

INSPECTION REPORT

SOUTHLANDS LOWER SCHOOL

Biggleswade

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109525

Headteacher: Jennifer Morgan

Reporting inspector: Peter Kerr
23583

Dates of inspection: 11 – 14 June 2001

Inspection number: 192455

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Kitelands Road Biggleswade Bedfordshire
Postcode:	SG18 8NX
Telephone number:	01767 312372
Fax number:	N/A
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	David Smith
Date of previous inspection:	20 January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
23583	Peter Kerr	Registered inspector	Mathematics Music	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9334	Jenny Mynett	Lay inspector		How high are standards? - Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2153	Jane Lamb	Team inspector	English as an additional language The Foundation Stage Art and design Geography History	
27155	Brendan Gill	Team inspector	Special educational needs English Physical education Religious education	

13805	Lynn Lowery	Team Inspector	Equal opportunities Science Information and communication technology Design and technology	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is an average-sized first school with 255 children on roll. A nursery class caters for 40 children part-time. There are roughly equal numbers of girls and boys overall, but in some classes there is an imbalance. Only eight children come from ethnic minority backgrounds and seven speak English as an additional language, including two who are at an early stage of learning English. There are 38 children on the register of special educational needs, including 2 who have a Statement¹ of need. The children's social and economic circumstances are broadly average, though only 7.3 per cent of children claim free school meals. Their attainment on entry to the school is also average. Virtually all the children transfer to the adjacent middle school at the age of nine. Since the last inspection there have been many changes to the staff and governing body.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school in which the children achieve well and reach above average standards in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and art and design. Teaching is good overall. The children have good attitudes to their work and behave well around the school. The headteacher provides firm leadership and receives good support from the governors and senior staff. Some teachers employ very effective methods to motivate and interest the children but others do not. The budget is efficiently managed and the school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The children achieve well and reach above average standards in English, mathematics, science, ICT and art and design.
- Teaching is good overall, and is consistently good in the Foundation Stage².
- Good tracking of the children's attainment in English, mathematics and science is used well to improve lessons and raise standards.
- The planning of the curriculum and of lessons is good.
- Good provision is made for children with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language.
- The accommodation and resources are good.

What could be improved

- The way the school identifies strengths and weaknesses in teaching.
- The range of methods used to motivate children and keep their attention.
- The marking of children's work to show them how they could improve.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED

The school was last inspected in January 1997. Since then, good improvements have been made. Standards have risen in both key stages in English, mathematics, science, ICT and art and design. The quality of provision and teaching in Foundation Stage has improved and teaching is of more consistently good quality throughout the school. The curriculum is better organised and resources have improved. All the issues raised by the last inspection have been addressed to some extent. The subject co-ordinators have a clearer role, though they do not yet have enough management responsibility. Expectations are higher, including for higher attaining children, although some of the highest attainers are still not challenged enough. Assessment information is now used well to inform medium and short term planning and there are more opportunities for pupils to undertake independent research.

¹ A Statement of special educational needs is a legal document provided by the local education authority that outlines a child's needs, specifies and finances the required support.

² The 'Foundation Stage' is the new name given by the government to the nursery and reception classes.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on National Curriculum test results.

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

The school's efforts to improve the standards of writing were rewarded with very good test results in 2000. The 2001 results show improved performances in all three subjects. In mathematics, for example, all the children reached at least Level 2, the average level for seven year olds. In all the subjects, more of the children attained the higher Level 3 than would be expected, showing that children with above average attainment are achieving well. This has boosted the school's average points score, making it likely, therefore, that the comparisons with all schools and with similar schools are better in 2001 than in 2000.³ The school exceeded its targets in mathematics and writing in 2001, but just failed to reach the reading target. When the 2001 results are taken into account, the trend in the school's results over the past four years is better than the national trend. The school also adds more value in terms of increased test scores from Year 2 to Year 4. Children in Year 4 achieve well, with many of them attaining Level 4 in the optional national tests in English, and mathematics. This is above expectations for their age. The children enter the school with average attainment, so their performance at the ages of seven and nine represent good achievement and reflects good added value by the school. Girls and boys achieve equally well. Children with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language receive good support and make good progress. The quality of writing seen during the inspection was particularly good, as was the children's ability to work independently and carry out investigations. In some lessons, a small number of children with the highest levels of attainment do not achieve quite as well as they could, however.⁴ Standards in ICT are good. The children use their rapidly developing computer skills well to aid their learning in other subjects. Standards in art and design are also above expectations. In other subjects, children achieve standards in line with expectations for their age.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The children like school. They work hard and strive to succeed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good around the school. However, a small minority of children do not pay sufficient attention in some lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Good. The children relate well to each other and to the adults in the school, creating a good working atmosphere.
Attendance	Satisfactory, but too many holidays are taken in term time. Punctuality is good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

³ Comparative statistics for 2001 are not available at this stage.

⁴ Achievement is a measure of how well children perform relative to their ability. Attainment is a measure of what they have learned. There are only a very few children in the "highest attaining" bracket.

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-9 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

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

The good quality of teaching overall is a significant factor in improving standards. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teaching was judged good or better in 72 per cent of the 70 lessons observed and very good in 16 per cent of the lessons. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is consistently good. All the teachers, classroom assistants and other helpers are very aware of the needs of the children at this age. Teaching in English and mathematics is good. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well and the children use them effectively in other subjects. Lessons are planned well to cater for a wide range of ability and the teachers enjoy good relationships with the children. They know the subjects well and work very closely with the very effective teaching assistants to provide good levels of support for all the children. Lessons meet the needs of the vast majority of children. Those with special educational needs, and for whom English is an additional language, receive good individual attention. A small number of the highest attaining children are not so consistently provided with appropriate challenge and support, however. The children are interested in lessons and work hard. However, a small minority are sometimes inattentive in lessons and this is not always managed well. The children's motivation is nurtured through rewards or good work and the setting of targets. Marking is satisfactory, but is not used consistently to show the children what they have done well and indicate how they can improve.. The children are therefore not as aware as they could be of how well they are doing individually, although they have a good awareness of the learning programme for the class as a whole. The school has made a start on improving this aspect of teaching, beginning with English where some good marking was seen.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. There is a good range of learning opportunities, with an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy, which is helping to raise standards.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. These children receive good support towards their individual learning targets and are included in all lessons and activities.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Those children at the early stages of learning English have individual learning programmes. All these children are included in all activities and achieve as well as their peers.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. There is a good personal, social and health education programme. Provision for moral and social development is good. The children are taught right from wrong and to accept responsibility. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good procedures for ensuring welfare, health and safety. Good assessment of English and mathematics helps to raise standards.

The school has a sound partnership with parents, whose views of the school are positive. The curriculum is varied and there is a good range of extra-curricular activities. Computers are used well as a tool for learning. The school does not have many formal procedures for monitoring personal development, but the staff know the children well. There are opportunities for reflection, but these are sometimes not as well used as they could be. The children are made aware of the different cultures that influence the world they live in, but this is not a strong feature of the school's provision.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides firm leadership and gives clear educational direction. The acting deputy head supports her well and key stage co-ordinators are effective in their roles.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are very supportive and well organised and are developing a good working knowledge of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The tracking of the children's performance in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is good. The evaluation of teaching, to find out what works well and what does not, needs improving.
The strategic use of resources	The school manages its budget well and targets spending towards clearly identified educational objectives.

There is a good complement of teachers and classroom assistants, but some teachers are on temporary contracts. The accommodation and resources are good. The job descriptions of senior managers are under review following the appointment of a new deputy headteacher. Although there is some monitoring and evaluating of teaching, it is not structured to identify and spread good practice. The school achieves good value for its spending by linking purchases to the school improvement plan and ensuring that competitive quotes are obtained wherever possible. The governors visit the school to see for themselves how it is performing. These visits could be made more effective by being linked more closely to the improvement plan.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The children are happy, enjoy school and behave well. • Teaching is good. • The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best. • They feel comfortable approaching the school with any problems or concerns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information they receive about their children's progress. • Their involvement in the school. • The range of activities outside school. • Challenge for more able children.

The inspection confirms all the positive views expressed. It also found that the information given to parents about their children's progress does not consistently provide details of what has been accomplished and targets for improvement. It was found that the school encourages parents to become involved, but that only a few respond. There is challenge for most children in most subjects, but a small number of the highest attainers are not always given sufficiently demanding work. The range of extra-curricular activities was judged to be good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards have improved since the last inspection and are now above average in English, mathematics, science, ICT and art and design at Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 4.
2. The children's attainment is measured on entry to the nursery and is found to be broadly average. The children make good progress in the nursery and reception classes and achieve the Early Learning Goals in each of the six areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage. By the time they begin the National Curriculum in Year 1, the children therefore have average attainment in the key areas of English, mathematics and science and have had a good grounding in the creative and technological aspects of their education. Their personal, social, emotional and physical development is also well established and they have good learning habits and very positive attitudes towards their work. This provides the school with a very firm foundation upon which to build further achievement.
3. In the national tests for seven-year-olds in 2000, the school's results were well above average in writing compared to all schools and to similar schools. In reading and mathematics, the results were average. These results reflect the successful emphasis that the school had placed on writing over the preceding year. A feature of the results in all three subjects was the above average proportion of children attaining Level 3, the level above that expected for seven year olds nationally. This reflects the school's success in improving the challenge for higher attaining children since the last inspection.
4. The school's results in the 2001 tests were better than in 2000, especially in mathematics, where all the children reached at least Level 2, and 47 per cent of them achieved Level 3. Significant gains were also made in reading in 2001, with 88 per cent Level 2 and above and 46 per cent Level 3. The results for writing also improved, with 96 per cent of the children achieving at least Level 2 – a gain of 13 per cent – and 33 per cent at Level 3, which was a small increase on the previous year. No national data is yet available to make comparisons with other schools, but these figures should be well above average compared to all schools, as national results do not increase by such margins from year to year. They are also likely to be above average compared to similar schools. Overall, the school has successfully consolidated its strong position in writing established in 2000 and significantly improved its performance in reading and mathematics. Since the children begin Year 1 with broadly average attainment, these results reflect good levels of achievement.
5. The good results in 2001 mean that over the past four years, the school's performance has improved overall in all three subjects. Over this period, results for boys were lower on average than for girls in all subjects, and by a bigger margin than nationally.⁵ However, in some years, the boys' results have exceeded the girls' results, against the national trend. Given the small numbers involved each year at the school and the difference in gender balance from year to year, these figures are not significant in themselves. The inspection found no difference in achievement between boys and girls in any subjects. Groups of higher attaining children in any given class are just as likely to contain boys as girls, for example.
6. There are no nationally administered tests in science at Key Stage 1. The children's performance is measured only by assessments carried out in school by the teachers. Comparisons with other schools are therefore less reliable than in English and mathematics. In 2000, the school's assessments were very high compared to other schools. This was judged by the team to be an unrealistic picture, as the children's attainment in science in Year 3 is not significantly different to that in English and mathematics. The 2001 assessments are more realistic. They show the school to be above average rather than very high, with the same good

⁵ Nationally, girls score higher than boys in all three areas. The biggest difference is in writing (-1.3 points) and the smallest in mathematics (-0.1 points). One point in the test scores equates to approximately one term's progress.

performance at Level 3 as in reading, writing and mathematics. The inspection findings confirm that these assessments are a true measure of the children's attainment. Their performance in the "life and living processes" and "physical forces" was particularly strong.

7. The teachers' assessments in English and mathematics in 2000 showed a fairly even performance over the range of attainment targets in each subject, with strengths in writing and using and applying mathematics. In 2001, the assessments in speaking and listening showed an increase over the 2000 figures in the percentage of children attaining at least Level 2. In all areas of English and in mathematics and science, the proportion of children assessed at Level 3 was much higher than the 2000 national figure. These assessments consolidate a picture of improving achievement over a broad front in the core subjects at Key Stage 1. The school's performance in the important areas of speaking and listening and practical application of mathematics is good. The inspection found that the investigative and experimental aspect of science is also strong, confirming the school's success in equipping the children with good learning skills.
8. The school exceeded the targets agreed with the local education authority in 2001 in writing and mathematics. In reading, the target was 91 per cent Level 2 or above. The school fell short by three per cent, but this is not significant as it represents only one child. The school's targets are realistic yet challenging, and confirm its success in reaching above average standards and enabling the vast majority of children to achieve well from a broadly average overall starting point.
9. There are no national tests for nine-year-olds to compare the school's performance with other schools. However, in common with many schools, the school administers "optional" standardised attainment tests (SATs) at the end of Year 4. These show that over time, the school adds greater than average value to the children's performance. This is calculated by comparing the increase in the average points scored by the children in the Year 4 tests compared with their results in the Key Stage 1 tests. The children at this school make greater gains in these scores than the average gains in other schools for which figures are available. The inspection confirmed that standards are higher by the end of Year 4 than would be expected nationally at this age in all three core subjects (English, mathematics and science.) The greater than average points scores that form the basis of this comparison are increased if more than the expected number of children in the group achieve higher levels. In this case, more children are achieving Level 4 in Year 4 than would be expected nationally, as this is the level that average eleven year olds aim for. The good results at Level 4 reflect the school's success in tracking the children's attainment in the core subjects and providing lessons that cater for children of above average as well as average and below average attainment.
10. Children with special educational needs make good progress. Their needs are identified early and they are provided with good support. Their individual educational plans are relevant to their needs and their progress towards achieving them is regularly monitored. Although their attainment is usually below average, they achieve well because of this good level of support. Children for whom English is an additional language also achieve well. There is no expert support available to cater for their needs, but the school has taken advice and provided suitable programmes of support for those children at the early stages of learning English. During the inspection, these children were effectively included in all the lessons, enabling them to make appropriate progress in each subject. The school caters well for the three main bands of average, above average and below average attaining children, who all achieve well. However, a small number of the highest attaining children find their work too easy and are not challenged to achieve as much as they are capable of.
11. During the inspection, judgements were made about standards in each subject at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2) and the end of Year 4 (Key Stage 2). The judgements made in English, mathematics and science confirm the strong and improving picture painted by the school's test results.

12. In English, good standards of reading were noted in English lessons and when children read to the inspectors. The children also read for research purposes from books in the classroom and from CD-ROM on computer. However, few children were observed using the library independently. The content and presentation of writing seen was good, in English and in other subjects. The children also achieve well in speaking and listening at both key stages, using a wide vocabulary for their age and participating confidently in discussions. This prepares them well for their transfer to the middle school. A small number of the highest attainers were judged to be capable of even higher levels of attainment than was being expected of them, however in all three areas.
13. Standards in mathematics have improved and are above average at both key stages. The oldest children in the school are well equipped for their transfer to the middle school. As well as having a good grounding in number, shape, measure and data-handling, they are also used to using their mathematics to solve practical problems. They do this with confidence and skill. On occasions, the very highest attainers in both key stages do not achieve as well as they might because the teachers do not consistently question them to test the limits of their knowledge and understanding. The children also use their mathematics skills effectively in other subjects, for example in creating graphs and charts in science and geography and making time lines in history.
14. The children achieve well in science at both key stages and reach above average standards. Their knowledge is good, particularly of the natural world and physical forces. They also develop good investigative skills throughout the school, equipping them well to deal with the new learning challenges that they will encounter at the middle school.
15. Standards in ICT have improved. The children have acquired new skills rapidly as the school has developed its facilities. They use their computer skills well in other subjects. For example, they produce graphs from data in mathematics and research from CD-ROM in history, geography and science. They reach above average standards by the end of Key Stage 1 and by the age of nine, placing them in a good position to meet the challenges of the middle school.
16. The children also reach above average standards in art and design. They have good observational drawing skills and express themselves creatively in a range of media from crayons to clay. They produce good quality designs, making good use of the computer where appropriate.
17. In history, geography, design and technology, music, physical education and religious education, standards are in line with expectations at both key stages. This reflects the school's emphasis on the core subjects and ICT.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

18. The children generally demonstrate positive attitudes to school and are keen to learn. Parents are particularly pleased by the way the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. They feel that teachers expect their children to work hard and achieve their best. The children enjoy school. They are enthusiastic, eager to contribute, generally well motivated and keen to participate both in lessons and other activities around the school. Even the youngest children who have recently joined the nursery were observed concentrating on their tasks and activities for extended periods. The children in the nursery and reception class show a mature and confident approach to work and in their relationships with each other. They are developing good social skills and are eager to investigate, exploring new learning opportunities. They work and play well together in the classrooms and the playground, sharing equipment and materials sensibly.
19. The school has an appropriate focus on promoting good behaviour in and around the school. Whilst behaviour is good at lunchtime and around the school, behaviour during lessons is only satisfactory. When teachers' expectations are high and behaviour strategies are applied consistently, the children respond well. However, in a number of classes the inattentive behaviour of a small minority of children can interrupt lessons for the rest of the class. Parents feel that behaviour is good apart from the few individuals who exhibit poor behaviour. They

see this behaviour to be well managed by staff. The children are generally courteous and polite. They are happy to talk about what they are doing and show their work to visitors. Children are aware of the school rules and customs. There are few incidents of bullying and oppressive behaviour. When they do occur, they are taken seriously and dealt with promptly and effectively. One child was excluded temporarily in the autumn term.

20. Relationships in the school are generally good, both between staff and children and amongst the children themselves. This promotes a good working environment and has a positive impact on learning. The children play well together, with children of different ages joining in games at lunchtime. However, some children find difficulty in working together and sharing the equipment. This results in squabbling and argumentative behaviour. When opportunities are presented in the personal, social and health education programme (PSHE) to do so, children listen to each other and are happy to talk about their feelings. They respect each other's opinions, values and beliefs. Even the very young children in the nursery are developing a good moral code, learning how their actions may affect others. The clear aims and ethos of the school encourage the children to value and respect each other. The children take good advantage of the opportunities now offered for them to learn independently. This is an improvement since the last inspection. In the nursery and reception classes children are encouraged to make choices, and take responsibility for their own learning, helping them to develop their initiative and investigative skills. In other years the children take advantage of the opportunities they have to make choices. For example, they choose the materials they use in art and design and in design and technology lessons. The children research in books and through CD-ROM, for example in history projects, though no independent use of the library was observed during the inspection. They also enjoy learning through investigations in mathematics and science lessons.
21. Children undertake positions of responsibility conscientiously. They return the registers after registration, for example. They also willingly act as class monitors and clear up after lessons without much prompting. Year 4 children have additional responsibilities. They undertake various administrative tasks like cutting and counting the vouchers collected from crisp packets. Year 4 children help to look after the younger children at lunchtimes. They also take responsibility during the second half of the year for training up some of the Year 3 children to take over this task in their final year. The school council planned for next year is designed to provide an opportunity for children's views to be aired and taken into account, enabling them to feel part of decision-making processes.
22. Children's attendance levels in the school are satisfactory. The level of attendance at 94.5 per cent is in line with the national average. This includes 0.2 per cent unauthorised absences. Many of these absences are a result of parents taking their children on extended holidays in term time, or one child with frequent absences. Children are generally prompt into school in the mornings.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

23. The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection and is now good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during this inspection, compared with nearly 20 per cent last time, and much more of the teaching was of good or very good quality. Teaching was judged good or better in 72 per cent of the 70 lessons that were seen and very good in 16 per cent of lessons.
24. Teaching in the nursery and reception classes is of a consistently good quality. The teachers and assistants plan together very closely and provide a rich and varied environment in which the children can expand their knowledge and understanding of the world and develop their skills. Key to this is the very good understanding that all the members of staff have of the needs of children at this age. The children are encouraged to play and to make their own choices of activities wherever possible. The activities have been prepared with the children's needs in mind and therefore engage their interest and enable them to grow in confidence and practise their emerging skills. The teachers intervene sensitively to demonstrate new skills, for

example how to hold a pencil correctly. They are very effective at using these opportunities to develop the children's spoken language skills and social confidence. Good records are kept of the children's progress. By the time they leave the Foundation Stage, the children are very well prepared for the National Curriculum programmes of study.

25. Lessons throughout the rest of the school are planned very thoroughly from clear schemes of work that reflect the latest government National Curriculum guidelines. In English, mathematics and science, the lesson plans are based on very good information about the children's existing skills, knowledge and understanding derived from the extensive assessment information that has been collected. In other subjects, tasks of varying difficulty are prepared on the basis of more informal assessments of the children's attainment. As a consequence, in most lessons, the children are challenged at an appropriate level and make good progress. In some subjects, such as music, the teachers have a less secure knowledge of what skills the children already have, and are therefore less successful in taking them forward quickly.
26. The teachers consistently share the learning targets for each lesson with the children, ensuring that they know what is expected of them. Introductions are clear, activities are well prepared and the classrooms well organised so that the children have all the resources they need to complete their tasks. This is particularly effective in the practical subjects such as science and design and technology, where the children need access to a range of equipment. The general assistants make a very useful contribution here, helping to organise the resources and supervising the children in their use of them. The lesson plans are comprehensive and pay due attention to key skills of enquiry in subjects such as science, history and geography, as well as the coverage of factual knowledge. As a result of this very careful preparation, the children learn the basic skills in each subject efficiently. They work hard, making every effort to produce their best efforts, for example physically in physical education lessons and creatively in art and design activities.
27. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well, mainly in English and mathematics lessons, leading to good performances in the tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. Reading is taught effectively in literacy lessons through a variety of methods, including the structured teaching of letter sounds (phonics). The children use their reading skills in other subjects, for example to search for information using CD-ROM in history or science lessons. Writing is encouraged in other subjects such as history. The teachers are also beginning to follow the recently introduced policy of improving the children's literacy through careful marking. The children are also given opportunities for speaking and listening in other subjects. For example, they are encouraged to explain their methods to the rest of the class in mathematics. The teachers also include opportunities for the children to use their numeracy skill in their planning for other subjects. For example, the children draw time lines in history, produce graphs in geography and take measurements in science.
28. In the most effective lessons, the teachers are lively and enthusiastic and use a variety of methods to keep the children interested and learning. For example, they change the tone or volume of their voice and use every opportunity to directly involve the children. In a very good English lesson in Year 1, the teacher used her voice very effectively to keep the children's interest and attention throughout, leading to very effective and enjoyable learning of phonics. In other lessons that are otherwise very effective, the teacher keeps talking for too long with the same tone of voice, with too few opportunities for the children to actively participate. This sometimes leads to inattention and fidgeting among the children. On occasions, the teachers do not check this early enough. Low level disruptions continue therefore, distracting other children and resulting in a slower pace of learning than would otherwise be the case. This is the only aspect of teaching that is not as strong as it was at the time of the last inspection.
29. The teachers use formal and informal assessments well to plan lessons that cater for broad levels of attainment and they ensure that all the children are aware of the whole class learning objectives. However, their use of day-to-day assessments to guide individual children towards improving their work, although satisfactory, is less effective. In some lessons, the highest attaining children can clearly accomplish the set tasks with relatively little effort and were therefore ready for more challenging work. This is not the case in all subjects. It is true of mathematics and English, for example, but not science, where the level of challenge is sufficient for all the children. The teachers use questioning very effectively in science lessons

to check the children's understanding and move them on. Such questioning is also used well in many English and mathematics lessons, but not consistently and to such good purpose.

30. The teachers mark the children's work regularly, but this exercise is not well used as a tool for improving the children's work, encouraging them to greater efforts. It seldom acknowledges the children's achievements or suggests what they should do next to improve their work or extend their learning. This is an area for improvement, recognised by the school, where the policy needs updating and fully implementing across the school. A start has been made in setting out clear procedures for marking in English. Co-ordinators in other subjects, for example science, also see this as a priority area for development.
31. The teachers use a good variety of resources to engage the children's interest and support their learning. For example, artefacts are used in history and religious education to give the children an insight into the lives of other people. They also make good use of visits, both locally and further afield to enrich the children's learning experiences. The children's lively interest in the small animals they had collected in the school grounds and the work they produced following their work on Betws y Coed testify to the success of these strategies. Literacy and numeracy lessons are also enhanced by the range of books, materials and equipment that is provided. In the most effective lessons, the teachers use these resources in conjunction with active participation by the children to keep their interest, deepen their understanding and extend their skills. When the teachers take too much control of the resources themselves and over-direct the lessons, the children's interest is not so effectively engaged and the resources therefore have less impact on their learning.
32. Children with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language receive good support and are able to take full advantage of all the learning opportunities on offer. Those children who have individual learning programmes, agreed with their parents, are supported very effectively by the teachers and classroom assistants. Other children with special educational needs are given work that has been tailored to suit their needs so that they can achieve realistic gains relative to their prior attainment. Those children who are in the early stages of learning English have their own individual targets to work towards. The teachers and assistants are very aware of their needs and ensure that they receive adequate support.
33. The overall good quality of the teaching ensures that the children learn at a good rate over their time at the school. Expectations for presentation are generally high, so that the children are encouraged to do their best. The good quality displays around the school give the children standards to aim for. The children in each class are aware of their overall progress through the sharing of learning targets. However, their knowledge of their own learning at an individual level is not as good as it could be because marking is not used consistently to show them how they can improve. The children have good levels of independence by the end of the Foundation Stage, and some of this is sustained through the school. However, on occasions, over-direction by some teachers limits the development of this aspect of their learning higher up the school. Few children were seen using the library independently, for example, and in music and design and technology, the older children are not given sufficient independence and responsibility to develop their skills to the full. There were also few examples of the highest attaining children extending their learning through extra research, investigation and writing. The difficulties experienced with inattention in some lessons are partly due to these teaching methods not being sufficiently utilised.

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

34. The school provides a broad and balanced range of activities that meet the requirements of the National Curriculum, the Agreed Syllabus for religious education and sex education. There is an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy, which is helping to raise standards.
35. Since the last inspection, the curriculum has been developed so that it meets the requirements of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. These strategies are conscientiously implemented and are raising standards. The school has recognised the need to raise standards in ICT and now ensures that all children have one dedicated ICT lesson each week,

in addition to ongoing work through other subjects of the curriculum. This, in addition to the provision of more ready access to computers, is successfully raising achievement.

36. The time allocated to subjects is in line with the national average, with the exception of science, where it is quite low. However, standards in science are good, so the allocated time is being used well. Since the last inspection, improvements have been made to the provision for personal, social and health education. It is now an important part of the curriculum and additional time has been allocated to enable it to be taught effectively. It is making a significant impact on the personal development of the children. Among the issues it deals with are the dangers of drug misuse and awareness of the dangers associated with the railway line close to the school.
37. All the clear and detailed schemes of work have been updated to take account of recent government guidance. The quality of long and medium term planning is good. It ensures that all the requirements of the National Curriculum are covered and that children consistently build upon their previous skills and knowledge. Individual lessons are very thoroughly planned and take into account the needs of all children, except for the very highest attaining children who are not always sufficiently challenged. The key stage co-ordinators monitor the curriculum, but subject co-ordinators do not directly observe lessons. They are therefore not as aware as they could be of strengths or weaknesses in their subjects.
38. The quality and range of learning opportunities for children under five is good and is a strength of the school. These children benefit from a rich and varied curriculum. It covers all the areas of learning recommended for children of this age. It enables them to achieve all the Early Learning Goals and prepares them well for the National Curriculum in Year 1.
39. Effective use is made of homework to support the children's learning. It is generally thoughtfully chosen so that it reinforces what has been learnt in class or extends the children's prior knowledge and prepares them for the next lesson.
40. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities that cater for the interests of most children. These include music, sports, construction and computer clubs. In addition, there is a programme of visits to places of interest, including the local area. Visitors to the school include actors who portray 'Romans' to enrich the children's historical awareness and performing musicians to give them experiences of live music. Children take part in a local art exhibition and those whose work is chosen enjoy a preview evening with their parents. There are also good links with the library service and this contributes to the breadth of children's learning.
41. Provision for the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has been improved since the last inspection, particularly the cultural aspect. However, provision for spiritual and cultural development remains weaker than for moral and social development.
42. Opportunities are provided for spiritual development through assemblies, which are generally planned well. Children are familiar with prayer and sing religious songs with spiritual themes. The quality of these assemblies varies. Some provide good opportunities for reflection, while in others it is a token gesture. However, the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship is fully met. Good links also exist with the local church. Children have the chance to visit it and learn about its history and use. In addition, the vicar makes visits to the school. Opportunities are sometimes taken to develop a sense of awe and wonder in the children, for example related to the observation of a caterpillar changing into a butterfly. However, opportunities for spiritual development are not systematically identified and planned for. The school celebrates the main Christian festivals and makes children aware of those of other religions, such as the preparation for Eid.
43. Provision for moral and social development is good. The well-planned PSHE curriculum makes a significant contribution to this. There is a clear code of conduct which the children know and which they have discussed. Teachers provide good role models and are quick to reward children for good attitudes and thoughtfulness towards others. Issues such as bullying, behaviour and drugs are discussed. The school is keen to promote in the children a respect

for differences between people. The school consciously seeks ways to give children responsibilities. Year 4 children are responsible for looking after children in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, for example, and every year they train the Year 3 children so that they can take over their responsibilities smoothly. Teachers consciously plan work for children to do in pairs and small groups in order to develop their social skills. The children are encouraged to be thoughtful about those who are less fortunate than themselves and they are actively involved in raising money for a number of charities. Work in geography and history contributes to their moral development, for example, when they consider living conditions for some people in Mexico and in Victorian times.

44. The school has improved its provision for cultural development since the last inspection. The children learn about their own culture, for example in history lessons, and are given an adequate introduction to the range of cultural influences on modern society. For example, the Kenyan plate and display of masks from Africa celebrate some of the artistic traditions brought to this country by immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean. The range of multicultural books in the school has also been increased. Musical instruments from different cultures are available for the children to work with and they learn to appreciate a wide variety of music in assemblies and through the visiting musicians. They listen to and sing music from non-western cultures and look at the work of a broad range of artists in their art and design lessons.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

45. The school provides a caring, supportive and family environment. The procedures for ensuring the welfare, health and safety of children are good, making a significant contribution to their personal and academic development. Procedures for monitoring and promoting children's academic progress and personal development are sound. Although there are few formal procedures for monitoring children's personal development, teachers know the children well, and will act quickly if a need is observed. The school seeks to ensure that the children have equal opportunities. There are good systems in place to support the academic and personal development needs of children with special educational needs. The entry process into the nursery is well planned for, and handled sensitively.
46. Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are sound. The school has a comprehensive behaviour policy. This includes various strategies for establishing an atmosphere free from harassment and bullying, and encouraging good behaviour. There is a good mix of rewards and sanctions. Where expectations of behaviour are high and teachers are applying good behaviour management strategies, distracting and disruptive behaviour is kept to a minimum. The children know the rules and code of behaviour, and are enthusiastic about the various reward programmes such as the recognition charts.
47. The procedures for promoting prompt and regular attendance are good. Appropriate liaison has been established with the Educational Welfare Officer who visits each term. Parents are kept informed of their responsibilities for ensuring their children attend regularly, or informing the school of the reason for absences. They are also encouraged not to take their children on holiday in term time.
48. The overall quality of assessment, recording and reporting is good. The teachers' use of assessment information to inform their planning and to monitor and support pupils' academic progress is good. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are less well developed. The arrangements for assessing the pupils with a Statement of special educational needs are good and used well to target their learning needs.
49. Procedures for ensuring the health, safety and care of children are good. The school has appropriate child protection procedures, with a member of staff and governor identified as having child protection responsibilities. Regular training and updating sessions ensure all staff are kept suitably informed and aware of any changes to these procedures. Good links have been established with the various support agencies. The school has good procedures to care for children who have accidents or may need medical attention. Staff quickly inform parents if

their children are ill or suffer an accident. Three members of staff are qualified to provide first aid treatment.

50. There are comprehensive health and safety guidelines and procedures in place. The site agent, headteacher and health and safety governor undertake regular checks to monitor health and safety issues around the school. Priority issues raised during the last external health and safety check have been dealt with.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

51. The school's partnership with parents is sound. Parents have generally positive views about the school, reporting that their children are very happy and enjoy school. Their opinion is that teaching is good, and the school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best. Parents generally feel comfortable approaching the school with any problems or concerns. However, over twenty per cent of those parents who returned the questionnaire felt that they were not always kept sufficiently informed about their child's progress or when there were changes to staff. The inspection found that there was indeed room for improvements in the details provided to parents about what their children had achieved and what the next targets were. As for staffing arrangements, the team felt that the school did all it could to keep parents informed under some very difficult circumstances. A similar number of parents felt that the school did not work closely with them, and they did not feel involved in the life of the school. The school has put on various events to try and involve parents, but these have usually been poorly attended. The headteacher and governors are considering what means they could use to find out exactly what the parents expect in this regard. Over a third of the parents who responded to the questionnaire expressed concerns regarding the range of activities outside lessons. The inspection judged that the range of activities was good for a school of this size and type. Finally, a number of parents felt that the more able pupils were not sufficiently challenged in the work they were given. The inspection findings were that this is true only for a small number of the highest attaining children.
52. The information provided for parents is very comprehensive. Information regarding the school and its activities is detailed in the school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents. Parents also receive regular information regarding forthcoming events and activities through frequent newsletters. Information regarding the curriculum and topics to be covered are circulated each term. Occasional workshops are held to introduce new areas of the curriculum such as the Literacy Strategy. Termly consultation/open meetings and the 'open door' policy enable parents to meet with teachers to discuss their child's progress and achievements. The teachers' annual report to parents provides a brief outline of what has been covered, but does not always detail children's attainment and progress or include targets for improvements. Parents of children with special educational needs are kept well informed about their children's progress, and are involved in the review processes.
53. The school encourages parents to become involved in their children's learning. However, only a small number volunteer to help with different activities in the school. One adult was observed ably supporting children on the computers in Year 3, whilst another helped out with numeracy groups in the reception class. Parents are suitably briefed to help them in these tasks. Where reading books go home regularly and adults are able to spend time listening to their child read, this is making a significant contribution to the standards of reading. The reading record provides a further opportunity for parents to communicate with staff on a day-to-day basis, although not all parents are taking advantage of this. Parents are also encouraged to support the homework policy and get involved in some of the homework projects. The Southlands Association is very active. It runs a number of successful social and fund raising events each year which raise significant sums of money for the school. Approximately £3,500 was raised last year which went towards helping to purchase computer equipment and other resources. The Association also acts as an informal 'lobbying' group. They responded to parents' concerns over voluntary 'craft' contributions by offering to pay fifty per cent of parents' contributions, for example. Although the school seeks to consult with parents over such issues as the home/school agreement, few offer comments and views. The

school has identified the need to find better systems to take account of parents' views as an area for development.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

54. The headteacher provides firm leadership and ensures that the work of the school is directed towards raising standards and fulfilling its general aims. She is supported by a hard-working staff who have the skills and determination to continue taking the school forward. However, some of the teachers, including very effective ones, are on temporary contracts. The relatively inexperienced governing body is very supportive of the school and the headteacher and is beginning to be effective in shaping the direction of the school and holding it to account. Financial planning is good and the school's budget is efficiently managed. The accommodation is good and there are good levels of resources in nearly all subjects. The school has gone through a very difficult period recently with staff illnesses, absences and bereavement. One consequence of this discontinuity in staffing has been a lack of clear delegation of management responsibilities. Some monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning has taken place, but it lacks a clear structure and strategic purpose. Some policies have also become outdated and do not reflect the current good practice.
55. The headteacher provides clear educational direction. The improving standards in English, mathematics, science, ICT and art and design testify to the success of the efforts the school has put into these subjects. This has been achieved without sacrificing the aspects of personal development that the school aims to foster. Extensive data has been collected on the results of national tests and of school-based assessments. The school has used this well to compare its performance against other schools in order to judge how well it is doing and what should be the priorities for development. The headteacher has played a central role in this process. She is currently being ably assisted by the acting deputy head, with whom she works very closely towards shared objectives. The key stage co-ordinators are the lynch pin of the management of the school. They have been responsible for most of the monitoring of the curriculum that has taken place so far, for example. The responsibilities of the deputy head are less clearly defined at present as a new post-holder has been appointed and has not yet taken up the post. The role of the subject co-ordinators is under-developed. Few of them have undertaken any direct monitoring and evaluating of teaching and learning, for example, and this is not part of their job description. They therefore do not have a clear picture of how their subjects are being delivered across the school. Neither do they have delegated spending powers. This limits the usefulness of their role in developing their management skills.
56. The headteacher has played the key role in the monitoring and evaluating of teaching. Much of this has been in response to the emerging needs of individual teachers, however, rather than directed towards a clear strategy for improving teaching and learning. As part of the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, the school undertook some monitoring of teaching, in common with most schools. Out of this exercise, specific areas for development in teaching were identified and improved. For example, teachers were concerned that the whole class sessions in numeracy lessons were not working as well as they should and made them more effective. Currently there is no such focus for monitoring and evaluating teaching in order to identify what works well and what does not and to spread good practice across the school. During the inspection, for example, some teachers were able to keep the children motivated and involved whereas others were not so successful at this. There has been no policy driven effort to identify such examples of good practice in order to learn from them. Although the quality of teaching was judged good overall, it was clear that it could have been even more effective if strengths were identified and spread through the school.
57. The governors are committed to the school and do all they can to support it. Many of them are parents, or have been parents of children at the school. This ensures that they have a good working knowledge of the school and its history. They work very closely with the headteacher to ensure that the school fulfils all its legal obligations and strives to improve its performance. They have a range of talents and expertise, which they are willing to put at the school's disposal, and do so on occasions to good effect. For example, governors have been instrumental in facilitating the management of some very difficult staffing issues recently.

They do what they can to keep abreast of what is happening in the school by undertaking visits, but their own busy and sometimes unpredictable work-schedules make this difficult on occasions. When individual governors do visit, they report back to the governing body with their impressions. This is a good method of keeping all the governors informed of developments. However, the governors' visits are not structured around any strategic plan to evaluate the work of the school for themselves. For example, their visits do not have a clearly defined purpose linked to any specific priorities in the school improvement plan. They are therefore missing opportunities to independently evaluate the effectiveness of budget expenditure.

58. The school improvement plan is a comprehensive document that sets out the main priorities for development in each area of its work. The plan is relevant to the school's needs and has contributed towards raising standards. Costs are included where possible, time scales are set and the responsibility for implementing each proposal is allocated. However, it is not clear from the plan to what extent the specific objectives have been achieved. This limits its usefulness as a tool for taking stock at any given time of what has been achieved and what remains to be done. A sharper focus on this aspect of the plan may help the governors to determine what should be the focus for their visits or other monitoring. The staff are fully involved in drawing up the plan, but consultation on its priorities is not as wide as it could be. Parents, for example, are not invited to contribute their ideas and there is no forum for the children to channel their suggestions for improving the school towards the governors. A school council is planned for the near future, however, which would serve as a suitable instrument for this purpose.
59. The school has a good strategy in place for appraisal and performance management. The governors agree performance targets for the headteacher, and teams are in place to agree targets for the rest of the teaching staff. However, the large turnover of staff in recent years has delayed the full implementation of these procedures. Good procedures are in place for helping newly qualified teachers to become fully effective members of the staff. Recent and current staffing shortages have meant that the school has not felt able to utilise them in every case, however. The school also serves effectively as an agency for the school-based training of new teachers.
60. The school's finances are carefully controlled. The governors have acted on the major recommendations of the most recent auditor's report and have a very good overview of the budget. They have good systems in place for monitoring spending. They ensure that all grants, including those for special educational needs, are used for their designated purposes. The finance committee keeps the governing body fully informed of the school's financial position. They ensure that a sensible contingency fund is kept in reserve and carried over from year to year. The rather large amount that was carried forward this year included money that had come into the school's account at the very end of the previous financial year for spending on specific projects during this financial year. When these amounts are subtracted, the carry over is moderate. The headteacher has had to carry the bulk of the responsibility for administering the finances during the induction of the newly appointed secretary. Good systems are in place, however, and the new post-holder is quickly learning the routines and procedures and gradually taking over full responsibility for administrative duties.
61. The school's accommodation is good. Some aspects of the design of the building pose difficulties for teaching. For example, the hall has poor acoustics and serves as a thoroughfare. However, these problems are managed well and overall the conditions the children have to work in are better than in many schools. Resources are good in all subjects except history and geography, where they are satisfactory. They are readily available and used well, making a good contribution to the children's learning. The school's expenditure on computers in particular, and associated software and staff training, has paid dividends in improving the children's skills. The children use ICT as a tool for learning across the curriculum, improving their achievements in many subjects. The school has also taken a carefully considered decision to increase its expenditure on classroom assistants. This too has been a worthwhile investment. The assistants are very effective in the classroom. They support individual children very well and work closely with the teachers to extend the range of activities that can be organised, keeping more of the children working to their potential.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

62. In order to improve the quality of teaching and learning still further, the headteacher and governors should:

(1) Improve the monitoring and evaluation of teaching by:

- Focusing more clearly on identifying strengths and weaknesses in teaching and spreading good practice;
- Ensuring that all teachers with management responsibility, including subject co-ordinators, have as part of their remit a role in directly monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in their subjects;
- Ensuring that there is a manageable programme of lesson observations to enable the monitoring to take place.

(Paragraphs 54, 55, 56, 80, 88, 93, 120, 125, 134)

(2) Improve the consistency of the children's attention, concentration and behaviour in lessons by:

- Ensuring that teachers set consistently high expectations for attention and good behaviour in lessons;
- Identifying and disseminating the teaching methods and styles that are effective in engaging the children and holding their attention;
- Extending opportunities for children to play more active roles in lessons and work independently.

(Paragraphs 12, 19, 20, 28, 31, 33, 46, 77, 86, 92, 103, 119)

(3) Improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers' marking so that it helps individual children to know what they have achieved and how to improve.

(Paragraphs 30, 33, 76, 78, 109, 114)

In addition to the above key issues, the governors should consider including the following minor issues in the action plan:

- In order to ensure that even the highest attainers are challenged sufficiently, the school should consider adopting a policy aimed at identifying gifted and talented children and providing specifically for their needs.

(Paragraphs 12, 13, 83, 84, 86)

- Improving the School Improvement Plan by widening the consultation base and introducing systematic checking of its implementation.

(Paragraph 58)

The inspection team acknowledges that the school has identified marking as a priority for improvement. A start has been made with the introduction of a new marking policy in English.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	70
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	29

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	16	56	28	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		255
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		15

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		38

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	15

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	5.3
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000	13	17	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	10	10
	Girls	15	15	15
	Total	24	25	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	80 (89)	83 (77)	83 (95)
	National	84 (82)	85 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	8	11	12
	Girls	15	15	17
	Total	23	26	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	77 (86)	87 (95)	97 (98)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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	2
Indian	5
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	208
Any other minority ethnic group	2

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	1	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.7
Average class size	25

Education support staff: YR– Y4

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	163

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000 - 2001
	£
Total income	485880
Total expenditure	484308
Expenditure per pupil	2035
Balance brought forward from previous year	36552
Balance carried forward to next year	38124

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	272
Number of questionnaires returned	107

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	32	3	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	42	46	8	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	61	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	54	14	1	2
The teaching is good.	44	48	3	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	45	21	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	45	5	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	38	7	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	26	49	17	5	3
The school is well led and managed.	37	59	2	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	59	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	9	40	29	8	14

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

The parents and carers have positive views of the school. The inspection confirms these views. It also found that there was room for further improvement in the quality of information in the school's reports to parents on their children's progress. The school does make attempts to involve parents, but not many respond to the opportunities that are offered.

Other issues raised by parents

Some parents commented that more able children were not challenged sufficiently. The inspection team found that the majority of higher attaining children did receive sufficiently difficult work but that there was scope for more challenge for the highest attainers.

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

63. The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is a strength of the school. There is a nursery class which children attend part-time and two classes of reception age children. Children enter the reception classes in September, January and April during the year in which they are five. Most children in the reception classes attend the school's nursery class part-time before they enter full-time school. The provision for the children's all round development and education is good. The members of the early years' staff are effectively developing provision for all children in the Foundation Stage. The reception classes build well on the work of the nursery. The curriculum for all children in the Foundation Stage promotes the Early Learning Goals effectively in all areas of learning and development. This inspection shows good improvement from the findings of the previous inspection.
64. Curriculum planning for all children of nursery and reception age meets the requirements of the new Foundation Stage of learning for young children and is good. The school has revised its policy and planning in line with the recently introduced guidance for the Foundation Stage and this is well implemented. The nursery and reception class teachers work closely together to ensure there is good continuity between the classes. They give the children a firm foundation in basic learning skills and there is a smooth transfer to work at Key Stage 1 of the National Curriculum. All members of staff have a clear commitment to raising standards. They attend training courses and plan work together. They work hard to develop close and effective relationships with parents and carers. This ensures that children see how the important people in their lives, at home and at school, share an interest in what they do. These links help in making the transition from home to school smooth and painless. The nursery and reception teachers are also forging effective links with Key Stage 1 teachers. This ensures the continuation and development of the current early years' good practice into Key Stage 1.
65. The record keeping system is clear, manageable and helpful. It gives all members of staff a well-informed basis for planning work. The nursery works closely with parents. It uses an entry assessment procedure to assess children's level of development and achievement. This gives a clear indication of the children's early abilities in language, mathematics, social and physical skills. It ensures that the members of the nursery staff have a clear knowledge of what children know and can do at home. The reception teachers continue to use and add to the nursery records to provide a good picture of each child's progress through the Foundation Stage. All children make satisfactory or better progress in the nursery and reception classes. The vast majority are therefore likely to meet the Early Learning Goals in their communication, language, literacy, mathematical, creative, personal and social and physical development. Many of the children exceed them. All members of staff ensure that children, including those with special educational needs, have full and equal access to all the areas of learning. Parents value and appreciate the work children do in the nursery and reception classes.

Personal, social and emotional development

66. All members of staff promote children's personal, social and emotional development effectively throughout the foundation curriculum and teaching and learning is generally good. The members of staff are consistent in their dealings with the children. They provide good role models as they treat children politely, courteously and with respect. Children settle quickly and happily into the security of the nursery and make satisfactory or better progress in developing their personal and social skills. They are confident when moving around the nursery and share and take turns amicably, for example, when using computers and books. They concentrate well on their tasks, for example, when working together observing mini beasts in the garden area. Children are enthusiastic and enjoy their work in the nursery and reception classes. They generally co-operate well with each other and adults and are challenged by adults to share and show politeness and respect for others. They continue this good progress in their

personal development as they move into the reception class. Here, children generally work well together, although some less mature children need adult support to do their best. They understand the routines of school life and move reasonably quietly and confidently around the school. The members of staff take every available opportunity to develop and promote calm behaviour and independence. By the time they are six, most children, including those with special educational needs, are likely to meet the expected levels in the development of their personal and social skills. The school is continuing to maintain and improve this area of children's development effectively since the previous inspection.

Communication, language and literacy

67. All aspects of provision for the development of communication skills, language and literacy are good. The range of books in the nursery and reception classes is suitably wide for the needs and interests of the children. Children's progress is generally good. The members of the nursery staff ensure that children learn the correct way to hold and handle books and to enjoy looking at pictures. The reception class teachers use the National Literacy Strategy effectively to develop children's understanding of letter sounds and word building. This gives children a very firm basis for reading. All members of the early years' staff provide opportunities for children to realise the importance of language across all areas of learning. This encourages children to read and write. Some children in the nursery can already recognise their own names. Most children have at least average writing ability and many older children in reception classes exceed this. Teachers successfully promote children's ability to listen by reading stories. Children enjoy these sessions and quickly develop a love of books. All adults give an effective level of support to children who use the role-play areas. As a result, children make good progress in their ability to share ideas, experiences and feelings as they act out real life situations, such as working on the plant stall or in the garden centre. All children learn to hold and use pencils correctly. They increase their early writing skills in a range of activities that encourage their hand and eye control. This makes a positive contribution to their development. Children with special educational needs receive effective support from the staff. The children are at least in line with the Early Learning Goals by the time they enter Year 1 and some children exceed this.

Mathematical development

68. Teaching is good in mathematical development and the children learn well. Most of the children make good progress in consolidating and developing their number skills. One of the strengths of this provision lies in the way in which members of the nursery and reception staff develop these skills through a structured programme of work. This includes the use of construction activities to develop the children's awareness of space and their control skills. The children become interested in number and count objects as part of everyday life. For example, children in the nursery play counting and matching games. In the reception class, the national numeracy strategy is adapted well to teach the children the basic numeracy skills at the right level. There is good support for children with special educational needs. They make good progress in developing their knowledge of numbers. By the time they enter the reception class most children have a good range of mathematical skills for their age. The members of the reception staff continue to build on and develop these early skills well. There is a session of structured number work each day. Most children count and order objects to ten confidently and older pupils can work with much larger numbers. Many know and recognise the place of numbers on a number line and some children are confident in simple addition. The children consolidate and build on their early mathematical experiences effectively. Most children reach the Early Learning Goals by the time they begin National Curriculum work in Year 1. Many pupils exceed this and are working towards Level 1 of the National Curriculum.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

69. Teaching is good in this area and the children make good progress. The children have many opportunities in the nursery and the reception classes to explore the world. For example, in the reception classes, the children investigate how plants and small animals live and grow. The teachers have enriched their learning by enabling them to make and tend their own garden areas outside. They understand that plants need water, light and a place to grow. All the children in the Foundation Stage develop a sound level of understanding of where they live in relation to the school. The children use computers as a matter of routine from the nursery onwards. They work carefully and accurately at matching objects on screen, for example. They develop a suitable understanding of how to use the keyboard and mouse for accurate control in these activities. Most children are likely to meet the Early Learning Goals in this area of learning by the time they begin the National Curriculum in Year 1. Some will exceed them.

Physical development

70. The nursery makes good provision for the children's physical development enabling them to make good progress. Teaching is good and the children learn well. They have access to pencils, crayons, scissors and glue from the beginning of their time in the nursery. Many experience difficulty in controlling tools when they start in the nursery. All members of staff promote the development of physical skills well. This ensures that the children learn well and make good progress. They increase their control skills well, and most are at expected standards when they enter the reception class. Children in the nursery and reception classes develop their climbing and balancing skills effectively. They have opportunities to run, jump, skip and use wheeled toys, and do so with an increasing awareness of space. There is a very well organised, attractive and secure area for outdoor activities, which is very well used by the three classes. All adults interact well with the children and take all possible opportunities to support and extend children's physical skills and development. Children make good progress and most are likely to meet or exceed the expectations of the Early Learning Goals by the time they enter Year 1.

Creative development

71. Teaching is good in this area. All the members of staff have high expectations of what the children will achieve. The children respond by learning well and making good progress. The lessons are enjoyable so the children are motivated to work hard and develop new skills and techniques. The children make good progress in both classes as they learn how to apply their skills with a range of materials. They paint confidently and learn the techniques of modelling very quickly. An example of this is the attractive clay modelling of mini beasts in the reception classes. In the reception classes, children also develop well their ability to measure and cut accurately, for example, when making Father's Day cards. Good teaching ensures they make good progress in shaping and assembling materials. Music is taught well in both the nursery and reception classes. The children have regular opportunities to reinforce learning through songs and number rhymes, for example. The children sing a variety of songs melodically and accurately from memory, including songs from other countries and cultures. For example, they sang African songs confidently during the inspection. They play suitable instruments, mostly percussion, including some they have made themselves. Most children are likely to acquire the level of skill necessary to reach or exceed the Early Learning Goals in this area by the time they begin work on the National Curriculum.
72. The quality of teaching and learning is good in nearly all lessons in the nursery and many in reception. Some very good teaching also seen during the inspection. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. The teachers have a clear understanding of the needs of young children as well as realistically good expectations of what they should achieve and how they should behave. They give children challenging and interesting tasks to consolidate and increase their knowledge and understanding. All the members of staff use language very effectively to develop and improve the children's skills in speaking and listening. The teaching of specific practical skills, such as how to hold and use pencils and paintbrushes, are also given suitable emphasis. The adults encourage children to work independently and make

choices, when this is appropriate. The children respond well, for example by working sensibly on the computers. These strengths in the teaching are reflected in the generally good level of progress the children make in their early years at school. The experienced co-ordinator for the Foundation Stage is having a positive impact on the level of provision and the quality of teaching. The delivery of the curriculum is effectively monitored. The children's achievement is carefully assessed and recorded and this information is well used to plan work for them.

ENGLISH

73. Standards in English have improved since the last inspection and are now above the national average in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The school's results in the 2000 national tests were comparable with those in all schools nationally and with similar schools in reading. They were well above average compared with all and similar schools in writing. The girls' results in reading and writing were better than the boys' results in 2000, but in other years, the reverse has been true, so there is no clear difference in achievement between the genders. The results improved in 2001, especially in reading. Although national figures are not yet available for comparison, it is very likely that the results are now at least above average compared to all and similar schools in reading as well as writing. In Key Stage 2 standards are above the national average in reading and well above average in writing.
74. The children develop good speaking and listening skills in both key stages. By the time they transfer to the middle school at the end of Year 4, they have made good progress, and perform well for their age. They use a wide range of vocabulary, for example, as was noted when they discussed in detail the story of 'Horrible Monday'. They explained their ideas well, with reference to the text of the book. The children enjoyed the discussion, listened to one another's ideas carefully and phrased their responses well to open-ended questions. Despite their good performance overall, some of the children do not achieve quite as well as they could because they are not sufficiently challenged. Children of different attainment levels are given different work on many occasions, but it is not often designed to test the limits of their capabilities.
75. The children's reading skills are being developed well through reading activities in literacy lessons, for example when reading the story of 'Sun and Moon' in Year 1, and 'Worry Guts' in Year 4. The children are able to read for meaning, make deductions and answer many open-ended questions asked by the teachers. The reading skills of children with special educational needs are below average but they are keen to learn and they are making good progress because of the carefully targeted support they receive.
76. Standards in writing have risen since the last inspection because it has been a focus for improvement across the school. When the teaching is clearly focussed and objectives are identified, clear gains in learning are evident in the resulting work. This was seen in the children's writing in Year 2, for example, which was based on an alliteration exercise on 'Solomon Grundy' and in Year 4 where the children were producing a script relating to 'Worry Guts'. However, the standard of work produced sometimes reflects a need for closer attention to the mistakes the children make and for using marking to identify how individual children can improve their writing. Standards of handwriting are good in the pupils' handwriting books and English exercise books. There is good evidence of regular writing practice across the two key stages. Younger children practise forming their letters and joins correctly and older pupils develop their personal writing styles. Teachers have good expectations in both key stages and the children consistently produce well-formed and interesting writing.
77. Teaching is good overall and ranges from sound to very good in both key stages. Half the lessons seen were good in both Key Stages. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. The best teaching is found where the teachers' expectations are very high, they have very good subject knowledge and lessons proceed at a good pace from beginning to end. The teaching of 'oo' and 'ew' sounds and the activities relating to the 'Horrible Monday' story are very good examples of this best practice. In some lessons, the teachers are not effective enough in keeping the children's attention, leading to a reduction in the pace of learning and lower levels of achievement.

78. The marking of pupils' work has been identified as an area for development in teaching generally, and English is being used as a model of 'best practice' within the school. However, the agreed marking system is not yet being consistently implemented across the school. The best practice includes the acknowledgement of good work by the teacher and the clear identification of the next stage in learning for the individual child. Good examples of this practice are seen in Years 2, 3 and 4.
79. Children with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language make good progress in both key stages. Their needs are clearly identified and provided for. Individual education plans are provided for those children who need them. All the teachers make good use of these. They adapt their teaching in the light of the plans and work closely with the general assistants to provide good quality support for the children. As a result, the children feel secure and confident and make every effort to improve and to reach their targets.
80. The English co-ordinator provides good leadership and works hard with all members of staff to fully implement the National Literacy Strategy across the school and adapt it to the needs of the children. However, the management role of the co-ordinator is not sufficiently developed. Although there is some monitoring of lessons and of pupils' work, this is not yet part of a strategic plan to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and the co-ordinator is not given the responsibility for managing a specific budget allocation for English. There are detailed reading and writing records throughout school, and these are used well by the teachers to provide work at different levels of difficulty for different children. The good quality and range of resources available to support English lessons make a positive contribution to the children's enjoyment of the subject and rate of progress.

MATHEMATICS

81. Standards in mathematics have improved since the last inspection and are now above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Year 4.
82. The school's results in the national tests for seven year olds were average compared to all schools in 2000, and also in line with similar schools. However, the school's results in the 2001 tests were higher, with all the children attaining at least the expected Level 2, and 47 per cent reaching Level 4. The official statistics to enable comparisons with other schools in 20001 are not yet available, but it is very likely that the school's results will be above average compared to all schools and also similar schools. The trend in the school's results is now better than the national trend. There are no significant differences in performance between boys and girls once the gender balance and results in different years are taken into account. The school's assessments show that many of the current Year 4 children are already attaining Level 4, the expected level for eleven year olds nationally, indicating their potential to reach Level 5 or above by that age. An analysis of the assessment data also shows that the school adds above average value to the children's performance during Years 3 and 4.
83. The inspection evidence confirms that children are working to above average standards at both key stages. In Year 2, the work samples reflect an average spread of attainment, but in lessons the children demonstrate above average standards. Most of them add and subtract numbers less than one hundred confidently and know their basic multiplication tables. They apply their skills well and look for quick ways to solve problems, such as working out that $9 + 8$ is $(2 \times 9) - 1$. The average attaining children also have a good understanding of shapes and the language of fractions, and use this knowledge well to represent data in the form of graphs. They demonstrate a good understanding of data handling when they suggest and answer questions about the graphs they have drawn. There is a higher proportion of children working above the average level than would be found in many schools, and some of these display an exceptional insight into mathematics. They quickly see patterns in numbers, and explain very clearly why some options for solutions to problems will work while others will not. Their ability to generalise in this way and pursue a logical train of thought at this age suggests that they may be gifted mathematicians. The setting arrangement caters for them to some extent by including them in a narrower attainment band than their usual class. However, they are clearly

capable of more demanding work than most of their peers, and this is not systematically provided, so they may not be achieving to their potential. Children with special educational needs make good progress because they receive good support in their work towards their individual learning targets.

84. In Year 4, the children are working at higher levels than would be expected for their age. The higher attainers are already achieving most of the objectives associated with Level 4, while many of the average attainers are well on their way to reaching this standard. They add and subtract large numbers, multiply tens and units together and divide large numbers by a single number. They have a very good understanding of fractions. The higher attaining children write the simplest form of larger fractions, for example $\frac{4}{9}$ for $\frac{16}{36}$ and convert fractions to decimals and vice-versa. In a Year 4 lesson seen, the children demonstrated confidence and skill in applying their mathematics to practical problems. They used a variety of approaches to work out the cheapest way of transporting a class of children to the zoo, working out prices after a ten per cent discount. They were able to explain their methods very clearly, with the higher attainers quickly spotting a way to solve the problem with minimum calculations. The children have a good knowledge and understanding of aspects of mathematics other than number. For example, they know the properties of a wide range of flat and solid shapes and measure angles to the nearest degree. They collect data, display it in a range of graphs and tables and interpret it sensibly. They also use the language of probability to distinguish between certain, likely and impossible events. Their work shows that they are used to trying out different approaches to solving problems, giving them confidence in applying their mathematical skills. In discussion, the children show positive attitudes. They enjoy solving problems and spotting patterns. By and large the children achieve well, but on occasions it is clear that some of them are capable of even more demanding work than they are doing. This is particularly so in the area of using their emerging skills to solve increasingly complex problems and in finding general rules from the patterns they observe.
85. The quality of teaching is good overall. It was at least satisfactory in the eight lessons observed, good or better in 63 per cent and very good in 25 per cent of them. The very thorough assessment information that has been gathered is used effectively to plan lessons. Learning objectives are clearly identified and shared with the children so that they know what is expected of them. The teachers have a sufficient grasp of the subject to explain new concepts in ways that are understandable to the children. They use a variety of resources to make their presentations more interesting, and prepare tasks and ask questions that are adjusted to the range of attainment in each class. In the most effective lesson seen, these strengths were further enhanced by a very good range of methods for gaining and keeping the children's interest. The teacher displayed a very good insight into how children learn best by limiting her own input as much as possible and giving individual children maximum opportunities to become actively involved right from the word go. For example, by letting a chosen child point to the numbers that the children were reciting, the teacher ensured that they paid attention while at the same time giving herself the opportunity to observe them closely to check their understanding and involvement. In lessons that were good in other respects, the teachers talked for too much of the time, and without any modulation of tone, leading to some inattention among the children, which was not always managed effectively. In the best lesson, by contrast, the children responded to the teacher's energy and enthusiasm with lively responses and good levels of concentration and effort.
86. The teachers generally set high expectations for what the children can achieve. In a very effective lesson, for example, the teacher kept higher attaining Year 2 children occupied by asking challenging questions that made them think. However, on occasions, some of the children, especially the highest attainers, are too limited by the tasks that are set. The teachers sometimes ask challenging questions, as was observed in a very good Year 2 lesson, but do not often probe to see just how far the children can take a particular idea. They do not encourage the children sufficiently to ask their own questions or follow up their own ideas, or undertake individual or small group research and investigations. This was another strength of the very good teaching observed in Year 1. Here, the teacher worked with the highest attaining group and asked more difficult questions than had been set to gauge the limits of their understanding. This level of concern to work at the limits of the children's potential was absent from many of the lessons observed and was not evident in the samples of work seen.

The presentation and marking of the children's work is also an area for improvement. The teachers do not often challenge the children to ask further questions or to re-visit and extend their work. Most of the marking is simply ticks, with few acknowledgements of the children's achievements or pointers for improvement.

87. Good provision is made for children with special educational needs, or for whom English is an additional language in lessons. The teachers are aware of their individual needs and ensure that they have appropriate work to do and support with it where necessary. The general assistants are very effective in supporting these children.
88. The subject is under temporary leadership and management by the acting co-ordinator, who nevertheless is providing clear educational direction. Resources are good and are used well throughout the school. Computers are used where appropriate to enrich and extend the children's mathematical experiences. Good examples were seen of this in lessons on data handling in which the children put information into the computer and generated graphs and charts to represent it. There has been some monitoring of teachers' planning and of the work that the children have produced, and some observations of lessons as part of the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy. However, responsibility for evaluating and improving teaching are not fully devolved to the co-ordinator. There is no delegated budget to manage and no planned programme of lesson observations aimed at identifying what works best so that good practice can be spread through the school.

SCIENCE

89. Last year, the teachers' assessments of the children's attainment at the age of seven were very high compared with the national average. This year's assessments are lower, but more realistic. They indicate that the number of children attaining Level 2 or above is similar to the national average, but that considerably more children attain Level 3 than is the case nationally. The scrutiny of children's work during the inspection supports this judgement. Attainment overall is above the national average. The children maintain their good progress in Key Stage 2. By the age of nine, their attainment is better than that expected for children of the same age nationally. Children with special educational needs receive good support and are therefore also able to achieve better than expected standards.
90. By the age of seven, children are particularly good at carrying out scientific investigations. They make sensible predictions and draw logical conclusions. With the teachers' support, they suggest how they can make their tests fair and understand why this is important. They measure their results in centimetres or minutes and seconds and put them onto a chart so they are easy to understand. Recently they have found out how to put their results onto a computer program and print them out as different types of graphs, such as pie charts. Children are very knowledgeable about the lifecycles of different plants and animals. Their interest in this work has been particularly aroused by the chance to observe a caterpillar going through the process of changing into a butterfly in the classroom. The children understand the need for humans to exercise and have a healthy diet and they have a good idea which foods are good for us. They have investigated different animals and can describe their main features, habitats and eating habits. They understand why it is important to return the mini-beasts they bring into the classroom to their natural habitats. Children know that they will find different creatures in different habitats. They understand push and pull forces and the effect of friction on a moving toy vehicle. They know that materials can be classified in different ways and were able to sort the things they found at the seaside according to whether they are natural or manufactured.
91. The children continue to make good progress in Key Stage 2. By the age of nine, they are competent investigators and always consider whether their tests will be fair. As well as carrying out teacher planned investigations carefully and with a good degree of accuracy, they are beginning to plan their own investigations and methods of recording results. They have a good understanding of different forces and can explain complicated concepts such as air resistance, up-thrust, magnetism and gravity. Their knowledge of the human body has been extended and they know about the skeleton and how muscles work. They know that different types of teeth are used for different purposes. They understand the functions of the different parts of plants and the effect of water, light and temperature on them. By the end of year 4

they are beginning to understand that plants and animals can be classified according to their similarities and differences. For example, they can classify living things according to whether they are vertebrates or invertebrates. They are also beginning to ask their own key questions to help them to classify, and they use this skill to research information on the computer.

92. Teaching at both key stages is good. Teachers plan lessons very thoroughly and their organisation is good. Consequently lessons run smoothly and children do a lot of work in the time available. Teachers are clear about what they want children to learn in the lesson and share this with the children. As a result, they know what is expected of them and work hard to achieve it. The teachers are well supported by effective general assistants. This has a positive impact on learning, particularly for children with special educational needs, who make good progress. The teachers plan an interesting range of activities and make the subject as practical as possible. Consequently, children enjoy science and become particularly competent at carrying out investigations. Questioning is used well to check what the children understand and to get them to use their knowledge in different situations. Good use is made of computers for research and to present the findings of investigations. Teachers use science lessons well to develop children's number, literacy and ICT skills. The children show interest and are quick to volunteer answers to questions. The teachers generally manage the children well, but do not always insist that they give their full attention when they are supposed to be listening. This causes some children to miss important information. They then need further explanations and achieve less than they should in the time available. Teachers mark work regularly but rarely write comments on it to tell children what they have done well or how they could improve. The co-ordinator has already identified this as a priority for development.
93. The children benefit from a good range of resources and their interest is stimulated by the effective use of the school grounds as a source of living things to be studied. Since the last inspection, the school has made a good level of improvement. There is no longer any unsatisfactory teaching. The pace of lessons is no longer too slow and teachers ensure that higher attaining children are sufficiently challenged. Science is now taught as a subject in its own right rather than as part of a topic. Consequently it receives more attention and this has contributed to the high level of children's attainment. The co-ordinator's role remains under-developed, however. There are insufficient opportunities for her to directly monitor teaching and to take responsibility for the subject budget.

ART AND DESIGN

94. At both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 children are attaining levels which are generally above those expected for their ages and their achievement is good. Evidence was taken from lessons at Key Stage 2, displays and portfolios of children's work, sketchbooks, teachers' plans and discussion with children. Because of the timetabling for the subject, no lessons were observed at Key Stage 1, so no judgement has been made on teaching and learning at this stage. There has been good improvement in both standards and provision since the last inspection.
95. Younger children have made good quality drawings of natural objects following their observations and are skilful in a variety of media such as charcoal, pastels, crayons and felt pens. The attractive and careful work reflects good observation and drawing skills. Older children use their computer skills well to produce complex designs based on Islamic architecture. The oldest children have also made beautiful water colour paintings of Betws y Coed in North Wales linked to their geography work on the area. Older children use their sketch books well to record their ideas and designs.
96. Good teaching was seen at Key Stage 2. The strengths of the teaching are the good range of activities offered, the expertise and confidence of teachers and the links to the work of other cultures and the local environment. ICT is used well in the art curriculum. Drawing, painting, modelling, collage and design skills are taught well and there was evidence of the use of three-dimensional media, such as modelling materials and clay. Teachers link art and design work well with other subjects such as ICT, history, religious education and geography.

97. Children at Key Stage 2 respond well to their teachers and are enthusiastic and keen to develop their existing skills in new work. They are able to discuss and evaluate their own work to improve it and to compare the work of different artists. The children, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress and are able to work with some independence. Behaviour was satisfactory in all the lessons that were observed, enabling the children to concentrate and learn well.
98. The enthusiastic and knowledgeable co-ordinator for art and design has undertaken revision of the schemes of work and extended the resources, which are now good. Very good use is made of the County project loan and picture lending services and the school is gradually building up its own bank of artefacts to extend its own resources. There are plans to update the policy to reflect current practice, which is based on the revised National Curriculum. The key stage co-ordinators undertake satisfactory monitoring of standards by evaluating samples of the children's work. However, important aspects of management responsibility are not yet delegated to the co-ordinator. There is no provision for the direct monitoring and evaluating of teaching, and no delegated budget. Teachers' assessment of children's work, including those children with special educational needs, is satisfactory, and the school is planning to extend this to provide a list of skills in the various media to track children's progress through the school. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

99. At the end of Key Stage 1 children are achieving standards above the national expectation. By the age of nine, their attainment is similar to that of children of the same age nationally.
100. Seven-year-old children are able to use an appropriate range of tools with accuracy and care. Their ability to design what they intend to make is good. They produce clearly labelled diagrams of their glove puppets, for example, and write lists of the materials they will need to make them. By the end of Year 2, the children are able to produce side and top views of what they are going to make and these show a surprising level of detail. They show the ability to use their initiative when selecting suitable materials for the job. The children have investigated various methods of joining things and are able to make sensible choices when they assemble their puppets and vehicles. Most are able to produce written instructions for making their items and they can produce simple evaluations of the finished product.
101. By the age of nine, the children are particularly skilled at designing. They produce alternative designs before deciding which is the best, giving their reasons for their choice. They can identify the tools, methods and materials they will need to make the item, but this is often from a restricted range and limits their ability to show real initiative and originality. They take care when making things. For example, their purses are neatly cut out, sewn and decorated. They are beginning to take into account the needs of the user when producing designs. In their evaluations of finished work, they say what they like about it, what they found difficult when making it and how they might improve it if they made it again.
102. The children make good progress in design and technology, particularly in their designing skills. Lower attaining children and those with special educational needs receive effective individual support, enabling them to achieve well.
103. The scrutiny of children's work and the observation of lessons during the inspection indicate that the quality of teaching is good at both key stages. Teachers have a secure understanding of the subject. This enables them to provide clear explanations and demonstrations of new skills and techniques, which children can understand and acquire easily. Lessons are planned carefully. Resources are easily accessible to the children so that good use is made of the time available. The children enjoy the subject because the activities planned are interesting. Classroom assistants and parent helpers are given clear guidance by the teachers. Consequently, they are able to make a very useful contribution to the quality of children's learning. The teachers' planning ensures that the children make progress within lessons and that each lesson builds upon what has gone before and prepares them for the next. As a result children systematically build up skills and knowledge. At Key Stage 2, children are not always given enough independence. This means that they are unable to achieve levels above the

national expectation. Some teachers in both key stages accept inattention from the children and on occasions it means that the teaching is less effective than it should be.

104. Since the last inspection there has been a satisfactory level of improvement. The school now gives appropriate attention to designing and this has resulted in improved standards. Children's response remains positive, although teachers need to raise their expectations of children's concentration and attention. The scheme of work has been improved following recent national guidance. Monitoring of children's progress in lessons is improving in some classes but not all. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to spread the good practice in some classes to all the rest, but currently does not have the remit to do so.

GEOGRAPHY

105. At both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 standards in geography are in line with those expected nationally, as they were at the time of the last inspection. All the children, including those with special educational needs, are achieving what could be expected of them.
106. Children at Key Stage 1 collected and examined packets and wrappings of foodstuffs and found out the country of origin. They were then able to find out on world maps where these places were. Older children could fill these in on their own maps and discuss how the food arrived here.
107. At Key Stage 2, the children have worked extensively on finding out about a village in Mexico. They have a good understanding of the physical and human conditions there and the similarities and differences between life there and in Biggleswade. They use appropriate geographical vocabulary and have good observation and map reading skills. Older children have extended their learning about the Mexican location to look at the roles and work of members of the Horta family who lived in the village. They have studied the way in which their work and lifestyle were affected by the physical and geographical conditions there. Good use is made of ICT as children research and investigate from information stored in a CD-ROM.
108. Teaching in geography is good with some very good teaching in Key Stage 2. A good balance is achieved between teaching skills, such as map reading, gathering evidence and comparing different locations, providing factual knowledge. The subject is taught with enthusiasm and a level of good expertise and the work is well planned to interest and motivate the children. This results in them developing good attitudes, behaviour and learning skills. They are enthusiastic and they work hard. There are good links with art and design, such as older children making beautiful water colour paintings of parts of Betws y Coed, which they had studied previously. ICT is also used well, for example to gather information.
109. Since the last inspection, the school has made good improvements to the schemes of work and resources for teaching the subject. The two co-ordinators are knowledgeable and interested and have recently updated the schemes of work. The resources for the subject are satisfactory to teach the National Curriculum. The assessment of children's progress in geography is satisfactory; assessment is planned as a part of some lessons and at the end of units of work. Day-to-day marking could be used more effectively to raise standards by giving the children clear guidance on how they can improve.

HISTORY

110. At both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 standards in history are in line with those expected nationally, as they were at the time of the last inspection. All the children, including those with special educational needs, are achieving what could be expected of them.
111. At Key Stage 1, the children use their developing research skills to find out about inventors such as Henry Ford and can recall facts, place some events in chronological order and understand some of the similarities and differences between aspects of life past and present. They had used the results of a questionnaire of their parents, for example, to discuss some of

the differences between travelling in their parents' and grandparents' lifetimes and in the present day.

112. Older children use a good variety of evidence, including CD-ROM information, books and photographs to build a picture of life in past times. They are able to recognise broad periods of time, have some understanding of time lines and chronology and can describe some of the impact of change on our lifestyles. For example, they compared the roles of women in Viking times to the role of women today.
113. Teaching in history is consistently good. Historical skills, such as evidence gathering, are taught well, enabling the children to gain a secure knowledge and understanding of past times. The subject is taught with enthusiasm and a good level of expertise and the work is well planned to interest and motivate the children. This results in them having good learning skills, behaviour and attitudes. The children are enthusiastic and hard-working. There are good links with art and design, such as when older children made Viking houses from card and wool. ICT is well used to support learning, mainly through research.
114. The two enthusiastic subject co-ordinators have updated the guidance for teachers in the use of the schemes of work, which is an improvement since the last inspection. The resources for the subject are satisfactory and are well supplemented by the use of the County Loan service. The assessment of children's progress in history is satisfactory and assessment is planned as a part of some lessons. Day-to-day marking does not always give some children enough guidance on how they can improve further, however.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

115. Attainment is above the national expectation at the end of Key Stage 1 and at the age of nine when children transfer to the next school. Children make good progress in ICT, acquiring a good range of skills at a brisk pace. Children with special educational needs receive effective individual support and are able to acquire good standards relative to their previous attainment.
116. By the age of seven, children are confident when using computers and do so with a good level of independence. They load, save and print their work without help. They word process very competently, making good use of commas, full stops, question, exclamation and speech marks. They change the style and size of the font. The children enter information onto a database and print out their work as different types of graph or pie charts. Working in pairs, they achieve this without help from the teacher. Children understand that many machines are operated by control buttons and are able to instruct a floor turtle to move in different directions. Some good quality work in art, for example their pictures of bats, has resulted from their competent use of the design programme 'Dazzle'. Recently, they have been learning how to access information from a CD-ROM multimedia program as part of their work in science.
117. By the age of nine, children use computers confidently and know when they would be useful. They produce extended pieces of writing, choosing the style, layout and importing pictures to combine with the text. They regularly use computers to carry out research and know how to access information via the Internet. Children learn how to use procedures to make pictures using 'Super Logo'. They are sufficiently skilful at this to be able to predict what shape will result from given sequences. Their ability to use 'Dazzle' is extended and they learn how to produce the tiling effect so that they can apply it to their work in art on repeating patterns.
118. Since the last inspection, the school has made considerable improvements to the teaching of ICT. The resources have been considerably improved, along with teacher expertise. The children's attainment is now above the national expectation and their achievement is consistently good in all aspects of the subject. Children now use computers on a very regular basis and to support their work in almost all subjects. The scheme of work has been developed to take into account recent national guidance. The children now show good levels of initiative and independence when using computers.

119. The quality of teaching is consistently good at both key stages. The teachers ensure that the children use computers frequently and in almost all subjects. Their subject knowledge is secure. This enables them to provide clear demonstrations of new skills and as a result children learn them very quickly. They plan an interesting range of relevant activities. Consequently, the children enjoy their work and are well motivated. Teachers encourage the children to work independently and to show initiative when using computers. They use questioning well to get children to use their prior knowledge and apply it in new situations. The children's ability to do this gives them confidence. Teachers have high expectations of what the children can achieve and they respond well to the challenge provided. Occasionally, the teachers do not gain the full attention of children and consequently have to waste time repeating what they have already explained very clearly. Generally, the children are managed well, however, and they work sensibly and co-operatively when using the computers.
120. The quantity and quality of the learning resources are good and have a positive impact on learning. Co-ordination of the subject is sound, but there is insufficient direct monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure that the best practice is recognised and spread. A sensible strategy for assessment has been introduced, but the information is not yet used effectively to improve lesson plans so that they take full account of the skills already developed.

MUSIC

121. Standards are in line with what would be expected nationally for children at the end of Key Stage 1 and at the end of Year 4. This is a similar judgement to the one made at the last inspection. Provision is much the same except that some improvements have been made in the range of cultures represented in the music that the children listen to and the songs they learn. The children are also encouraged to listen to music more carefully than they were at the time of the previous inspection.
122. By the end of Key Stage 1, the children sing a range of familiar songs in tune and with reasonable expression. They are aware of the basic qualities of music, such as its rhythm, pitch variations and mood, and they recognise the sounds made by familiar instruments. They have the ability to collaborate in the composition of musical pieces, as was demonstrated in the lessons seen and through the tape recordings made of earlier compositions. For example, a class of Year 2 was observed performing a piece that they had composed earlier to represent the sounds that would be heard on the street outside the school. Their achievement in this aspect of music is satisfactory, but is limited by some aspects of the teaching. For example, they did not listen for themselves to the sounds they were trying to represent before composing the piece described above. Instead it was based on a discussion led by the teacher. This limited the potential of the lessons for developing the children's listening skills and their creative responses to the sounds they hear. Their performance was also very strictly controlled by the teacher, giving limited scope for the children to experiment with instruments and sound combinations and to experience leading or conducting the piece. There was evidence on display of the children's responses to the composition 'Travel Diaries' by Malcolm Williamson. This indicates that they are linking the music they perform to the music they listen to.
123. By the age of nine, the children sing well, as was illustrated by their tuneful singing at the after-school choir practice held during the inspection. In the lesson that was observed, the children demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of standard rhythm notation. For example, they read and clap different 4/4 patterns written in musical notation. They kept to the beat well and clapped or tapped one rhythm while a different one was also being played. There was insufficient evidence on which to base judgements about their attainment in other aspects of the subject. Those children with the aptitude have the opportunity to play the recorder and the violin, and do so to a satisfactory standard. The recorder lessons are given voluntarily by enthusiastic members of staff. The children involved enjoy these lessons and make good progress. Violin lessons are given by a visiting specialist teacher. The lesson observed was very good because it engaged individual children in a group at the level they were at and brought their skills on in clear achievable steps within an 'ensemble' setting. The progress

made by the children over time as a result of these lessons depends very much on the amount of practice that they undertake themselves.

124. The quality of teaching observed was satisfactory. The teachers plan lessons that ensure coverage of the revised National Curriculum programme of studies. The children were managed well in the lessons seen, and the teachers had good subject knowledge. In Key Stage 2, it was clear that the children were making better progress over time than they did in the lesson observed because of the knowledge skills that they demonstrated. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that the standard of teaching is better overall than in the lesson seen. In Key Stage 1, the children are making sound progress in composing and performing because they have regular lessons from a music specialist. However, their progress is restricted by the limited teaching strategies being used. Over-direction by the teacher leaves the children with too few opportunities to experiment with sounds and evaluate and improve their own work. This arises partly by the time constraints imposed when a different teacher takes the group out of the class. However, the dependence on lessons given by a 'specialist' teacher at this stage also limits the range of methods used. For example, it is more difficult to give the children opportunities to choose instruments and work on their own ideas in small groups and to link their compositions to other areas of their work. There is a need, therefore, to improve the level of teacher confidence and expertise so that the subject can be more fully integrated into day-to-day classroom practice.
125. The subject is co-ordinated by two teachers on an acting basis following the resignation of the previous post-holder. They are organising the subject satisfactorily, but there is no meaningful evaluation of current practice through the school. Resources are good, but are not used to their optimum effect because of the limited teaching methods currently deployed. The subject makes a good contribution to the children's personal and cultural development. This includes the broadening of their awareness of different cultures, as was observed when Foundation Stage children sang African songs. Those children who sing in the choir and play instruments also have the opportunity to perform in public, boosting their confidence and improving their awareness of the potential that music has as a life-long source of enjoyment and fulfilment.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

126. Attainment in physical education is average in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. This maintains the standards reported by last inspection. There is no difference in achievement between boys and girls. The last inspection highlighted that there were no extra-curricular activities to extend opportunities in physical education. The school currently offers a limited range of activities.
127. One games lesson and one dance lesson were observed in Key Stage 1. The teaching and learning was good in one lesson and very good in the other. The teachers clearly focus on the learning objectives in both lessons relating to the skills involved in striking, throwing, catching and fielding small balls and developing movement through dance. The children enjoyed the activities and their skills increased through well-directed teaching. For example, the children in the dance lesson were clearly focussed and showed appropriate expressive movement around the hall, clapping to a range of rhythms played from a commercial tape recording. The teachers' expectations in Key Stage 1 ranged from good to very good. The children's attitudes to each other and to the activities were good enabling them all to work co-operatively and successfully.
128. In Key Stage 2 the teaching was good. The main reason is that teachers' expectations and knowledge of the subject are good. In a games lesson the children showed good throwing, catching and fielding skills and played co-operatively and successfully in small-sided games of rounders. Planning in both key stages is good because it identifies learning objectives and assessment opportunities and provides for activities that match the different levels of attainment.
129. The resources for physical education are good. Gymnastic apparatus is well organised, small-sided games equipment is well-stored and is easily accessible to staff and the children.

Swimming lessons were not observed but they form part of the curriculum for all the children from reception top Year 4.

130. The current temporary physical education co-ordinator does not have a curriculum budget and has not been involved in monitoring. There is an appropriate scheme of work but the physical education policy needs updating.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

131. The school follows an agreed two-year plan for religious education in both key stages based upon the locally Agreed Syllabus. At the ages of 7 and 9 years, the children's knowledge and understanding of religious education is in line with the expectations of this syllabus.
132. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 is sound and is good in Key Stage 2. Detailed lessons take into account the knowledge and understanding of the children. As a consequence the children in Year 4 have good knowledge of the Christian religion and information on other faiths, for example the ritual undertaken by Muslims on entering their place of worship. The teaching is interesting and involves pupils in good questioning and answering techniques. In Key Stage 1 the sound teaching involved the children in discussing and understanding the importance of forgiveness taught through the Christian story of Zacchaeus. However, the pace of the lessons is a little slow and they sometimes lack a clear focus that the children can understand.
133. The teachers use a variety of strategies to encourage good quality of presentation. As a result, the children take pride in their work. For example, Year 4 pupils enjoyed making a concertina book to show the washing rituals of Muslims in preparation for entering the Mosque. The children in Key Stage 1 include religious education work within topic books. Pupils in Key Stage 2 complete most of their well-presented work in religious education exercise books. Teachers' questioning in both Key Stages showed good subject knowledge. The children in Key Stage 1 generally responded well to these open-ended questions. However, on occasion some pupils needed to listen more carefully to each other. In Key Stage 2 the children listened attentively to each other and engaged in clearly focussed learning on the Islamic place of worship. Planning is good in both key stages. It complies with the school's scheme of work and contains clearly defined learning objectives. These are adapted to suit the needs of children with different attainment levels. This was especially evident in the identification of the needs relating to special needs children. The children in both key stages enjoy their lessons and take part enthusiastically in planned activities. For example, the children in Key Stage 1 enjoyed singing a song about Zacchaeus and acting out the parts of Jesus and Zacchaeus.
134. The religious education co-ordinator has worked hard to improve the provision for the subject. Teaching has improved since the last inspection. This has led to more effective learning. Resources have also improved, enabling teachers to use artefacts from different religions in their teaching, which help the children to appreciate rituals and symbolism. The school also makes good use of local religious leaders, who are invited into school to work with the children and enrich their experiences. The use of ICT was not seen during religious education lessons. Monitoring of teaching has not been undertaken by the co-ordinator and there is no specific religious education budget controlled by the co-ordinator. The co-ordinator is effective within the remit of the job description. Plans are in hand, for example, to amend the religious education scheme of work, once the locally Agreed Syllabus has been revised, and to provide the necessary in-service training to teachers. However, the co-ordinator does not have a dedicated budget and is not expected to directly monitor teaching and learning in the subject across the school.