

INSPECTION REPORT

OAKTHORPE COUNTY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Swadlincote

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 119945

Headteacher: Mr N Jones

Reporting inspector: Hugh Protherough
8339

Dates of inspection: 5th – 7th June 2000

Inspection number: 192711

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	School Street Oakthorpe Swadlincote Derbyshire
Postcode:	DE12 7RE
Telephone number:	01530 270383
Fax number:	n/a
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Ray Merry
Date of previous inspection:	24 th – 26 th February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Hugh Protherough	Registered inspector	Mathematics Science Information technology Physical education Equal opportunities Special educational needs	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
Christine Murray-Watson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mari Powell	Team inspector	Under fives English Art Design and technology Geography History Music Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? How well does the school care for its pupils?

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The Registrar
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Oakthorpe is a small primary school with 76 pupils on roll that has doubled in size in the past two years. This rapid growth reflects the increasing confidence of parents in a school that has had a troubled past, but that is now moving forward positively. The leadership has managed effectively the influx of new pupils [16 joined school at times other than the start of the school year] and significant changes amongst the staff team. A group of six pupils from travelling families also visits the school from time to time. Almost all the pupils are of white ethnic origin. The village suffered considerable hardship when the local pit was closed and almost a third of the pupils are entitled to free school meals which is much above the national average. Almost 40 per cent of the pupils are on the register for special educational needs including one child with a statement of special educational need and two further pupils currently awaiting assessment. These figures are much higher than usual.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The determined leadership of the headteacher and the strong support of the staff and governing body is moving the school in the right direction. The quality of teaching in lessons is generally good which helps motivate the pupils and is leading to a steady rise in standards. For example, most of the Year 6 pupils are on course to reach the nationally expected level in English, mathematics and science. Thus, although the cost of educating the pupils at this school is higher than usual, it offers satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards are rising. This year most eleven-year-olds are achieving the expected levels in English, mathematics and science.
- The shared commitment of the headteacher, staff and governing body to raising standards is effectively supported by the thorough analysis of test and assessment data and the setting of challenging yet realistic targets for each pupil.
- Most lessons are interesting. Teachers provide the pupils with a good range of challenging activities that encourage learning.
- The work of the learning support assistants generally makes a significant contribution to successful teaching throughout the school.
- The school offers a broad curriculum that carefully promotes the creative, personal and social development of the pupils and is successfully raising their self-esteem.
- The organisation and management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is thorough and helps these pupils make good progress.

What could be improved

- The planning of the curriculum for the non-core subjects; especially geography, history, art, music, design and technology.
- The consistency of teachers' approaches to marking pupils' work.
- Arrangements for setting homework.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The previous inspection identified serious weaknesses in many aspects of the school's work. **This is no longer the case.** The appointment of a caring, committed and purposeful headteacher and the strong support of the staff and governing body has resulted in significant improvements to the quality of education provided at the school. As a result, the staff team has regained the confidence of its

community and pupils are coming back to their local school. Teaching is much better than before. Lessons are interesting, motivate the pupils and help them to learn important skills and knowledge; especially in English and mathematics. As a result standards are starting to rise. The school's curriculum is much broader than before. However, the next step is to improve the planning of the curriculum for the non-core subjects so that the pupils' learning builds more steadily and gains greater depth as they move through the school.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests, **but is left blank because fewer than ten pupils currently take the national tests each year.**

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	[]	[]	[]	[]
mathematics	[]	[]	[]	[]
science	[]	[]	[]	[]

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

The numbers of pupils taking the national tests over the past four years have been very small which means that any statistical analysis of individual years is likely to be unreliable. However, putting the results of all four years together it is evident that standards at the school have been very low for a considerable time in comparison with both the national picture and that found in similar schools, especially in English and mathematics. The new headteacher quickly recognised the situation and set about improving things through the regular assessment of individual pupil progress and the setting of challenging, but realistic targets for every child. Thus this year, for the first time, the proportion of pupils working at the expected levels at the end of Key Stage 2 is similar to the national average in English, mathematics and science. This is a significant achievement for these pupils and a solid basis for further school improvement. The current Year 2 contains a large number of pupils with special educational needs so the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics is below average. Nevertheless, it is clear that pupils are building effectively on their prior attainment because a few brighter pupils are now working at the higher level 3.

There has been considerable improvement to the school's provision for teaching information technology so that the pupils are far more confident in their use of the school's computers and other equipment. As a result, standards have risen and are in line with the expected levels at the end of both key stages. Similarly, the quality of pupils' work in religious education is in line with the levels outlined within the locally agreed syllabus for this subject.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils enjoy school and speak positively about their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Although most pupils are friendly and well mannered there is a minority in each class that sometimes finds it difficult to listen carefully when the teacher is addressing the whole class.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships at the school are generally very positive. However, for many pupils the use of initiative and self-directed work are at a very early stage of development.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The school's attendance figures have been artificially depressed by their approach to recording the long-term absence of the pupils from Travelling families.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 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 teaching is much stronger than at the time of the last inspection and is of good quality throughout the school. About a quarter of lessons seen [24 per cent] were judged to be very good or excellent and almost all of the lessons were satisfactory or better [94 per cent]. Only one lesson [6 per cent] was judged unsatisfactory.

The school has successfully introduced the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. The planning for these lessons is detailed and makes clear what the children are going to learn. In the most successful of these lessons the teachers were observed sharing and regularly referring to these objectives with the children. The investment in learning assistants is paying dividends. These additional adults make a significant contribution towards helping the teachers manage the wide range of age and ability within each class. Their support during group work is particularly effective because the teachers are frequently able to plan a good range of interesting and challenging activities that motivate the children and speed up their learning.

Although the pupils' work is regularly marked, approaches vary between classes. Although teachers give plenty of encouragement in lessons, too few write comments that tell the children how to improve their work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a much broader curriculum than before and the strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are working well. However, arrangements for planning the non-core subjects, though improved and meeting statutory requirements, are less secure.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	There are highly effective arrangements for managing the large number of pupils with special educational needs. As a result, these children are successfully integrated and make good progress in relation to the targets outlined on their individual education plans.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The school makes strong provision to encourage better behaviour and to raise the pupils' self-esteem. There is also a good range of activities aimed at raising the pupils' awareness of other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school makes satisfactory arrangements for both child protection and health and safety. The teachers provide good support and guidance for the pupils and use assessment information effectively to set personal targets for each child.

The school has very good links with the parents, carers and its local community. The leadership has improved the quality of information it provides and the annual reports of pupil progress frequently contain telling descriptions of the strengths and weaknesses of individual children. However, there is scope to improve still further the amount of information provided for parents and carers about the school's curriculum.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership is much improved. The school aims are clear, appropriate and reflected in the day-to-day life of the school. The headteacher and his senior staff are working together successfully to raise standards, based upon a sensible plan that targets, training and resources in the right places.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is much better organised than before and has played a major part in the rejuvenation of the school's fortunes. They have made a number of successful staff appointments, keep themselves informed about the school and now fulfil all of their statutory responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Headteacher, staff and governing body have a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school based upon a thorough analysis of the pupils' performance and regular checks on how well teachers deliver their lessons.
The strategic use of resources	The headteacher and governing body make effective use of the school's budget. Expenditure is planned carefully to match the priorities of the school development plan and evaluated in terms of its impact upon pupils' learning. The school has made a good start to applying the principles of best value.

Although the school has been through a period of significant change to its personnel this has been managed extremely effectively. Induction procedures are good and personnel such as supply teachers

receive clear guidance. This is provided by the headteacher, staff handbook and most significantly, by the learning assistants attached to each class who know the children extremely well. The school buildings are well maintained and set in spacious and attractive grounds. The school is generally well resourced to deliver the requirements of the National Curriculum.

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 school is improving and getting a good reputation for its work. • Their children enjoy school and work hard at their lessons. • The children's behaviour is good and they are learning how to accept responsibility. • Teachers are friendly, accessible and always willing to talk about any problems. • They have confidence in the headteacher. They trust his judgement and share his desire to make the school successful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many parents would like their children to have a bit more homework. • Some parents would like more information about what their children are going to be taught at school each term.

The inspection team agrees with the overwhelmingly positive views of the parents. The school is improving. However, they also agree that parents and teachers need to sort out what they want to do about homework. At the same time the school should begin to provide a bit more information about what the children are being taught each term.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The numbers of pupils taking the national tests over the past four years have been very small which means that any statistical analysis of individual years is likely to be unreliable. However, putting the results of all four years together it is evident that standards at the end of both key stages have been very low for a considerable time, especially in English and mathematics. They are also low when compared to the results achieved by pupils from similar schools. The new headteacher quickly recognised the situation and set about improving things through the regular assessment of individual pupil progress and the setting of challenging, but realistic targets for every child. Thus this year, for the first time, the proportion of pupils working at the expected levels at the end of Key Stage 2 is similar to the national average in English and mathematics and continues to be broadly average in science. This is a significant achievement for many of these pupils and a solid basis for further school improvement.
2. The current Year 2 contains a large number of pupils with special educational needs so the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics continues to be below average. Nevertheless, it is clear that pupils are building effectively on their prior attainment because a few brighter pupils are now working at the higher level 3.
3. Further analysis of the test results of the past four years indicates that the girls have been performing better than the boys in all subjects. This year, at the end of Key Stage 1 the gap in performance is much smaller with proportionately only slightly more girls than boys reaching the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics. At the end of Key Stage 2 both boys and girls are achieving similar results.
4. The standard of pupils' work is improving most rapidly in English and mathematics. This is because the teachers have embraced the national strategies for literacy and numeracy in positive fashion. They have made effective use of the national guidance, the additional training and made sensible modifications to their curriculum plans the better to meet the needs of their pupils who are taught in mixed age classes. As a result most pupils are gaining in confidence as speakers, especially at the end of Key Stage 2 where some can now talk and act as a character other than themselves. The use of guided group reading means that many pupils are starting to recognise that by varying their tone of voice and expression they can make reading aloud more enjoyable for others to listen to. By the time they leave school most pupils are now writing in different styles for a far wider range of purposes than previously. Similarly in mathematics far more seven-year-old children are gaining confidence in their recall of simple number facts so that by the age of eleven it is becoming second nature to attempt to manipulate numbers in the head. At the same time the quality of pupils work in such aspects as two-dimensional shapes is becoming much neater and more accurate.
5. The pupils' work in science is broadly average at the end of both key stages. At Key Stage 1 the pupils have covered a good amount of interesting and relevant work across the full range of the National Curriculum programmes of study. The reason why standards are rising is because the teacher tries hard to encourage opportunities for the pupils to work practically and record their findings systematically. Their recent work on the growth of

seeds is a good example of this. The analysis of the pupils' work at the end of Key Stage 2 reveals Year 6 pupils are developing increasing maturity of scientific thought when comparing work from September with that completed most recently. Their work on sound shows increasing awareness of important features of how sounds travel. Similarly there have been appropriate gains in the pupils' knowledge of human body and the location of major organs.

6. There has been considerable improvement to the school's provision for teaching information technology so that the pupils are far more confident in their use of the school's computers and other equipment. As a result standards have risen and are in line with the expected levels at the end of both key stages. Similarly the quality of pupils' work in religious education is in line with the levels outlined within the locally agreed syllabus for this subject.
7. The pupils' work in the other non-core subjects of the National Curriculum is also improving and at the end of both key stages is broadly in line with the expected levels. The teachers are making sure that the children get a much better balance of activities than those described at the last inspection. Nevertheless, improvements still need to be made to the planning of the curriculum of these subjects so that the pupils' learning builds steadily on what has gone before. This will lead to still faster progress and even higher standards.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils have a generally positive attitude to learning and are responding well to the interesting and challenging curriculum being offered to them. They arrive promptly at the start of the school day and are eager to come in to school to start the day's activities. Following a difficult period in the life of the school, when pupil numbers fell to a low level, pupils are developing an increased pride and confidence in their school community. This is reflected in the high proportion of pupils who wear the newly created school uniform, for example, and the enthusiasm with which pupils apply themselves to winning team points within the school's reward system. Pupils are appreciative of the extracurricular provision being made and large numbers attend after school activities.
9. When teachers require high standards of behaviour and application to the task in hand, pupils respond well. The oldest pupils are learning to work in groups, with less direct supervision needed, and to present their work tidily. Throughout the school, however, there are individuals who find self-discipline difficult and who are unable to sustain concentration for very long without adult support. When teaching is less than good, with very clear expectations for high standards and skilled classroom management which supports pupils well at their own level of personal development, the quantity and quality of learning can quickly fall. With a high proportion of pupils newly arrived in the school, the use of personal initiative and independent learning is not yet well developed. When the older pupils are given opportunities to assume responsibilities and to work independently in lessons, their response is good.
10. Behaviour is satisfactory throughout the school and many instances were seen where pupils displayed thoughtful and caring behaviour towards the younger children. This is actively fostered by the school's 'team' system where pupils of differing ages are encouraged to work together to gain team points. The benefits of this approach are seen particularly on the playground, where young pupils gain confidence and a sense of security through the support of the older ones. Whilst the great majority of pupils relate well to each other, and to adults, there are a number of individuals who need careful support whilst they develop the necessary social skills.

11. Whilst school statistics show a very low level of attendance overall, this relates almost exclusively to the authorised absence of pupils from Traveller families. The attendance of other pupils is in line with that found in primary schools nationally.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

12. The teaching is much stronger than at the time of the last inspection and is of good quality throughout the school. About a quarter of lessons seen [24 per cent] were judged to be very good or excellent and almost all of the lessons were satisfactory or better [94 per cent]. Only one lesson [6per cent] was judged unsatisfactory.
13. The key elements that have contributed to the improvement in teaching at the school and the current rise in standards are the high expectations of the teachers and their generally skilful classroom management. Although a significant number of the pupils lack self-belief, have a short concentration span and experience a range of difficulties in learning, the teachers are strongly committed to helping all the children realise that with hard work and perseverance they can achieve highly. The teachers set a good example by providing tidy and attractively displayed classrooms. They speak politely to the pupils and other adults working at the school. They use praise frequently to encourage the children, especially when a pupil shows that they have listened carefully and responded appropriately to a particular instruction or achieved a personal target. A further strength is the coherent way that this approach is supported by the school's system of rewards for good work and behaviour. As a result most children respond positively to school and try to work hard and do their best, although for a few this remains difficult.
14. In order to motivate the pupils the teachers are careful to plan lessons that are both interesting and challenging. They are most successful during the teaching of English and mathematics because they have a secure subject knowledge that has benefited from much recent additional training. As a result their planning for these subjects contains good detail. The teachers set out clearly what they want the children to learn and in the best lessons they are observed sharing and regularly referring to these objectives with the children. For instance, in the upper part of Key Stage 2 the teacher wanted to improve the pupils' ability to manipulate larger numbers in their heads. Her mental warm-up game was great fun and the pupils were eager to contribute, even though some took a long time calculate their answers. The teacher reminded the pupils that one of the key aims of the lesson was "to get faster" at mental calculation. Thus, everybody worked extremely hard during the group written activities. A good volume of work was completed because the teacher and learning assistant knew who needed help and regularly made supportive comments about the good working atmosphere within the room. The final plenary shared the different strategies learnt for adding on numbers such as 29 before the opening game was played again. This time the answers came much faster and the teacher was able to point out to the children that they had achieved the aim of the lesson.
15. In science the teachers gain the interest of the pupils by taking care to ensure that they get the chance to engage in practical activities. As well as the regular use of the school site to look at the habitats of different types of animals and insects, they often set up tests and experiments within the classroom. Thus, in Years 2 and 3 the pupils are trying to find out the conditions under which cress can be grown successfully. The teacher's own good knowledge is clearly in evidence during the lesson by the way that she questions the pupils using correct technical language as well as ensuring a systematic approach to setting up the experiment and recording the findings. This is having a positive impact upon the pupils' achievements in

science, because the work in pupils' books shows that this is a regular feature of the teacher's approach to the subject.

16. The school's investment in learning assistants is paying dividends. These additional adults make a significant contribution towards helping the teachers to manage the wide range of age and ability within each class. Their support during group work activities is particularly effective because the teachers are frequently able to plan a good range of interesting and challenging activities that motivate the children and speed up their learning. For instance, the pupils in their Reception Year join in the early stages of the literacy hour, but then work hard in two groups with the learning assistant and nursery nurse whilst the teacher pushes forward the learning of the older infants. Thus in one lesson the children heard the story of 'A New Home for Tiger.' The additional adults then led effective discussions of the story as the children drew pictures or made play dough models of key parts of the story before writing simple captions.
17. The contribution of the learning assistant in the top class has been particularly significant. Due to the unfortunate absence of their teacher, this class has recently had a succession of temporary supply teachers. The usual member of staff has always involved the learning assistant fully by sharing lesson plans and being very clear about how she can help groups and individuals. As a result the learning assistant has an excellent insight into the running of the class and the personalities it contains. Thus, she has played a crucial role in helping the temporary teachers to settle in quickly, explaining systems and routines. Equally her continuing presence has been a source of reassurance and continuity to the learning of the several pupils whom she supports on a regular basis, including a number with special educational needs.
18. In order to improve teaching further the staff needs to consider ways in which they might encourage the pupils to build on their increasing confidence and self-esteem by providing greater opportunities for independent learning. For instance, at the moment the arrangements for homework lack coherence. Although some teachers set homework, pupils and parents are not clear about how much will be set and how often. Whatever the nature of the 'homework' the responsibility for pupils to communicate this to parents and to achieve each task successfully would be another major step towards improving standards. Consultation with parents and carers about homework would also strengthen further the home school partnership and wider community links. **This is a key issue for action.**
19. There is similar inconsistency in the approaches taken by teachers towards the marking of the pupils' work. Although the teachers give plenty of encouragement in lessons, too few write comments that tell the children how to improve their work. In Key Stage 2 in particular it is important that the pupils get used to reading what the teachers write and then make corrections and improvements. This will also help them get ready for life at secondary school. **This is a key issue for action.**

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

20. The curriculum for Key Stage 1 and 2 is improved and much broader and better balanced than at the time of the last inspection. The curriculum for the children in the foundation stage of learning is adequate overall and provides a reasonable range of appropriate experiences. The school recognises that aspects of learning in the foundation stage will require re-planning if all the early learning goals are to be reached by the time the children leave the reception class. In some of the non-core subjects such as history, geography, art and design and

technology, curriculum plans require review to ensure that new learning builds upon what pupils have learned previously. Here, the current approach to planning, while it ensures a range of worthwhile experiences, does not take sufficient account of how the pupils' skills are to be developed progressively at each stage of learning.

21. For instance in history, the pupils learn important facts and information about the life styles of Ancient Egyptians and Viking invaders. However, the teachers have no secure framework to decide how, or when they will encourage the development of the important skills of research. This is important because some of the questions asked about one civilisation are useful starting points when considering another. Equally, the questions and research expected of an eleven-year-old should be more sophisticated than those for a seven-year-old. Currently the pupils acquire a satisfactory level of knowledge within individual topics but their skills of investigation develop less systematically. The school now needs to put in place a more detailed curriculum framework for the non-core subjects that sets out what will be learnt and when as the pupils move through the school. **This is a key issue for action.**
22. The previous inspection noted significant shortcomings in the curricula for information technology, music and physical education. The school's strategy for delivering the statutory curriculum in information and communication technology is improving. There is a clear intention to cover all aspects of the attainment targets of the National Curriculum and a sound start has been made. Several advances in planning the teaching of music and physical education represent an improvement since the previous inspection and are raising standards in these subjects.
23. The school has increasingly secure strategies for raising attainment in literacy and numeracy. The planning is coherent across the school and ensures that all aspects of these subjects are taught. In particular, planning for speaking and listening activities is more effective than at the time of the previous inspection and is gradually improving the pupils' skills. The programme for religious education is soundly based on the local syllabus but there is no coherent scheme of work to ensure that the topics taught at each stage are delivered at the appropriate depth for the age range.
24. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is well planned. Their needs are clearly identified in their Individual Education Plans and the suitability of activities to ensure their progress is carefully monitored. Efforts to ensure access to activities for all pupils are highly effective, for example, a few pupils with particular learning needs, are, nevertheless, 'stars' in the musical life of the school. Some older pupils, identified as having literacy needs, are in receipt of a literacy programme which is likely to result in their reaching the average expected levels in English by the end of Key Stage 2.
25. The provision for the pupils' personal and social development is good. All adults at the school are dedicated to raising the pupils' self-confidence and self esteem so that they willingly attempt increasingly challenging tasks. There is a strong drugs and health awareness programme, enriched through a visit of the "Life Caravan" and the promotion of physical exercise through a range of sports and gymnastic activities. School assemblies and lessons in religious education are well planned to enhance the pupils' self-awareness and help them to develop a sound value system.
26. Provision to foster the pupils' spiritual development is sound but not always systematically addressed in curriculum areas where opportunities might arise to promote awe and wonder and a sense of life beyond the purely material. However, observation of the work of artists, such as the Impressionist painters, is successful in kindling a sense of awe about how these

artists have captured nature in a variety of painting styles and generate moods which inspire reflection. This was seen in a display of paintings in the style of Monet, attractively mounted in a corner of a corridor with a suitable backcloth, paper cut-out bridge and cut-out paintings of water lilies.

27. Adults consistently promote sound moral principles. They deal fairly when difficulties arise and consistently apply the agreed rules. This creates a climate where pupils are honest and open in dealing with each other in spite of the fact that a few pupils are emotionally immature in their relationships and require much sensitive support. There is a range of opportunities for pupils to acquire social skills to prepare them for the next stage of learning and for adult life. Older pupils interact quite naturally with younger ones, even devising a whole range of games in which they can participate during sports day. Individual pupils also act as 'buddies' to new pupils settling into school for the first time. Visits and visitors provide further useful opportunities for developing effective social skills.
28. The curriculum contains a strong cultural strand. This ensures that the pupils develop a firm sense of their own local identity. Equally, a number of different cultures have their place in school activities. Wall displays contain artwork, posters and photography that reflect a range of cultural experiences offered to pupils. For example, the visit of an Indian dancer is recorded in photographs as are events such as a visit to a Sikh temple. The literature in the school library also contains material that reflects the cultural diversity of Britain in the twenty-first century.
29. The pupils' learning experiences are considerably enriched by the contribution of its community to pupils' learning. Local people have provided sources of evidence for work in history in particular in relation to World War II. Through these visits and visits out into the locality, the pupils know how their community has changed over time and how this has affected the economy of the area and the lives of people. There are good links with church groups. The school's music has benefited considerably from local sponsorship. There is a close partnership with other local schools, including the local college, with whom the school is establishing a very effective lifelong learning programme.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

30. The school makes satisfactory provision to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety. With the rapid rise in pupil numbers from a low level, the newly developed policies for maintaining appropriate checks, and the use of risk assessment, need to become firmly established to take account of the increased number of pupils moving around the building. The school has appropriate child protection procedures in place and liaises with outside agencies as required.
31. Class teachers have a clear picture of what each pupil knows and can do and set work that challenges them appropriately. The procedures in place to keep track of how pupils are behaving and the progress they are making in their personal development are similarly good. This enables teaching staff to manage their lessons effectively and helps pupils to make good progress. A strong element in the support the pupils are given is the effective use of the learning support assistants. Their skilled and caring support for individuals and small groups of pupils and the good relationships they have established help to promote a good working atmosphere where pupils can gain in confidence as they learn. Consistent, clear and high expectations throughout the school for good behaviour and a positive approach to learning characterise much of the life of the school. The evident commitment of all the staff to the wellbeing, care and personal development of the pupils helps to provide a secure and happy community in which pupils can make good progress.

32. The procedures for monitoring and assessing the pupils' academic performance are generally effective. The teachers track the pupils' progress conscientiously and are increasingly using a good range of information to guide their planning. In many lessons, especially in those in literacy and numeracy, tasks are carefully matched to the pupils'

needs and abilities as a result of careful assessments. This is having a beneficial effect on improving the pupils' literacy skills and their abilities to carry out mental calculations.

33. The school makes good use of the information gained from national test results and other test and assessment data in order to produce appropriate targets for every pupil at the school. This is particularly the case in the assessment of the progress of those pupils with special educational needs. Careful attention is given to raising their self-esteem and increasing their belief in themselves as successful learners. Thorough and detailed notes are maintained about each pupil's strengths and weaknesses and these are then used to set clear and appropriate targets for improvement. These are regularly reviewed with the child and the parent and it is clear that most are making good progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

34. Parents and carers are very positive about the school and rapidly increasing numbers of local families, as well as those outside the immediate catchment area, are choosing to send their children to there. They are very positive about how much their children like school and the high quality of the teaching they receive. The staff is seen as approachable, with high expectations of each child. It is evident that the recent changes in the leadership and management of the school are viewed as having had a positive impact upon the quality of education provided.
35. The school has established very effective links with parents and works hard to involve them both in the life of the school and with their children's learning. Provision has been made for a parents' room in the school. With the appointment of a development officer, parents are able to benefit from training in the use of computers. This, as well as other activities in which parents can become involved, means that they are often in school and are made to feel welcome. A member of the teaching staff is always outside at the start and end of the school day for informal contact with parents and carers and this is much appreciated. Regular parents' evenings and annual reports, which contain a good measure of information on what pupils are attaining and the progress that they are making, are a further strong element in the school's partnership with parents.
36. The school benefits from much committed parental support. Practical help is given around the school and the materials being produced by the parents' computer group are starting to enhance the resources available. There is an active Parents and Friends Association which raises funds and organises social events for parents and pupils. Some parents, who would like to be more involved in helping their children with work done at home, are concerned at the inconsistent use of homework. There is scope for a more consistent policy and practice to be established. **This is a key issue for action.** More information could also be given about what the pupils will be studying each term, in order to help parents become more involved with their children's learning.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

37. The major problem facing the school at the time of last inspection was the weak leadership and management of the previous headteacher. Parents were unhappy and taking their children to be educated elsewhere so that shortly after the inspection the school was facing closure. Fortunately the governing body took decisive action. They recognised the crucial importance of their school to the local community and set about recruiting a new headteacher who would improve things.
38. Since his arrival the headteacher has systematically set about the business of taking the school forward. This has not been easy because the small staff team has changed frequently, but he continues to work tirelessly to make the school successful. Central to all that he does is the conviction, shared with staff and governors, that the school lies at the heart of its community and that all the pupils should be helped to achieve the highest standards possible.
39. From the outset the headteacher was aware that the standards achieved by pupils at the school were rock bottom. He swiftly set about getting as much information as possible about the strengths and weaknesses of every child and setting targets for how they might improve. In order to do this the teachers make effective use of national tests and other assessment information. There was also a keen awareness of some of the significant shortcomings in the teaching identified at the last inspection. As a result the headteacher sought the advice of local authority inspectors to help him to develop his monitoring skills, so that now there are regular checks on the quality of lessons. This information is used effectively to help all staff improve the way they work with the children. The positive impact of these strategies is best illustrated by the steady rise in standards that has matched the national trend and the much better results achieved by the current Year 6. Similarly, during this inspection there was virtually no unsatisfactory teaching and about a quarter that was very good, whereas previously there was more than a quarter unsatisfactory and none that was very good.
40. It is evident from their comments and questionnaire responses that parents and carers soon became aware of improvements at the school. Many who had taken their children away brought them back. Pupils from further afield have also begun to attend the school. At its nadir the school roll was under thirty; it has now trebled to over seventy. Most parents acknowledge that this remarkable turn-around is largely as a result of the strong leadership and vision of the headteacher. In particular, the caring ethos of the school, the accessibility of the staff and their willingness to listen and work with families are key features of its success.
41. The headteacher has received strong backing from his governors. They listen carefully to his opinions and have sensibly incorporated the staff view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school when agreeing their well considered school development plan. This document sets a brisk pace of change and clearly informs the priorities by which the governors allocate the school's budget. Careful consideration is always given to the ways that expenditure will benefit the education of the pupils and help raise standards. For instance, the commitment to providing a learning assistant in each class is a considerable expense, but there is good evidence that this policy is having an extremely positive impact upon the quality of education provided. The governors have also made a good start to ensuring that similar best value judgements are applied to the purchase of other goods and supplies by requiring three quotations for significantly large expenditure and comparing the quality of each. The governing body now fulfils its statutory responsibilities in full.

42. The funds provided to support those pupils with special educational needs are used appropriately and effectively. The special educational needs co-ordinator has a very good oversight of the management of her area of responsibility and this leads to these pupils making good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. A particular strength is the comprehensive record maintained of the strengths and weaknesses of each pupil that are regularly added to and reviewed by staff around the school. It is this evidence that helps to shape the good quality, relevant and attainable targets.
43. Arrangements for the induction of new staff are good. There is a helpful handbook of useful information about the day to day running of the school. Equally the small and closely-knit staff team work together extremely effectively to share curriculum responsibilities and individual expertise. For instance the newly qualified teacher has received good support in her first teaching post. This is important because in September three new teachers take up posts at the school.
44. The school building and attractive, spacious grounds are well maintained and used effectively to support the teaching of the curriculum. The school has a good level of resources and there have been significant improvements in the levels of provision for teaching information technology since the last inspection. The new school library provides an increasingly wider range of reading material for the children. The use of a computer to keep track of who has borrowed the books is both efficient as well as providing useful opportunities for the pupils to apply their information technology skills in a real situation.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

45. In order to raise standards at the school still further the headteacher, staff and governing body should;
- Create a clearer curriculum framework especially for art, design and technology, geography, history and music, in order that teachers know exactly what to teach at each stage as the pupils move through the school. (Paragraphs 21, 90)
 - Review arrangements for marking pupils work so that the children are told what they have done well and how they might improve their work. (Paragraphs 19, 66, 74)
 - Consult with parents and pupils to arrive at an agreement about the setting of homework paying special attention to ensure its relevance to pupils' learning. (Paragraphs 18, 36, 75)

The school is aware of all these issues and has already included the first two within its development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	17
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	8

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6	18	35	35	6	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	YRec – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	76
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	24

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YRec – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	29

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	17.6
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.2
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

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

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total			
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	()	()	()
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total			
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	()	()	()
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999			

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total			
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	()	()	()
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total			
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	()	()	()
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	2
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	64
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YRec – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20
Average class size	25

Education support staff: YRec – Y6

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	111

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	1998-99
	£
Total income	139732
Total expenditure	147758
Expenditure per pupil	3519
Balance brought forward from previous year	22005
Balance carried forward to next year	13979

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	76
Number of questionnaires returned	45

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	60	36	2	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	49	42	0	0	9
Behaviour in the school is good.	47	49	2	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	40	22	0	11
The teaching is good.	60	31	0	0	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	47	31	16	0	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	73	16	4	0	7
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	24	0	0	9
The school works closely with parents.	64	24	7	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	64	32	0	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44	51	2	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	42	7	2	9

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

46. At the time of the inspection, there were three children under the age of five years in the reception class. Most children attend the local playgroup that is housed on the school site before they join the mixed Reception and Year 1 class at the start of the term in which they become five. A significant proportion begins school with well below average skills in language and numeracy and is also socially and emotionally immature. Parents make valuable contributions to the information that the school needs in order to provide an appropriate level of care and support when the children start school.

Personal, social and emotional development

47. By the end of the foundation stage, the majority of the children are close to attaining the early goals in this aspect of their learning. A significant minority finds it difficult to sustain concentration or maintain consistently constructive relationships with adults or other children. Many children can sit quietly for an extended period, listening to a story or awaiting their turn during a class discussion. Others are restless, often disregarding the adults' reminders about appropriate behaviour and, consequently, disrupting the pace of class activities. When working in small groups, these children demonstrate somewhat better levels of concentration and pursue their activities with greater interest.
48. The children generally demonstrate a sense of belonging to a large group, can take turns when using materials or when forming lines to move to the hall or playground. However, a few depend heavily on adults for support, for example, when preparing for practical activities.
49. The adults are sensitive to the children's needs and positively help them to form constructive relationships. They make consistent efforts to develop the children's confidence and raise their self-esteem, for example, during their early efforts to produce models from play dough or when making marks on paper to represent writing. The children enjoy opportunities to choose activities such as role play, which allows them to develop relationships in a 'make-believe' setting. As the adults consistently say 'please' or 'thank you' to the children, the majority is becoming more courteous in their response.

Language and Literacy

50. The children's language skills are well below average when they join the reception class. They make satisfactory progress during the foundation stage even though their language skills are still below average during Key Stage 1. Few pupils demonstrate the ability to communicate through lively talk. A satisfactory range of structured play activities, for example, in the home corner, or through using construction kits, enhances the children's ability to develop their vocabulary and encourages them to listen and respond to each other. Early reading skills are not strong but regular opportunities to look at books satisfactorily raises the children's awareness of the links between letters and sounds and the significance of print. They are gradually acquiring a repertoire of nursery and counting rhymes which they enjoy chorusing as a group. By the end of the foundation stage, the majority of children is still at the very early stages of writing. Often, the writing is linked to purposeful play, such as making a play dough model of 'Dogger' the dog. However, the shape and orientation of letters are still under developed so that for example, where they can write their own name

independently on a name card, the letters are not always clearly formed or correctly positioned.

51. The teacher plans a range of purposeful activities to develop language skills. However, not all adults are always sufficiently clear or explicit about the way language can be used to maximise the development of vocabulary, clear speech or to extend speech. The majority of children listen with enjoyment to stories and rhymes but are much more reticent in making up their own.

Mathematical development

52. The children's confidence in counting, sorting and in other areas of mathematics is below average. This is in spite of the fact that they show evidence of having enjoyed counting rhymes and counting activities linked to classroom experiences. A few of the children can count objects to five and, with some accuracy, link these numbers to the relevant number of objects. They are at an early stage of matching and sorting objects into sets. They recognise the basic two-dimensional shapes but a few children have difficulty in articulating their names. They can compare the size of objects or the quantity of liquid with reasonable success, their experiences being enhanced through the use of construction kits to make 'tall' and 'short' buildings, or water play to observe 'full' and 'empty' containers.
53. The adults organise a satisfactory range of activities for developing mathematical language. In particular sand and water play are used for this purpose. There are opportunities for using empty containers, different sized boxes, tubes and others to engender mathematical talk. As in the case of literacy, there is room still for adults to question pupils more deeply in a wide range of activities, focusing and developing mathematical language and concepts.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

54. The children develop a satisfactory awareness of the world about them by the time they complete the foundation stage. They show this by confidently using a range of tools and equipment such as spatulas, brushes and various containers. They are beginning to be able to manipulate the mouse to change images on the computer screen. They can identify features of their school, for example, the location of the library, the outdoor play equipment and the environmental area. They talk about the time they were in the playgroup and recognise the passage of time between that and the present. They are aware of change, for example, when different substances such as perfume or bubble soap are added to the water tray. They can cut and join paper and fabric.
55. The planned activities are compatible with the delivery of the early learning goals. However, the planning does not sufficiently show how various skills will be taught in greater depth as the children progress through the foundation stage. For example, it is not clear how children learn to take apart and reassemble an increasing range of equipment, or how their recognition of the technology around them will be developed. In some areas, for example, in history there is not a clear distinction between the level of work appropriate for the foundation stage and that for Key Stage 1.

Physical Development

56. Taken overall the children are making satisfactory progress in most aspects of this area of the curriculum. However, some lack of opportunities for the supervised use of wheeled vehicles or for structured activities involving large-scale movements such as climbing up or

through large apparatus, restrict some aspects of the children's development. Their confidence and independence in using small equipment such as beakers of juice or containers for sand and water play is systematically supported. When observed during

outdoor breaks, the children are energetic and can control their movements well when running or playing with hoops.

57. The adults have a satisfactory awareness of the children's safety in and out of the classroom. They are vigilant when items such as scissors or spatulas are used and ensure that the children are made aware of the potential dangers of water or sand on the floor. There is, however, scope for further development in the planning of activities to enhance the children's experiences. No lessons in physical education were observed but there is considerable evidence that the children enjoy vigorous exercise and opportunities to use their skills in controlling hoops and balls.

Creative development

58. The children make steady progress in developing their creativity, especially in painting and music. During painting activities, the children confidently experiment with colour and are able to make appropriate choices of materials, for example, when engaged in junk modelling or collage work. The home corner provides a suitable range of settings for developing the imagination during role-play activities. A recent change of staffing has been too recent to enable the teacher to establish fully a high quality environment to fully stimulate the children's creativity. The range of art and artefacts on display is limited, thereby restricting the opportunities for children to observe artistic forms and representations. There are limited resources in their own classroom for the youngest children to become aware of the rich variety of cultures represented in art. Nevertheless, whenever possible all the children enjoy opportunities to exercise the freedom to experiment with ideas and activities arising from their own imagination.

ENGLISH

59. Standards in English are steadily improving. They are still below average at the end of Key Stage 1 but in this current year, at the end of Key Stage 2 they are broadly average. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests for seven-year-olds standards in reading were below average and in writing well below average. In 1999, the very small cohort taking the Key Stage 2 tests attained results that were very low in comparison with both the national picture and that in similar schools. However, the improvement over the last three years is in line with the national trend.
60. Inspection findings indicate that standards in reading and writing are improving. They are still below average at the end of Key Stage 1 because of the continuing low levels of pupils' speaking and listening skills and the significant number of pupils with special educational needs. Nevertheless, an increased proportion of pupils is reaching the expected levels and a minority is beginning to exceed them by working at a higher level. This is a big improvement reflecting the school's higher expectations of what the children might achieve.
61. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are more confidently applying their writing skills and the reading of many is securely in line with the national average. They speak more fluently and the majority listens appropriately during class discussion so that they are able to make interesting observations in response to the remarks of their peers. The school's literacy strategy is now securely in place, enabling teachers to develop a clear and consistent approach to fostering the pupils' literacy skills. The pupils with more acute literacy needs are making good progress as a result of skilful additional help and careful assessment of their needs.

62. The children enter school with very low speaking, listening and early reading skills. Their attainment by the end of Key Stage 1 is still below the national level. The school has recognised the need to develop talk in a variety of situations and there is now a range of planned opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking skills during key stages 1 and 2. The younger pupils willingly respond to teachers' questions about stories they hear but fewer are willing to contribute, except very superficially, during a "show and tell" session. Very effective teaching during a geography lesson for older pupils inspired lively argument and counter-argument about a simulated planning proposal.
63. The pupils' competence in reading is still below that expected by the age of seven but greater emphasis on developing a wider range of strategies for reading is gradually having a beneficial effect on the pupils' reading skills. Reading comprehension skills are still low as many pupils have restricted vocabularies. However, the growing emphasis upon shared reading of text, the daily opportunities for silent reading and greater focus on the use of the library are effectively extending the range of language the pupils understand and use. The pupils at Key Stage 2 read from an increasing variety of text so that their attainment, whether in reading fiction or non-fiction, is improving markedly. The majority read accurately and expressively. They are developing distinct preferences for certain authors and genres of books. All the readers heard demonstrated a willingness to read.
64. The pupils' writing skills were a cause for concern at the previous inspection. There is now a more systematic approach, for example, to developing the pupils' handwriting skills. Similarly pupils are now encouraged to read through and edit their own writing and focus on checking key spellings which they may have recorded in their own word books. Standards are generally still below average by the end of Key Stage 1 but there is evidence that more pupils are attempting to write increasingly complex and interesting sentences. They organise their writing in appropriate ways, for example, when writing instructions or labelling diagrams. By the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils demonstrate that they can adapt their writing, for example, to compose a letter of complaint or to write a narrative. They are beginning to select appropriate language to describe characters or settings. Much of the work in their exercise books falls below the standard seen in exemplars of work on classroom display or in their portfolios. This is because there has been a number of different teachers working with the class over the past few months. This has led to an inconsistent approach to marking and fluctuating expectations upon the pupils to present their work well. Some of their very recent writing more clearly reflects the fact that the majority are capable of work which meets national standards.
65. Most of the pupils have a positive approach to learning. However, concentration skills and the ability to sustain independent work are still areas to develop at both key stages. The pupils with special educational needs show interest in their work as a result of the skilled and sensitive support which they receive. When offered the opportunity, all pupils enjoy using computers to support their work. The library generally provides a good focus for the development of literacy skills but could be used even more productively to increase opportunities for further independent work.
66. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection is good at both key stages. There is a proportion which is very good and which increases the pupils' progress significantly. The objectives for most lessons are clear and appropriate. When they are shared with pupils, they make a particularly effective impact on improving the learning. Teachers' planning ensures that the pupils' basic skills in reading and writing develop systematically. The pupils' writing skills are well applied when they record work in science but are under used to write

about topics in history, geography or religious education. Very effective questioning of pupils successfully develops their thinking and extends their understanding. For example, in a class in Key Stage 1, the pupils' recognition of the characteristics of non-fiction text was very secure as the result of very well focused questioning. The pupils' learning benefits from the good level of consultation undertaken between teachers and learning assistants. Adults know the pupils very well and are skilful at matching work to their needs. The liveliness of the teaching results in interesting activities for the pupils. Some of the writing tasks have captured the imagination of the older pupils while in Key Stage 1 the narrative skills of teachers are well used to fire the pupils' imagination. The marking of work is a weakness. There is no common approach across the school. The pupils gain inadequate knowledge of where to improve their work as the marking is generally uninformative. **This is a key issue for action.**

67. The progress of the literacy strategy has been well monitored even taking account of staff changes. Raising standards in literacy remains a key objective of the school which is being addressed systematically. There are now adequate resources for reading, the library, in particular, having been reviewed and reorganised. The school is using its existing assessment data effectively to measure progress and is aware of the need to bring together the range of information gathered so that it provides still sharper guidance for the planning of work.

MATHEMATICS

68. The very small cohorts of recent years make the analysis of the results of individual years unreliable. Nevertheless, it is quite evident that putting the results of all four years together, standards at the end Key Stage 2 have been very low for a considerable time and that standards at the end of Key Stage 1 although slightly better, are still below the national average and the results achieved by pupils in similar schools. A significant weakness evident within the detail of the results of last year's national tests was the fact that no pupil managed to reach the higher levels possible in either of the national tests for seven or eleven-year-olds. Furthermore analysis of the data indicates that girls have been achieving much better results than the boys at the end of both key stages.
69. Inspection findings show that standards are improving following much hard work by the teachers to raise the pupils' ambitions. For instance, although the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level at the end of Key Stage 1 continues to be below average, this year several pupils reached the higher level 3 and four fell just short. A further positive sign is that all those who reached the higher level were boys. At the end of Key Stage 2 all of the pupils are working within, or close to the expected level which is a big improvement. Here again the boys are achieving at least as well as the girls, although few are yet working at the higher levels.
70. A major reason why standards are rising is because the school has conscientiously embraced the guidance of the national numeracy strategy and the teachers are working hard with the pupils to make it a success. The teachers knowledge of mathematics is secure and has benefited from the additional training associated with the strategy. Lessons are thoroughly planned and generally have precise objectives for learning. In the best of these lessons such as those observed at the end of both key stages, the teachers take care to share these with the pupils. This is important because a significant number of pupils find it hard to concentrate on their work for long periods and sometimes become restless. The frequent reinforcement of the teacher's expectations and objectives for learning help to keep them focussed. A further strength is the way that the teachers try to make learning about

numbers fun. In every lesson the teachers had a good range of lively mental ‘warm-up’ games that related closely to the mental strategies they were trying to teach. Subsequent written group work reinforced this and the final plenary sessions gave the pupils a good chance to show what they had learnt. In each case, the speed of the children’s response had quickened noticeably by the end of the lesson showing good gains in their levels of skill, knowledge and understanding. The pupils clearly enjoy the challenge of the activities and speak enthusiastically about their work. Mental agility in manipulating numbers in calculations is improving throughout the school.

71. The teachers make very effective use of their learning assistants. These additional adults provide very good support during group work. They are often deployed to support the learning of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. This works well because they watch how the pupils are tackling their work, ask probing questions and help to explain any misunderstanding. In some cases they keep careful notes of what the pupils do and how much work they manage to complete. This is extremely helpful because it provides the teacher and learning assistant with a record to refer to when planning the next lesson.
72. The analysis of the pupils’ work shows that they have produced a good volume of written mathematics in both key stages. At the end of Key Stage 1 the majority of work is in worksheet format. This is because the teacher is trying to set work that is matched appropriately to the wide spread of age and ability in a class that also contains Year 3. The pupils are covering a good range of mathematical activities, but the weakness of this approach is that the children seldom have the opportunity to practise setting out their own work. Similarly the teacher has few opportunities to assess the pupils’ approaches to more open-ended mathematical tasks, although there are occasional examples of the pupils using their mathematical skills within science.
73. In upper Key Stage 2 the picture is more varied because the children have been taught by several different teachers. The positive attitudes of the pupils are revealed in books that are generally well-maintained and free from graffiti. Nevertheless, the variation in the different teachers’ expectations is clearly in evidence. Some of the work is scruffy and poorly presented yet the current teacher demands, and gets, much neater work. For instance, she expects that each digit of a number is written inside one square. There has been a reasonable range of mathematical activities covered, with some strength in the work covering two-dimensional shape and the use of rulers and protractors to measure angles accurately. However, here again, opportunities to practise and apply mathematics in a wider setting have been few.
74. Throughout the school approaches to marking are inconsistent. Teachers are very good at encouraging the pupils within lessons. They correct the children’s work conscientiously indicating right and wrong answers, but seldom provide a written commentary to explain to pupils how they might improve still further. **This is a key issue for action.**
75. The pupils are much more enthusiastic about their work and more parents are willing to support learning at home. However, the school approach to homework is haphazard. Many simple, open-ended mathematical investigations are challenging and fun. The school should review its approach to setting homework and at the same time extend the scope of pupils’ application of mathematics to everyday situations. **This is a key issue for action.**

SCIENCE

76. Over the past four years the pupils’ performance in science has been somewhat better than

the results achieved in English and mathematics. The rate of improvement has matched the national trend but even so, the standards reached by the eleven-year-olds in the national tests have, on average, been well below the expected level and the results of pupils in similar schools. Last year's teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 show that whereas most of the pupils managed to achieve the lowest band within the nationally expected level 2, none achieved at the higher levels. Similarly, although several pupils achieved the appropriate level in the Key Stage 2 tests, none reached the higher level.

77. Inspection findings show that things are getting better. This year almost all of the Year 6 pupils are working at the expected level, although two of them were absent for one of the science tests. At the end of Key Stage 1, even though there is a significant minority of pupils with special educational needs, the proportion working at the expected level is broadly average and one or two are starting to work at the higher level 3.
78. At Key Stage 1 the pupils have covered a good amount of interesting and relevant work across the full range of the National Curriculum programmes of study. The reason why standards are rising is because the teacher tries hard to encourage opportunities for the pupils to work practically and record their findings systematically. For instance, as part of their work on the growth of seeds, the Year 2 and 3 pupils set up a test to discover the best conditions for successful germination. The selected conditions vary from group to group, but it is clear from the sensible way that the majority discuss the work that pupils are used to speculating about the possible outcomes of their experiments. Similarly, the higher attaining pupils found little difficulty in designing a grid to record their findings.
79. In this lesson the teacher questioned carefully to probe the children's understanding and was careful to make sure that they appreciated the need for a fair test. She made effective use of her learning assistant who provided good support for a group of lower achieving pupils. Throughout the lesson the pupils showed interest and enthusiasm for their work. The great majority applied themselves conscientiously although the attention of a few began to flag towards the end of the afternoon.
80. It was not possible to see science being taught at the end of Key Stage 2. The analysis of the pupils' work reveals that there has been some variation in the quality of teaching as a result of the differing expectations of the teachers who have taught the class. Nevertheless there has been reasonable coverage of the National Curriculum and there is good evidence that the Year 6 pupils are developing increasing maturity of scientific thought when comparing work in September with that completed most recently. Although some of the units of work appear as isolated 'gobbets' of science, there are examples, such as the work on sound, that show a good progression of study that increases in complexity and demand. By the end of this unit the pupils have a good understanding of how sound can travel through air, solids and liquids, and some of ways that sound can be muffled. Conversations with the pupils about science reveal that they enjoy this subject and the generally tidy presentation of their work shows a good level of commitment.
81. The leadership is sensibly introducing the national guidance for the teaching of science. This will be a major undertaking next year with three new members of staff and the need to identify a subject co-ordinator. Part of this review should also concentrate on how the pupils' written science work is received and marked. There are some good examples of teacher's writing a specifically scientific commentary in a few of the Year 2-3 books and folders, but this is not yet firmly established throughout the school.

ART, DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY, GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND MUSIC

82. The last inspection identified significant weaknesses in many aspects of the school's provision for these subjects. The leadership has responded positively by providing additional training and resources for staff so that the quality of the pupils' work in these subjects has considerably improved and now generally meets the expected levels at the end of both key stages.
83. In history, the younger pupils have an awareness of the passage of time and recognise differences between the lifestyle of today and that of the Victorian period. They recognise some of the older aspects of their local area and newer developments that have taken place. Work in history and geography are often linked as pupils use maps and plans to locate features of their locality. Their awareness of the more distant past is soundly developed through studies of famous people, such as Guy Fawkes who have shaped the history of this country. An attractive display of past art work on the Vikings and Anglo Saxons provides further evidence of the breadth of the history curriculum, again usefully linked to an analysis of the place names of Anglo Saxon origin.
84. By the end of Key Stage 2, the older pupils acquire a sound knowledge of the past through learning about the Romans in Britain as well as about more ancient civilisations such as that of Ancient Egypt. However, the written work provides little evidence of the pupils' understanding of key historical concepts such as how we find out about the past or how the past can be depicted in different ways. The majority of the pupils has a sound knowledge of aspects of the geography of this country such as the significant impact of rivers upon the landscape. However, the pupils' geographical vocabulary is under developed because the planning of work does not make sufficient coherent links between one topic and another to enable pupils to apply their geographical language in a range of situations. In one lesson observed, however, the teacher very skilfully provided an opportunity for the pupils to prioritise and ask questions relating to a proposed supermarket development.
85. Individual lessons in both history and geography are well planned but there are too few opportunities for the pupils to record their work. The pupils are interested in their learning especially about their local area, which has been enhanced through discussions with local people.
86. Aspects of the pupils' work in art are of a good standard. A significant minority of pupils produces work in art that is of better quality than expected for their ages. They are making good progress as a result of interesting and challenging activities. However, the current approach to planning, while it is effective in relation to individual activities, does not ensure that the pupils' skills are built upon systematically as they engage in work in a variety of media. Interesting opportunities for designing and making are provided through the design and technology curriculum. Nevertheless, the planning focuses on individual activities and not sufficiently on building skills through the succession of activities. The pupils work in a variety of media and have particularly good opportunities for observing and imitating the styles of famous artists such as Mondrian, Picasso and Monet. Younger pupils have carried out careful observations of different styles of portrait painting and successfully reproduced them using a range of crayons. They are developing a good sense of different tones. Appropriate emphasis is given to developing the pupils' design skills and encouraging them to observe and evaluate a range of artefacts such as Victorian clay tiles and the uses to which William Morris designs are put. Some particularly high quality design and finishing are evident in repeated block patterns based on William Morris designs.
87. The evidence of work on display and photographic records of previous work indicate that

pupils are enabled to engage in a wide variety of art and design activities. There is a coherent approach within the school which suggests that these subjects are an important element of a broad and balanced curriculum. However, the planning of work does not yet sufficiently ensure that pupils' always apply the skills they have learned, for example, the use of a variety of drawing media, to later projects. Older pupils have not been encouraged to use sketchbooks to trial designs and techniques although some preliminary sketching on paper was carried out preparatory to making models such as canal boats.

88. In music, pupils are experiencing a good balance of activities so that by the end of Key Stage 2, their work reaches average standards. The youngest pupils sing satisfactorily in tune and their repertoire progresses in range as they grow older. They can collaborate effectively using both self made and untuned percussion instruments. While performing 'The Hairy Scary Castle', using their voices to sing loudly or softly, accompanied by a variety of instrumental effects, the youngest pupils successfully recreate the mood suggested by the theme. At Key Stage 2, the pupils are able to clap in imitation of a range of rhythms. They are developing a sound vocabulary for evaluating the music they hear, including that from different countries and cultures. During a lesson focusing on how rhythms grow and can be enhanced by varying dynamics, texture and pitch, a good proportion of the pupils successfully recognised the different instruments used in an excerpt from the Peer Gynt suite. No evidence was available to assess the older pupils' competence in composition or group instrumental performance.
89. The teaching of music has been enhanced by the arrival of a knowledgeable, specialist teacher. The curriculum plans are now better balanced and allow for a variety of appropriate activities. Opportunities for additional musical experience through choir, guitar and recorder groups as well as individual instrumental lessons, have also enhanced the pupils' involvement in and enjoyment of performance. Although the time for music is low, the majority of the pupils show that the variety of activities is valued. A few pupils at all stages have yet to develop consistently good listening skills to ensure a brisk pace to all lessons in order to make best use of the time available.
90. Since the previous inspection the standards have improved overall in these subjects. They are now securely average, with some areas of above average attainment in art. A significant improvement in standards in music reflects the determination of the school to raise the profile of this subject from the unsatisfactory level observed at the previous inspection. However, although all these subjects are now taught on a regular basis, the school needs to improve the coherence of its planning to ensure that the pupils' learning builds steadily as they gain in age and experience. The teachers have begun to make sensible use of the national guidance for these subjects, but has yet to establish how they will modify this to meet the needs of pupils in mixed age classes containing a wide range of abilities. **This is a key issue for action.**

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

91. The school is making determined and successful efforts to improve standards in information technology. Since the last inspection there has been considerable investment in additional computers and other equipment such as a digital camera. The impact of these purchases is evident in much of the work analysed during the inspection. As a result standards are currently broadly in line with the expected levels at the end of both key stages.
92. Although it was not possible to observe much direct teaching of information technology during the inspection, conversations with the oldest pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 reveal

that they receive regular opportunities to incorporate the use of new technology in their work. For instance there are good examples of the pupils using word processing skills to write letters and stories. The accounts of educational visits are often enlivened by the way that images recorded on the digital camera are merged with text of pupils' writing. They are used to providing commands to a cursor in order to control its movement on the screen.

93. The school has recently gone "on-line" as part of its preparations for the National Grid for Learning. Although the staff still awaits the necessary training to further enhance their skills, the personal expertise of the headteacher means that pupils are already starting to make effective use of the Internet. For instance, some of the older pupils use the keyword "volcano" to find sites to support their research on this subject. They successfully download a good range of information that they print out, interpret and present to the class. This includes some useful work with a spreadsheet and graphs about the number of deaths caused by volcanoes over the past thousand years.
94. In Key Stage 1 the pupils are becoming familiar with computers. In Year 1 most children are gaining reasonable control of the mouse. They can click on command icons on the screen. For example, to choose which nursery rhyme they want to read. Similarly they click on objects such as simple two-dimensional shapes to drag and drop them into a new location. Several have used programs such as 'Colour Magic' to design pictures and write simple captions. Most are gaining useful insights into the way that commands can be given to programmable toys to determine their movements.
95. The headteacher is well aware that the pupils still need to increase the frequency with which the children are able to turn to computers to support their learning. Fewer pupils than usual currently have access to computers at home and not all staff share his confidence and expertise. Nevertheless it is evident that the use of information technology is increasing. A good example of this is the way that each time a child changes a book in the school library they have to enter the details on a lap top computer set up by teachers for this purpose at the start of each day. Throughout the inspection pupils were observed choosing books independently and then carefully entering the details onto the computer. Almost every child was able to explain the system and show the inspectors what they had to do. Many also had a good appreciation of the need to take care of school equipment and to keep track of who was using what.
96. There are ambitious plans to develop still further the use of computers within the school, including the possibility of re-organising space so that key skills might be taught to larger groups of pupils on a more regular basis. Before that, the school development plan sensibly sets out the need for further staff training and fuller consideration of the national guidance for planning the information technology curriculum so that pupils' learning builds more steadily as they move through the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

97. The headteacher and his staff have responded positively to the shortcomings identified in the previous report. There has been extensive staff training and the school-wide adoption of the Top Sport initiative. Several extracurricular sports clubs have been started so that, for instance the pupils compete regularly in football matches. Swimming lessons are provided at a local pool and this year every eleven-year-old pupil can swim a minimum of twenty-five metres. Several swim much further and have good water safety and survival skills. The school development plan sensibly identifies money to improve further the provision for teaching gymnastics by purchasing a range of equipment and large apparatus.

98. It was possible to observe only one, rain curtailed games lesson during the inspection. Here the pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 showed that their abilities to throw, catch and strike a ball are in line with the level expected for their age. The teacher has a secure knowledge of how to teach basic ball skills. He sets a good example by changing into tracksuit and trainers and was therefore able to help pupils improve their performance by demonstrating and joining in key activities. As a result the lesson moved along at a steady pace and all the pupils were kept busy and interested. Once the rain fell most of the pupils behaved responsibly and sensibly collected the equipment before moving back indoors.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

99. At the end of both key stages, the pupils' attainment in religious education matches the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Overall standards are a little above those seen at the previous inspection. The pupils' knowledge increases through both key stages as a relevant range of topics is covered. However, progress is a little disjointed as there is no clear scheme of work to show how different levels of knowledge and understanding should be identified in different year groups.
100. There is a rolling two-year programme divided into half termly themes. At Key Stage 1 the pupils develop a sound knowledge of Christian festivals and recognition that they are also an important feature of other world faiths. They learn to develop respect for themselves and others. They recognise that care of the environment is important. This is enhanced by the creation of a special area adjacent to the playground. A topic on food has been enriched through a visit to a Gurdwara.
101. By the age of eleven, the pupils extend their knowledge of Christianity. They recognise some of the features of Christian worship and understand that when Christians pray they are speaking to God. Their knowledge of Sikhism develops as they learn to appreciate the importance of role models in all faiths and of the signs and symbols associated with different religions. They learn to link the rules that govern their own conduct in school to those which are adopted by adherents of all religions.
102. The teaching in the one lesson seen was of good quality and aroused the pupils' interest and response. The evidence drawn from pupils' written work and the absence of a wholly coherent, progressive school scheme of work reflects some inattention to planning work in the light of earlier learning. This results in a curriculum where individual aspects are carefully planned and taught but within which important linkages in concepts and skills are somewhat tenuous. There is a degree of inconsistency also in the regularity with which religious education is taught.
103. The co-ordinator, who is no longer at the school, has carefully identified suitable topics to include in the long term planning. However, the monitoring of how these plans are implemented to produce a continuous programme of work, has lapsed. Good resources have been purchased, including interesting artefacts. There are also very positive links with local religious leaders. Nevertheless, clearer guidance for teaching is now required in order to raise further the profile of religious education as a core subject.