126)
 3. Increase the level of challenge for the higher attaining pupils by identifying opportunities for their work to be extended within each lesson.
(Paragraph 21)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	62
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	28

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	5	34	51	10	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YRec – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	277
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	23

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YRec – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	78

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	19

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.5

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3

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
	2000	17	18	35

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	13	15
	Girls	15	15	16
	Total	27	28	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	77 (84)	80 (82)	89 (100)
	National	83 (82)	85 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	15	14
	Girls	15	16	17
	Total	28	31	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	80 (84)	89 (97)	89 (97)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	23	16	39

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	19	21
	Girls	10	11	11
	Total	26	30	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	67 (81)	77 (64)	82 (75)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	18	18
	Girls	10	10	10
	Total	22	28	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	56 (64)	72 (61)	72 (69)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	14
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	4
White	206
Any other minority ethnic group	12

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	2	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YRec – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.7
Average class size	31

Education support staff: YRec – Y6

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	138

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	456 663
Total expenditure	437 376
Expenditure per pupil	1 579
Balance brought forward from previous year	-9627
Balance carried forward to next year	11 660

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	277
Number of questionnaires returned	122

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	52	43	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	43	49	7	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	58	3	2	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	53	15	3	2
The teaching is good.	40	52	3	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	51	16	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	26	2	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	41	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	45	44	9	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	61	34	4	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	49	5	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	43	16	4	3

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

58. At the time of the inspection there were 31 five year olds and 17 four year olds in the Foundation Stage. A significant proportion of the children in the reception class had recently started at the school as a consequence of the policy to admit children each term. One of the classes is designated as a reception class, and one class contains both reception-aged children and Year 1 pupils. Four teachers, two of whom are part-time, and several assistants teach the children. The teacher in the reception class is a one term temporary replacement, and one of the teachers in the mixed age class is also on a temporary contract.
59. During the inspection, most of the teaching was less than satisfactory. However, there were lessons where it was better and in one lesson in the reception class the teaching was good. Attainment is in line with national expectations, with children on track to meet the early learning goals by the end of the year. However, attainment could be better, especially that of the more able children, who have not achieved as much in their time in the Foundation Stage as they otherwise might. The school is aware of the need to improve the provision it makes for children in the Foundation Stage.

Personal, social and emotional development

60. The personal, social and emotional development of the children is only just within age-related expectations, and could be much better. The teachers' plans do not take sufficient account of the entirety of this area of learning, and so the children do not get enough opportunity to solve problems, develop autonomy and acquire the incentive to learn things for themselves. There are too few problem-solving challenges for the children, or activities planned where they have to make choices. In consequence, the children are developing a culture of dependence on their teachers instead of acquiring important life skills like initiative and collaboration. Although the children in the reception class explore feelings and discuss consequences during 'circle time', the weak organisation of these sessions and the restless behaviour of the pupils means that little progress is made towards the expressed aims.
61. The teachers provide suitable opportunities for the children to take on small responsibilities, like returning the register to the office, and this helps the children to understand that they can contribute to the smooth running of their school. The children are tremendously patient, sitting still and waiting their turn, and show perseverance when completing a jigsaw, even when it is too difficult for them. They know that they must look after their belongings, for instance, by folding their clothes after undressing for physical education, and when tidying the classroom at the end of a session. However, the teachers do not provide enough opportunities for them to take on more challenging responsibilities, and in consequence, the children do not achieve all they could

in this area of learning. In some instances, the teaching, particularly in the reception class, focused too much on the inappropriate behaviour of some pupils instead of praising the obedient behaviour of others.

Communication, language and literacy

62. The teachers do not provide enough opportunities for the children to communicate their thoughts, ideas and feelings, and as a consequence their speaking and listening development is not as rapid as it could be. On occasions, the children engage in animated conversations with each other, which helps them to build relationships and fire their imaginations. For example, two boys discussed with evident pleasure a chalk drawing of a spider, which one of the boys said, ‘...was jumping on his web in a thunderstorm.’ They began to use descriptive language to outline how the spider was jumping, the noise of the thunder and how the spider might be feeling. However, when the teacher approached, instead of listening to the boys, and extending this conversation further, she asked them how many legs the spider had. This question was answered quickly, but the previous conversation between the boys went no further.
63. Suitable emphasis is placed on the teaching of reading and writing, but more could be done to make these activities meaningful to the children. During the lessons seen, there were few opportunities for the children to write as part of their freely chosen play, and an analysis of their books showed that they were frequently given worksheets to complete. The teachers' over-reliance on worksheets does not help the children to see that writing has different purposes, and that it is an important means of communicating ideas to a variety of readerships. The staff is aware of the importance of demonstrating a correct model when writing letters on the whiteboard, but because of its location in the reception class not all the children were able to see it. Moreover, the teachers' writing in children's exercise books is not helpful in showing them how letters are formed.
64. The teachers use their voices well when reading stories and this helps the children to enjoy reading. They particularly enjoy fiction, and know that books are usually read from front to back and from left to right. Pictures in the books are interesting to the children and when given the opportunity they linger over them and tell their own stories. This is good and helps the children to acquire a love of books. Most children are able to re-tell a familiar story and correctly place the main events of the story in the correct sequence. The children recognise letters quickly, and are able to say the sound made by the letter. However, the teaching does not help the youngest children to see that print conveys meaning, and that words are discrete entities within a sentence. For example, during a shared reading session using a big book in a reception class, the teacher did not ensure that she pointed carefully to each word as she said them, and she leant across the text, thus obscuring it for some of the children.

Mathematical development

65. The teachers frequently rehearse counting with the children, for example, at registration time. This is useful, particularly for the less able children, who are not yet confident in saying the order in which numbers come. The more able children count well, and understand that numerals signify quantity. Real purposes are provided for the children to learn in mathematics, for instance, counting the number of children who will have either sandwiches or school meals, and recording the numbers on the board for the cook. This helps them to realise the value of mathematics and they enjoy their learning because of this.
66. The children have a natural interest in numbers, and the school has a wide range of resources to support this interest. However, arrangements to ensure that the teaching assistants have a clear view of how to teach numeracy effectively are not currently secure and in consequence the children do not always make sufficient progress in the sessions. In one of the reception class lessons, for example, the teacher had asked the assistants to use interlocking cubes to teach the children to compare numbers less than ten. In one group, the children were side-tracked by the wide range of colours of the cubes, and in another the children built guns and Power Rangers with them instead of applying themselves to the intended task. The teacher herself was working with a group outside and was not aware of the situation so was unable to intervene to tell the other adults what to do.
67. Although there is great potential for mathematical learning in the activity session before registration, it is lost because the session is too brief for the learning to be extended and enhanced by adult interaction of suitable duration. For example, some boys using a construction kit spent ten minutes playing in isolation of each other, but after that they began to collaborate and were making significant gains in their understanding of space and shape. This was because the teacher began to talk to them about what they were building. However, less than a minute afterwards it was time for registration, and so the children were not able either to consolidate their learning or take it further.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

68. This area of learning is enriched by a variety of learning opportunities set out in the activity session each day, but in general there is not enough scope for the children to extend their learning in the school grounds. There is a small courtyard, which can be used in the summer, but no designated safe play space where the children can investigate and explore the natural world that surrounds them. Moreover, the classrooms are small, and so opportunities for regular play with natural materials like sand, water and clay are restricted. However, the staff makes good use of the available space to help the children improve their understanding of technology. Computers and listening stations are frequently in use, and as a result the children know how to operate the volume controls and can use the mouse well to drag and drop images on the screen to dress a teddy bear, for example.

69. The children are keen to learn, and are very interested in making things for themselves out of construction kits and building blocks. They talked animatedly to one of the inspectors about their constructions and about the area they in which they live. They are aware that the local shop sells consumable goods like newspapers and chocolate. They also knew where to go if they are having new shoes, and that it would be necessary to make the journey by car or bus. However, some of the teaching about place and location is too abstract. Activities such as identifying landmasses and sea areas on a globe are not suitable, and do not increase the children's confidence in themselves as learners.
70. The staff take time and trouble to bring in some very good resources for their lessons, but do not make the most of them either to develop the children's skills of investigation, or to arouse their curiosity. In a lesson about the parts of a plant in the Year 1/reception class, for example, the teacher brought a good selection of fresh vegetables. However, instead of discussing the shape, smell, taste and feel of the vegetables to help develop children's sensory skills, the children ultimately had to complete a worksheet to identify which part of the plant was edible. The worksheet itself had limitations as the children quickly found, when they rightly could not place the pictures of peas, onions, and tomatoes on the worksheet in the prescribed categories of 'root', 'leaf', 'flower' or 'stalk'. There was great potential in this lesson for the children to observe and classify from first hand experience, but they actually learned very little.
71. The staff make good use of literacy lessons to teach the children about the natural world. For example, one of the sessions enabled the some children to learn that tadpoles develop from frogs' spawn, and that eventually the tadpoles will become frogs. However, the ensuing worksheet did not capture the children's interest and in consequence their behaviour deteriorated.

Physical development

72. The school provides suitable opportunities for the children's physical development even though there is no dedicated outside area for the Foundation Stage. Appropriate planning is in place to make use of the field and the hall with the aim that the children will acquire a range of physical skills like co-ordination, control, dexterity, balance and agility. However, some of the outdoor games lessons do not help the children to learn. The games lesson for the mixed age class was unsuitable for the children in the Foundation Stage. The aim of the lesson was to teach skills like striking a ball so that the children could play a game of rounders. This proved too difficult for the youngest children who could neither strike the ball accurately nor understand the rules of the game. Those who tried to take part in this looked bewildered and others who were not taking part in the lesson were given 'colouring-in' to do, which did not motivate them at all. The lessons in the reception class include appropriate opportunities for the children to use wheeled toys. Although the teaching assistant changed these toys regularly, she had not received sufficient guidance to ensure that she interacted with the children to move forward their learning. Opportunities were missed to extend the pupils'

skills through achievable challenges, such as requests that they should try reversing or reaching a particular direction using signals showing left and right.

73. The teachers emphasise the importance of perseverance, and so the children improve their manual dexterity. For example, they learn to tie a knot carefully and cut along lines accurately, which gives them a sense of achievement and pride in their finished product. They also have suitable opportunities to improve their fine manipulative skills by using jigsaws where they have to rotate the pieces to fit the puzzle and by tracing carefully over a template to improve their hand and eye co-ordination.

Creative development

74. The school appreciates the importance of creative development and plans to provide a range of experiences to help the children to express themselves creatively through dance, music, art, and imaginative play. There is a rich visual environment, which celebrates the children's work alongside that of famous artists and this helps the children to appreciate an aesthetic quality. For instance, the children are studying some paintings by Paul Klee, and the teacher in the reception class planned a good activity to help them to look carefully at the range of colours he used to create the mood of his painting, 'The Full Moon.' The children in this group tried hard to find wool to match the picture, and succeeded within the range of resources available.
75. As part of the programme to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world, the children are given opportunities to look carefully at how they have changed since they were babies and then to create portraits of themselves using pastel, collage and clay. This not only develops their creativity, but also in some instances enhances their self-esteem. The clay and pastel portraits show that the children had looked hard at themselves, and having suitable colours available enriched their learning. However, the collage on white paper plates will not have helped the Asian and black children to portray themselves faithfully since there was no opportunity for the children to paint the plates appropriately before sticking on facial features. During the inspection, the children learned a new song, and with their teacher's encouragement sang with reasonable pitch and rhythm to the tune 'Who built the Ark?' Suitable well-equipped role-play areas are available, and are changed regularly so that the children can extend their imaginative play by using a variety of attractive artefacts.

ENGLISH

76. In the last few years, standards in English have been similar to the national average at both key stages. This reflects the judgements made at the last inspection. However, in the national tests in 2000, the results dipped below the national average in comparison with all schools. When compared with similar schools, the results were well below average at Key Stage 2 and very low at Key Stage 1. This was due in part to the large proportion of pupils with special educational needs in Key Stage 1, and partly to disappointing

performance in writing across the school. The school has subsequently focused on improving the pupils' writing skills. Early indications, from the most recent national tests and the evidence found during the inspection, show that standards are once again close to the national average in both key stages.

77. Analysis of the test results over several years reveals that there is little difference between the performance of boys and girls. The evidence from the pupils' work seen during the inspection confirms this. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is conscientiously monitored, and suitable work is provided to help them meet the targets in their individual education plans. The progress of pupils who are learning English as an additional language is closely tracked and they are well supported. The school makes good use of the small amount of time it is allocated to provide effective additional adult support for these pupils that helps them to make good progress.
78. The literacy hour is now firmly established within the curriculum. In the lessons observed, the teaching was satisfactory overall. Half of lessons were good, and the teaching unsatisfactory in only a few. The teachers make effective use of the Additional Literacy Support materials to help the lower attaining pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5. The teachers make these lessons interesting and challenging and this motivates the pupils to learn and gives them a sense of achievement. For example, the pupils making words containing the sound 'or' worked hard to remember the different ways in which it can be spelt, as in 'thought' or 'walk'. The teachers' planning for literacy is detailed and generally identifies what the pupils are to learn. When this information is shared with the pupils, it gives them greater involvement in what they are trying to achieve. The classroom assistants are usually well briefed about their roles and work successfully with small groups of pupils.
79. The findings of the inspection indicate that current levels of attainment in speaking and listening are average by the end of both key stages. The teachers encourage the pupils to share their opinions and to contribute during class discussion. This gives them confidence to try, in the certain knowledge that their answers will be valued even if they are incorrect. A feature of the more successful teaching is the posing of questions to which there is no single correct answer. This encourages the pupils to listen carefully and think creatively. For example, pupils discussing how to write a letter of persuasion responded with several ideas when their teacher asked, 'In what other ways could you say that?' However, the teachers do not always make sure that they include all of the pupils during whole-class discussion and this reduces the learning of a few pupils. The pupils listen well to instructions and usually settle to their tasks quickly. In Key Stage 2, they expressed themselves with clarity when they retold a story they had read together, speaking from the viewpoint of different characters in the story. Others who were listening made pertinent comments about how accurately the viewpoints reflected the story. In about half the lessons observed, however, the whole-class introduction was too long and did not sustain the interest of all the pupils.

80. By the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils read with accuracy, expression and fluency. The teachers help them to develop various ways of tackling unfamiliar words. The pupils often break up unfamiliar words into different sounds in order to pronounce them. Their ability to identify when they have misread a word because it does not make sense in the sentence indicates that they understand what they are reading. For instance, a higher attaining pupil in Year 2 explained that when she met a word she could not read, she read on to the end of the sentence and then went back to try to guess what word would make sense. During literacy lessons, the teachers select a range of interesting texts for the pupils to read together. Occasionally, the teachers do not plan tasks that build appropriately on what the pupils already know. In one lesson, for example, the teacher asked the pupils to focus on reading with expression a previously unseen page of text. This was too difficult for most of the pupils, since they needed to concentrate initially on reading the words in order to make sense of the text.
81. By the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils read a wide range of texts with increased fluency and greater expression. They show competence in tackling unseen texts and are able to pick out the significant features of the characters in the stories they read. The pupils express preferences for particular authors and are clear about the differences between fiction and non-fiction books. Their knowledge of how to access information from books in the school library, and how to use contents pages and indexes, develops appropriately as they move through the school. In discussion, most pupils express an interest in a range of books and indicate that they enjoy reading. The entries in their home/school diaries support this.
82. Analysis of the pupils' work shows marked improvement in handwriting, presentation and content through the year, indicating the effectiveness of the recent focus on this subject. By the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils are forming letters correctly and in uniform size. Through Key Stage 2, the pupils develop a cursive script, the older pupils writing successfully in ink and presenting their work neatly. The teachers provide a satisfactory range of different types of writing, including stories, reports, descriptions, diaries and instructions, which not only stimulates the pupils' interest in writing, but also increases their knowledge. Most teachers are successful in encouraging the pupils to choose words to make a description more vivid or to create suspense. The pupils in Year 6 talk confidently about how they write a story plan, followed by a first draft which is edited in order to 'think of more exciting words to capture the reader's interest and to check punctuation and spelling'. For instance, in writing about a highwayman, one pupil wrote, 'The moon hung mysteriously in the sky as the ghostly mist drifted in front of your eyes'. When the teachers make reference to subject specific terms, it enriches the pupils' vocabulary and increases their understanding. This was evident when pupils who were studying the language of persuasion and complaint, investigated the use of 'rhetorical questions' and identified an example in, 'When will this endless building of houses stop?' The teachers often make good use of opportunities to reinforce conventions of punctuation, for example, by asking the pupils where commas should be placed within a list of items in a story they

were writing together. The teachers also provide satisfactory opportunities for the pupils to use their writing skills in other subjects, such as in historical accounts, scientific reports and descriptions of activities in design and technology. Increasing use is being made of information and communications technology for word processing, and the pupils are using satisfactory editing skills to format their writing.

83. The teachers make effective use of target setting with individual pupils. These targets are discussed with the pupils and are shared with their parents. Regular testing and assessment and the detailed tracking of pupils' progress are beginning to guide the teachers in matching the tasks to the pupils' needs and abilities. Most pupils are familiar with their targets and can describe occasions when they have worked specifically to achieve them. The teachers make good use of homework. Almost all of the pupils' work is marked, but the amount of written comment and the usefulness of it are inconsistent across the school.
84. The headteacher is effectively co-ordinating the subject, following the departure of the previous co-ordinator five months ago. There are several new members of staff, and consistent practice throughout the school is still being established.

MATHEMATICS

85. In the four years since the previous inspection, the results in the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests have in general been slightly below average. However, there has been a rising trend in line with the national picture, with last year's results showing particular improvement. These results showed that the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 was similar to the national figure, and that the percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 exceeded the national result by seven per cent. When the test results are compared with schools that have a similar percentage of pupils who are entitled to free school meals, the picture is similarly favourable. Over the last four years, the Key Stage 1 test results have been variable. Last year, the proportion of pupils attaining expected standards was well below the national average, and below that of similar schools. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 was well below the national average, and below the average for schools with a similar intake. This was because there were more pupils in the year group who had special educational needs and were not, therefore, able to attain the expected level for seven-year-olds.
86. The inspection evidence suggests that the steady improvement in standards at Key Stage 2 has been maintained, and standards at Key Stage 1 have improved. This is because of effective teaching based on sensible planning which caters well for the needs of pupils of average and below average ability. Standards are close to the national expectations at the end of both key stages despite the number of pupils on the register of special educational needs. The school has worked hard to support the pupils' mathematical development in the face of potential difficulties, such as the changes in teaching staff. As a result of challenging teaching, particularly in Year 2 and Year 6, regular relevant homework, and good levels of support for pupils with special educational needs, the school is likely to meet its predicted targets.
87. Over the last few years, the results for boys have been better than the girls' results. However, there was no evidence to suggest that this is likely to be the case this year, or that the teaching is biased in favour of any particular group of pupils. Pupils of both sexes and all ethnic heritages make good progress in their learning in Key Stage 2 and build on the relevant practical experiences they receive in Years 1 and 2. The parents are rightly pleased with what their children achieve in the school.
88. The pupils in the Year 6, including the lower ability pupils, can multiply competently and show a suitable understanding of decimals and fractions. The higher attaining pupils understand how to identify the median, mode and range in a given set of figures, and are starting to pose pertinent question for themselves when analysing data. Most of the pupils in this year group show confidence in and enthusiasm for the subject, particularly in one of the classes where the teacher's own love of the subject shines through in her lessons. Her high expectations and sensitive relationships with the pupils enable them to achieve very well. The pupils with special educational needs do well in

relation to their prior attainment, and are supported well by precise targets, which are both challenging and achievable.

89. There is a small group of pupils, in Years 3 and 4, who are working at very low levels and have limited understanding of basic number concepts. These lower attaining pupils are withdrawn from parts of some lessons to receive additional help in literacy. Although this is extremely beneficial to their progress in reading and writing, it adversely affects their progress in mathematics. This is because they not only get less time in the lesson than their more able classmates, but also have insufficient explanation of the task on return to their lessons. In consequence, they try unsuccessfully to puzzle things out for themselves, or have to wait for adult assistance. This does not contribute either to their confidence in the subject or to their progress within lessons.
90. In Key Stage 1, the pupils of average ability in Year 2 count accurately, recognise number patterns and correctly add ten to numbers less than 100. They understand halves and quarters and relate this knowledge well to their work on compass points and rotating shapes. The pupils of lower ability frequently rely on apparatus when calculating, but because they are encouraged to develop their own strategies, they use mental methods with increasing confidence. The high attaining pupils know multiples of ten, five and two and are beginning to use appropriate mental strategies when calculating. However, in discussion with some of these pupils it was clear that they could cope with more demanding work than they were given in lessons. Observation of their working habits showed that there was no sense of urgency in completing the tasks. This was also the case in some of the lessons in other year groups. In some lessons for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 for example, the higher ability pupils were given work which lacked sufficient challenge, and in consequence they did not make the strides in their learning of which they were capable.
91. The teachers are growing in confidence in using the guidance in the National Numeracy Strategy and the three-part lesson is generally well established. In the better lessons, the teachers make good use of whole class teaching and plenary sessions at the end of lessons to make mathematics fun, to develop the pupils' mental arithmetic skills and to check their progress in understanding. These lessons moved along at a brisk pace and pupils of all abilities had work that took account of their prior attainment. As a result, clear gains could be seen in the pupils' learning. Occasionally, however, the pace of lessons was too slow and the teachers spent too long explaining tasks to individual groups so that the momentum achieved in the first part of the lesson was lost.
92. The pupils' competence in mental arithmetic is developing well and is an improvement since the previous inspection. However, in some classes, particularly in Key Stage 1, the oral starter is too long and consequently there is insufficient time for them to complete their work in the main part of the lesson. This leads to some work being unfinished and the pupils feeling that they have not succeeded as well as they might in the lesson. The pupils

respond well to praise, and some teachers make particular efforts to let the pupils know how well they are succeeding and what they need to do next. The marking of work is generally regular and accurate, but some books have pages that are not marked, particularly when the lesson has been taught by a supply teacher. The best marking identifies the context in which the lesson took place, and gives the pupil good feedback on things that have gone well and areas for improvement.

93. The teachers provide good opportunities for the pupils to develop mathematical skills through the use of information and communication technology. The pupils enjoy these activities and understand how programs can help them to handle data and draw appropriate graphs and charts. There are also strong links with other subjects, notably geography, science and English that assist pupils' mathematical understanding. One such example was seen in a Year 5/6 lesson when the pupils were learning to interpret a pictorial graph about car sales over the course of the year. This required them to cite convincing reasons why sales were better in some months than others, and built very well on their current studies about persuasive argument in English.
94. The teachers make informal observations reasonably well, and in good lessons use this information judiciously to alter the pace. Assessment is used well by the senior managers to track the progress of individual pupils and cohorts as they move through the school. The management of the subject is held on a temporary basis by the headteacher. She manages the subject well, and in partnership with the nominated governor has monitored the teaching and successfully identified areas for particular development. Areas of particular weakness have been discussed with the staff and action taken to strengthen them.

SCIENCE

95. Between 1997 and 2000, the results achieved by the pupils in the national tests and the teacher assessments were below average. In last year's national tests at the end of Key Stage 2, the standards reached by eleven-year-olds were below the expected levels and well below those in similar schools. Very few pupils achieved the higher levels. In Key Stage 1, the picture was the same with no pupils managing to achieve the higher levels. Closer analysis of the data suggests that at the end of Key Stage 2 the boys have been achieving slightly better than the girls. However, the inspection evidence reveals no significant evidence of any bias in teaching techniques that might contribute to this slight imbalance.
96. The inspection findings show that attainment at the end of both key stages is still below what is expected of pupils of seven and eleven. **This is a key issue for action.** One reason is that the school has rightly focussed attention on raising standards in English and mathematics. Plans to tackle underachievement in science last year were understandably superseded by the need to address the disappointing results in writing. Furthermore, frequent

changes of staff affected expectations and consistency in the teaching and the subject has not had sustained leadership for over a year. The school's curriculum framework for teaching the subject was only introduced at the beginning of the year and is not yet securely in place. This is because it gives insufficient guidance to the teachers who are working with classes with a wide range of age and ability about what the pupils need to learn each year as they move through the school.

97. Analysis of the pupils' work shows that there has been reasonable coverage of the National Curriculum, but that more emphasis is given in some classes to the learning of facts rather than the development of the pupils' investigative skills. In Year 2, the pupils sort different materials and give simple descriptions of natural and man-made items - 'You get wood from trees, but plastic doesn't grow; it's made in a factory.' They draw different things that move by pushing or pulling. When finding out about what makes toy cars move over a distance, they record sensible group suggestions and then test out their ideas. Currently, they are working on labelling the different parts of a flower and keeping group diaries to record the growth of beans they have planted. In Year 6, the pupils are able to state whether or not the effects of various processes on materials are reversible. They know, for example, that 'when a candle melts you can't turn it back again, but when water freezes, the ice melts back into water'. They sort various substances into solids, gases and liquids and carry out class experiments into evaporation. In a study of different forces, they made parachutes to discover if air resistance or gravity was the stronger force and then recorded their findings neatly. In recent experiments on pollination and seed dispersal, one class has compiled a very useful technical dictionary to describe the parts of a plant.
98. Generally, the teachers prepare thoroughly for their lessons and make appropriate links to what the pupils have learnt before. For example, before Year 5 and 6 pupils began work on recording plant growth in graph form, the teacher started the lesson with quick fire questions to check what they had found out the previous week. This really helped to get the lesson off to a brisk start even though the pupils were feeling the effects of a very hot lunchtime. Similarly, in the Year 1 / 2 class the teacher's good questioning at the beginning of the lesson helped the pupils to remember what they had learnt about insects and plants on a walk round the school grounds. When asked 'Why do you think we saw so many bees just there?', the pupils replied, 'Because there were lots of dandelions and they like them for the honey'. Throughout the school, the teachers begin the lessons by telling the pupils what they will be learning. This is most effective when they then go on to check that the pupils have understood and are clear about what they have to do. Similarly, the better teachers make sure that when marking the children's work they tell them how to improve.
99. However, in too many classes the same activity or worksheet is given to all the pupils and this means that the work is too easy for some pupils and too difficult for others. Moreover, the teachers direct many investigations and the pupils write up the results. This limits the opportunity for the pupils to record their

own ideas and for the more able pupils to set up and follow through their own experiments. These are further examples of the reason why many pupils make slower progress than they should do.

100. A further weakness lies in the way that science is timetabled. Even for the youngest pupils, science is taught in long blocks of time in the week, always in the afternoons. In those classes where teaching is less successful, the pupils sit through a lengthy introduction, find it hard to keep their concentration and become less attentive as a result.
101. The deputy headteacher is also the science co-ordinator and she has a very clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve standards and provision. Science is on the school development plan for next year and the priorities are to review how and when science is taught and to have in place an effective system for assessment and target setting. This will enable the teachers to build up a more accurate picture of how well pupils of all abilities are doing and raise awareness of what they need learn next.

ART AND DESIGN

102. Although only two lessons were seen during the course of the inspection, other evidence, such as discussions with pupils about their work and scrutiny of past work, shows that standards are in line with expected levels. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection with some improvements, for instance in sketching and drawing. The recent introduction of sketchbooks and wide range of drawing pencils is helping the pupils to understand more about line, tone and shading. Some pupils show that they are using their sketchbooks well to try out ideas, much in the way that they would use a first draft book in English. In some classes, however, the pupils' sketchbooks are used more for a record of completed work than for ongoing experimentation, and in consequence these pupils are not making as much progress with drawing and design.
103. The school provides a rich aesthetic environment in which the pupils' work is displayed to its best. These attractive displays are also very helpful in encouraging pupils to aim high, and demonstrate to them that the school values the efforts that have been put into the work, not just the finished product itself. This is of particular benefit to the lesser able pupils who are not as able to record the things that they see and imagine with the flair of their more accomplished classmates. In a Year 3/4 class, for example, work on portraits by pupils of various abilities was displayed. Discussions with the pupils revealed how proud they were of their finished work. They talked animatedly about their portraits and had enjoyed studying the art of Picasso as a starting point for the work. Parents who came to the pre-inspection meeting were impressed with the standard of work on display, and with the wide range of media that their children use.
104. The school's history of involvement in the arts is impressive. There has been a determination, particularly on the part of the headteacher, to keep the cultural

dimension at the forefront of school improvement alongside developments in the core curriculum. This has enabled the pupils to benefit from working with professionals from a wide range of artistic disciplines. It has also helped the pupils to appreciate the artistic traditions of cultures from around the world. Furthermore, as a consequence of their involvement with art in the local community, and links with local business, the pupils understand and appreciate the power that the visual arts have to enrich life. Visits too make a strong contribution to artistic achievement. The recent visit to the sculpture park by pupils in Key Stage 1 has enabled them to understand more about form, texture, colour and pattern. It has also helped them to understand that design is an essential part of the artistic process, and that it takes time to achieve a pleasing result.

105. The pupils know that there is no prescribed way of responding to a stimulus and that personal choice is vital in considering how one might wish to communicate thoughts and feelings. In Year 6, for example, the pupils were able to name suitable media with which they might respond to a starting point suggested by one of the inspectors. When asked how they might wish to create an artistic response to the title 'A Summer's Day', the pupils named suitable media such as tissue-paper collage, pastels, watercolours and fabric printing as the media of their choice. The pupils benefit from the links that their teachers make between art and other subjects. In Year 4, for example they enjoyed making sculptures, lamps and coins relating to their historical study of Roman times, and the younger pupils showed a good awareness of purpose in their posters warning about the dangers of electricity, linked to work in science.
106. Although there is no agreed written policy for the subject, all the teachers adopt a similar approach and show high regard for the development of their pupils' creativity. The two lessons taught during the inspection were both satisfactory, with similar strengths and weaknesses. For example, both teachers provided suitable resources, and stressed the importance of design and the development of the pupils' skills. In both lessons however, there was not enough opportunity for the pupils to question each other, and to refine their work in the time available. The coordinator is not sufficiently aware of standards of teaching and learning because she has no opportunity to monitor the lessons at present. She does not teach the subject, and in consequence cannot take the lead in raising standards by personal example. There are no agreed procedures for assessment. Although a delightful portfolio of work has been assembled, its potential as a tool for improvement is limited because it does not record either the context in which the samples of work were produced or the levels that they illustrate. This is the weakest part of a subject that is potentially a real strength. More work needs to be done on assessment, so that the pupils too become aware of what they have achieved, and how they might subsequently improve their work.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

107. Standards in design and technology are below average in both key stages and progress is unsatisfactory throughout the school. This is because there is no clear

curriculum framework in place to support the development of key skills, knowledge and understanding. **This is a key issue for action.**

108. The teachers' planning for design and technology makes good links to other subjects, such as science, history and religious education. However the current approach does not provide adequate coverage of the different elements of the subject. The activities generally occur in isolation from one another and are repeated once or twice a year, so progress is inconsistent and depends too much on the knowledge and enthusiasm of individual teachers. Some teachers are uncertain about the specific features and requirements of the subject and lack confidence in how to use the good range of tools and materials available. The school recognises that the high number of staff changes and continuing lack of a scheme of work has affected planning and provision since the last inspection.
109. Analysis of the pupils' work, displays and photographs shows that there are some very worthwhile activities taking place. For example, in a recent Year 2 topic on mechanisms, the pupils produced simple diagrams of a vehicle and were given the opportunity to make and test a moving model with wheels and axles. They also came up with some very appealing patterns in designing Joseph's coat and decided that the best way to join the material was sewing because, 'It's quicker, stronger and there are no gaps.' In Years 3 and 4, the pupils produced simple diagrams showing what they would need before starting to make a Moving Monster using balloons to produce air power. In Years 4, 5 and 6 pupils investigated money containers and produced an appropriate design for a purse in Tudor times. They were able to test and decide the most effective stitch to use to give the strongest join. They paid particular attention to the finish by decorating it attractively. In the only lesson observed during the inspection, good use was made of the overhead projector to help Year 2 pupils carry out an evaluation and suggest improvements on their playground project. The pupils were encouraged to think carefully about what they wanted their playground models to do and to decide how well they work. Most pupils wrote sensible evaluation points and understood why it was necessary. Typical replies were, 'My seat needs to be the right size for children' and 'I should have made the string on the swing shorter.' The teacher used her good subject knowledge and challenging questions to help pupils of all abilities make good progress during the lesson. They shared her enthusiasm and talked about their models with confidence. However, throughout the school, there are not enough regular opportunities for the pupils to develop in a coherent fashion their skills of design or to become more dextrous and accurate in using a wide range of tools and materials.
110. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and determined to improve the current status of the subject. Plans are in place to develop a policy and scheme of work to clarify expectations and support progression. She realises that teachers need to become more confident in their approach and that regular opportunities are essential to check how the subject is being planned and taught across the school.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

111. In both subjects, pupils at the end of both key stages are reaching the levels expected of their age. This reflects the findings of the previous inspection where the pupils made steady progress to achieve average standards.
112. In a study of Tudor times the Year 5 and 6 pupils were able to produce useful timelines showing the key dates and events. They came up with some imaginative ideas for menus for rich and poor people and described differences in their food. They declared, for example, that 'the rich considered eggs and butter as food for the poor, but they preferred swan'. The menus they designed for farm workers and princes' were attractively presented. A comparative study of education and schooling in Elizabethan times helped the pupils to understand similarities and differences between life now and in the past. Effective links were made to other subjects such as art when the pupils used quill pens to write signatures in the style of Elizabeth I and to geography through mapping the route of the Armada. In geography, the pupils compiled detailed plans for a pleasure park with clear layout and key features, using symbols to indicate the purpose. Using a published pack they were able to plot the course of the major hurricanes in the Caribbean from 1980 to 1995. They gave reasonable accounts of the islands most at risk and the damage to harvests caused by such natural disasters.
113. In Year 2, the pupils were able show similarities and differences between toys now and in the past through drawing and classifying. In their study of a famous person, they made suitable links between the Great Fire and its effect on Samuel Pepys stating, for example, that 'he needed to send his furniture away to keep it safe.' In a study of the local area, the pupils gave interesting personal descriptions of the differences between Leegomery and Telford, for instance 'We don't have a swimming pool here, but there's one in Telford'
114. Most lessons are well prepared and effective use is made of resources. For example in a study of Ancient Greece with Year 5/6, the teacher got the lesson off to a lively start through particularly effective use of a 'statement game'. The pupils took it in turns to decide whether or not each statement matched what they knew about Athens and Sparta. In this lesson, the activities were well planned to take account of different abilities and the pupils with special education needs were given good support from the learning assistant. In some lessons the introduction is too long and pupils find it hard to stay focussed and they can easily lose the thread of the lesson.
115. Generally, the teachers make suitable reference to the pupils' previous learning although their questioning tends to focus on secure, factual recall, for example, 'What is a forum?'; 'What would happen at the temple?'. At the end of lessons, the pupils are usually given an opportunity to demonstrate what they have learnt by feeding back as a group. For instance, Year 3/4 pupils gave confident reports in their own words of what they had found out about the Coliseum and Roman houses. The teachers generally give clear explanations and the pupils know what is expected of them, and quickly move onto their tasks. In the only geography lesson observed, the teacher was circulating to

check what Year 1 and 2 pupils had recorded about places in their local area and was asking them to explain their choices. The pupils were very keen to talk about their work and gave good reasons for their likes and dislikes. 'I like the park, because I can play basketball but I don't like my sister's school because it's big and a bit noisy'. Throughout the school, relationships are good and most pupils work diligently and sensibly in their groups. They feel positive about their work and try hard to complete their tasks.

116. The curriculum is planned as part of a two-year rolling programme and geography and history are taught in alternate terms. In history, the teachers use the national guidance to plan what will be covered and when and how it will fit in to the term's work. Plans are in place to review the planning of geography next year. Coverage of the different key elements is adequate and largely focuses on the learning of historical and geographical facts, but a good range of visits, visitors and community links enriches both subjects. Analysis of the pupils' work shows that their written recording in class currently relies heavily on worksheets and published material. There is very little adjustment made to the planned work at class level to reflect the wide range of abilities and age of the pupils.
117. Both co-ordinators have a clear understanding of what needs to be done, although the development of geography has been affected by recent staff changes. They realise the need to have a more coherent approach to the development of research and enquiry skills throughout the school.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

118. The school has made good use of the additional funds provided by national government to improve considerably the quality of the pupils' work in this subject. At the time of the last inspection, the use of information and communications technology [ICT] was a peripheral activity, now it is being used increasingly in a range of contexts across the breadth of the National Curriculum.
119. This is happening because of improved equipment and better staff training. Thoughtful management has seen the recent creation of a small computer suite where it is possible for a whole class to be taught together. Although space is tight, the equipment is of good quality and enables the pupils to work swiftly with few interruptions caused by technical faults. The teachers recognise the value of this new resource and are determined to make the most of it. An intensive programme of training is underway, and many teachers are also giving up one evening each week to improve and enhance their own knowledge and skills in this subject.
121. At the moment, the pupils' attainment at the end of both key stages is broadly in line with the expected levels. However, the pupils own folders and records of work in ICT show vividly the positive effect of the recently improved resources and more confident teaching on their rate of learning. For instance, in the last few weeks the pupils in Year 6 used word-processing programs to

write letters and design letterheads. They have created simple spreadsheets in 'Excel' and accessed information on a website about the Caribbean. The teachers' plans for next half term show that before they leave for secondary school, the pupils will also be taught a little more about how to use a computer to carry out a series of commands to control the movement of the 'turtle' in logo program.

122. The teaching in Key Stage 2 is good because lessons are planned carefully with sensible links to other subjects of the curriculum. For instance, the current focus in English has been on the use of persuasive language. The lesson in ICT built carefully upon the pupils' skills in arranging, sizing and re-positioning text and image in a publishing program in order that they might design a poster for the school summer fair. The teacher provided a thorough introduction to the lesson so that the pupils knew precisely what was expected. She circulated quietly and through careful questioning extended and supported their work. The inspector's conversations with the children showed that they were enthused by this task. They had a good appreciation of the effects they wanted to create and how to achieve them saying, 'We want the school name to stand out; that's why we've chosen a red, curly font.' The pupils also personalised their posters by incorporating specific information about the stall they would like to organise. Throughout the lesson, both boys and girls behaved maturely and shared the computers in a friendly, equitable fashion. The pace of work was rapid so that within thirty minutes a good number of provisional drafts had been completed and printed for review back in the classroom.
123. There is also good evidence of the very effective use of the computers to support work in English. For example, in one lesson the pupils were provided with examples of letters of complaint written to politicians. The tasks were well matched to the pupils' abilities so that one group had to improve the letters by making them more persuasive and others had to identify key grammatical features, such as the use of rhetorical questions. The needs of the lower attaining pupils were catered for effectively by providing them with a simpler letter that was jumbled up. They had to use the mouse to click and drag the paragraphs into the correct order.
124. The picture in Key Stage 1 is equally positive. Here the teachers were observed making effective links with the pupils' work in mathematics, science, English and geography. For instance, the Year 2 pupils have created a database about plants and are now learning how to enter questions so that the computer can sort the information. By the end of the lesson, conversations with the pupils revealed that the vast majority were beginning to realise how the speed of computers in processing information makes them extremely powerful tools. In another lesson, the pupils began to visit a website to find out more about rainforests. The teacher's briskly paced and effective introduction showed that the pupils are already confident about how to log-on to their computer, enter a password, select the relevant program and find the titles relevant to their search. A particular strength of this lesson was the careful questioning by the teacher that involved pupils of all abilities, including those

for whom English is an additional language. The children work hard in these lessons, behave well and use the computers carefully.

125. The subject is managed by a new, enthusiastic and committed co-ordinator. The majority of her time and energies have been taken up with the organisation of the suite and the training of staff. A review of curriculum planning is underway and will be appropriately accompanied by an evaluation of the teaching in the computer suite. Another important aspect for improvement is the arrangement for demonstrating skills and techniques to the whole class. At the moment the teachers attempt this by sitting the children on the floor and demonstrating on one of the fourteen-inch monitors. The pupils are patient and concentrate hard, but visibility is poor and conditions too cramped. Nevertheless, the considerable improvements in the provision for the teaching of this subject are clearly enhancing the quality of education provided by the school.

MUSIC

126. The quality of the pupils' work is below the expected levels at both key stages. Observation of lessons and discussion with pupils indicate that they currently have a lot of catching up to do. **This is a key issue for action.** At the last inspection, the quality of work was in line with expectations, but since then the school's focus on literacy and numeracy and the disruption caused by several staffing changes have meant that other issues have taken priority over the development of music. However, the school has recently produced a new scheme of work which describes a broad and stimulating curriculum and provides a satisfactory framework to help the teachers build on the pupils' learning as they move through the school. This has only been in operation for a few weeks, so it is too early to assess its impact.
127. Although the pupils achieve less well than they should, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. This is because the teachers are well aware of what their pupils know, understand and can do, and make sure that they build on the pupils' previous experiences. For example, the pupils in Year 6 worked in small groups to replicate a thunderstorm, deciding how one member of the group should conduct them. The pupils responded positively to the task and concentrated on their work. However, the outcomes showed knowledge below that expected of these older pupils, but the task was appropriate for them given their prior learning
128. Although their knowledge of composers is very scant, the pupils have opportunities to listen to a range of music during collective worship and the staff encourage their skills of musical appreciation by asking them to listen for particular features or instruments. The pupils also listen to music during class lessons. For instance, pupils in Years 5 and 6 heard extracts from 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice' and 'The Flight of the Bumble Bee', but their level of interpretation was limited largely to deciding whether the music was fast or slow.

129. The teachers give the pupils good opportunities to perform for each other in class. However, opportunities for them to comment on each other's performances are not developed well enough. The pupils have neither the knowledge to evaluate what they hear, nor sufficient technical vocabulary to identify the elements of a composition and suggest how it might be improved. The teachers are beginning to increase the pupils' knowledge of musical terms, using words like tempo, dynamics and pitch, but this is at the early stages of development.
130. Good links with literacy were made in a lesson where the pupils in Year 2 created sounds using percussion instruments to represent the personalities of characters they knew from books. They showed good knowledge of the characters and interpreted this successfully in their music. After creating their sounds, the pupils attempted to record their music on paper. They did this by drawing pictures of the instruments they had used, but had little idea of how they might use symbols to represent the instruments or to record when and how often each instrument was played. The very small amount of singing heard during the inspection was tuneful, but there was insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement.
131. The pupils are offered opportunities to play musical instruments, but no one has yet taken this up. The school is now trying to boost interest by inviting the teachers into school to play for the pupils and to talk about their instruments. Approximately fifty pupils attend the school choir.
132. The co-ordinator has worked hard to produce the scheme of work. She has rightly identified the need to purchase more resources to help the teachers increase both their knowledge of music and their confidence in teaching it.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

133. By the end of both key stages, the pupils reach the expected levels and make satisfactory progress in lessons throughout the school. The development of physical education is well supported by careful planning which covers all the required activities - dance, games and gymnastics, swimming, athletics and outdoor activities for the older pupils. The arrangements for the teaching of swimming are particularly strong so that by the age of eleven most pupils swim a minimum of twenty-five metres and many can go much further. The pupils in Year 5 and 6 benefit from well-organised residential visits to an outdoor activity centre with a good range of activities on offer. The physical, education curriculum is also enriched by a good variety of extra-curricular sports clubs such as netball, football, cross-country and trampoline, many of which are effectively supported by parent volunteers.
134. The teachers plan the lessons carefully with a clear structure. In a Year 3 and 4 lesson, for example, the pupils were reminded of safety aspects and asked to explain the need for a warm-up. They said that it was necessary 'because our muscles are stiff, we need the blood to go round'. Throughout the same lesson, the teacher made good use of picture prompts and labels to explain

and then remind the pupils about the activities. The teachers' knowledge of the subject and the clear instructions they give help the pupils make steady progress in most lessons. When the pupils in a Year 1/2 class were making various body-shapes, the teacher constantly reminded them how to use the space, and they responded enthusiastically. In one particularly effective lesson with Year 4/5, the teacher's obvious enthusiasm and very high expectations generated a very positive response and real enjoyment during an outdoor games activity. The pupils' were constantly challenged to improve their skills in throwing and running with the ball and were confident in demonstrating to each other. The poor behaviour of two pupils threatened to disrupt the lesson, but the teachers' response was swift, firm and effective. In order to improve the teaching further, more opportunities for the pupils to refine and improve their skills need to be included in each lesson. In addition, the teachers need to focus their comments on the pupils' performance of the skills being practised, not just their good behaviour.

135. Older pupils benefit from the very good links with a local college. The students from the college are working for Community Sports Leaders awards. In liaison with the teachers, they plan activities that offer good opportunities for the pupils to develop their skills in striking, fielding, throwing and athletics. This arrangement works very well because the pupils respond very positively to the extra help provided by students who have particular skill in these areas. Careful records are kept of each pupil's achievements so that they are able to see what progress they have made and how to improve further.
136. The co-ordinator has only recently taken on responsibility and she is keen to ensure that physical education continues to make a valuable contribution to the overall development of the pupils. She is well supported in this by the deputy head. They are both aware of the need to check consistency throughout the school by observing the lessons and offering support through demonstration and advice.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

137. Although it was possible to observe only a little teaching of religious education, conversations with the pupils and analysis of their work show that at the end of both key stages their levels of attainment are broadly in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus.
138. By the age of seven, most children are familiar with some of the major figures from the Bible such as Jesus and Noah. They know that Christians worship in a church and that special events such as weddings and christenings are held there. They have also begun to learn a little about other faiths such as Judaism and Sikhism. By the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils' knowledge and understanding have increased appropriately and they can explain that the Bible is divided into the Old and New Testaments and that to find out about the life of Jesus one needs to read the New Testament. They are familiar with important stories such as that of The Creation and Adam and Eve. They also know that other religions have their own versions of how the world was

created. Recent study has focussed upon important festivals such as Easter. The Year 6 pupils spoke knowledgeably about the story including the period of Lent and the temptation of Christ. They have previously learnt about a few of the major festivals of other world religions, such as Passover and Diwali.

139. The most effective teaching takes place when the teacher is clear in her own mind about the religious content of the lesson and what she expects the children to learn. For example, the children in a Year 4 / 5 class are gaining some valuable insights into the importance of religious routines for people of different faiths. The strength of the learning process is made more powerful by the successful way that the teacher skilfully helps the pupils to share their own religious experiences with each other. For example, one pupil explained how she uses her rosary to help her to pray, and two Sikh pupils, supported by their mothers, spoke about the routines they go through as they enter the Gurdwara and prepare for prayer. A striking feature of this lesson was the way that all the pupils, regardless of their background, listened carefully and asked relevant questions. There were high levels of mutual respect and tolerance that reflected the very positive and inclusive ethos of the school.
140. In Year 2, the pupils are busy creating their own 'special place' in the classroom. This is working well because the children have already learnt a little about the key features of churches and synagogues and understand that part of their function is to provide a space for quiet reflection. As a result, groups of children are working hard to design their special place and to decide the rules that will govern its use. The teacher is successful because she continually encourages the pupils to draw comparisons with their previous learning and so reinforces their religious knowledge. The pupils are interested in their work and in conversation show that they are thinking hard about what they might contribute. This was less the case in a Year 1 / 2 lesson about signs and symbols. The introduction was too brief and the teacher provided far too few examples of religious signs and symbol. Consequently, the pupils made few gains in their knowledge of the subject and the task of designing a new class badge never reached any conclusion.
141. The headteacher is the current subject co-ordinator. She has drawn up a helpful framework for teaching the subject that makes effective use of both the locally agreed syllabus and other national guidance. Her successful emphasis on recognising and celebrating the increasing cultural diversity of the school is patently starting to enrich both the teaching and the learning.