

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ABBEY HULTON PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Stoke on Trent

LEA area: Stoke-on-Trent

Unique reference number: 123989

Headteacher: A D Keddle

Reporting inspector: Peter Kerr  
23583

Dates of inspection: 5 - 8 February 2001

Inspection number: 192721

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Type of school:              | Primary                                       |
| School category:             | Community                                     |
| Age range of pupils:         | 3 to 11 years                                 |
| Gender of pupils:            | Mixed   |
| School address:              | School Road<br>Abbey Hulton<br>Stoke-on-Trent |
| Postcode:                    | ST2 8BS                                       |
| Telephone number:            | 01782 235551                                  |
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| Appropriate authority:       | The governing body                            |
| Name of chair of governors:  | Mr Philip Whittaker                           |
| Date of previous inspection: | 10 March 1997                                 |

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members |               |                      | Subject responsibilities  | Aspect responsibilities  |
|--------------|---------------|----------------------|---|--|
| 23583        | Peter Kerr    | Registered inspector | Information and communication technology<br>Music                           | What sort of school is it?<br>How high are standards?<br>a) The school's results and achievements.<br>How well are pupils taught?<br>How well is the school led and managed?                     |
| 9504         | Sheila Gurney | Lay inspector        |   | How high are standards?<br>b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.<br>How well does the school care for its pupils?<br>How well does the school work in partnership with parents? |
| 31862        | Julia Coop    | Team inspector       | Special educational needs<br>English<br>History<br>Geography                |  |
| 8534         | David Price   | Team inspector       | Science<br>Design and technology<br>Religious education                     | How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?   |
|              | Moirag Thorpe | Team Inspector       | The Foundation Stage<br>Mathematics<br>Art and design<br>Physical education |  |

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school is a larger than average primary school, with 254 children on roll aged between three and 11. There is a balance between boys and girls overall but not in every year-group. The nursery, although in a separate building, is now incorporated into the school. It caters for 28 children full-time from the age of 3, taught by two full-time senior nursery nurses. The rest of the children are taught in ten classes, including two reception classes, in four separate buildings on a large site. Fifty nine per cent of the children are eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average, reflecting the relatively difficult financial circumstances of many of the families. Six of the children have a Statement of Special Educational Need, which is above the national average, but the percentage of children on the register of special educational needs is average at 16 per cent. All of the children are of white ethnic origin, six of them non-British, but none with English as an additional language. The attainment of the children entering the nursery is very low overall, especially in social and language and communication skills. The school's motto is "work hard, aim high" and current priorities include raising information and communication technology skills following the installation of a new computer suite.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a good school. The quality of teaching is good overall but is not consistently good throughout the school. The children make good progress over their time at the school and achieve higher standards than children in similar schools. The headteacher provides good leadership, with a clear commitment to high standards, and the governing body manages the school's resources effectively. Provision for the children's personal development is good and relationships and behaviour are very good throughout the school. The school gives good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- The quality of teaching is good overall, with very good teaching in the top juniors, enabling the children to achieve well compared to children in similar schools.
- Good provision is made for the younger children in the nursery and reception classes.
- Relationships are very good throughout the school and the children behave very well.
- The school makes good provision for the children's personal development and very good provision for their moral development.
- The headteacher provides good leadership and the senior management team is effective.
- The children achieve particularly well in mathematics and physical education because of good teaching, especially towards the end of Key Stage 2.
- The school has a very open approach to parents, who appreciate its work.

#### **What could be improved**

- The quality of teaching in lower Key Stage 2.
- Standards in history, geography and the creative aspects of music and art and design.
- The extent to which children develop their speaking and writing skills in other subjects.
- The opportunities that the children have to show initiative, take responsibility, develop their creativity and become independent learners.
- The rate of attendance, which is below the national average.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

Good improvements have been made, though some important areas still need developing. The headteacher has provided good leadership and management and has made some effective appointments in key posts. The quality of teaching is much better overall but is not yet consistently good enough. The planning for the curriculum is much better. There are now guidelines for teaching in all subjects, although these are not used consistently. There is some monitoring of the curriculum but this is an area for further improvement. Standards in English, mathematics and science have improved at a faster rate than nationally and the children's attitudes, behaviour and personal relationships are better. Provision for

the children's personal development has improved from satisfactory to good and there are more and better resources to support learning. The governors manage the school's finances more efficiently and deploy its resources more effectively.

## STANDARDS

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

| Performance in: | compared with |      |      |                 |
|-----------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|
|                 | all schools   |      |      | similar schools |
|                 | 1998          | 1999 | 2000 | 2000            |
| English         | C             | D    | E    | B               |
| Mathematics     | E             | C    | C    | A               |
| Science         | C             | D    | D    | B               |

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

The table shows that the school achieves better results than other schools with a similar proportion of children entitled to free school meals, reflecting the good progress that the children make from a low starting point. Overall, the rate of improvement in the school's results is quicker than the national trend but the trend in the English results has fallen further behind the national average in recent years. This is because many of the children have continuing difficulties expressing themselves in spoken and written language and do not read widely enough. The results achieved by seven-year-olds in the national tests in reading, writing and mathematics are well below average, even compared to similar schools, but this is partly due to disrupted teaching in the past. Standards are now rising at this stage, though they are still below average. The school sets suitably ambitious targets for the children to achieve by the age of eleven and, in 2000, these were met. Standards in mathematics are a strength of the school because of good teaching and management of the subject, though the number of children with special educational needs in the current Year 6 means that the test results this year are not likely to be higher than in 2000. In science, the children learn effectively through experimenting, investigating and explaining, which helps to improve their thinking and speaking skills. In PE, very good teaching and subject management have led to the children achieving above average standards but in history and geography achievement and standards are too low because the subject guidelines are not followed consistently enough. Standards are good in singing but achievement in other areas of music is too low. The children generally do not have enough opportunities to be creative and therefore achieve less well in this area than in others. Standards in information and communication technology are still below expectations but the children are beginning to make good progress now that there is regular teaching of computer skills.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect                                 | Comment  |
|--|--|
| Attitudes to the school                | Good. The children enjoy coming to school and they work hard. In most lessons they are enthusiastic and responsive.  |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms    | Very good, both in lessons and around the school. The children are friendly, welcoming to visitors and very polite. Bullying is not a serious concern and exclusions are rare and usually temporary. |
| Personal development and relationships | Relationships are very good, throughout the school. The children take initiative, accept responsibility and co-operate effectively when opportunities arise but this is not often enough.            |



|            |   |
|------------|---|
| Attendance | Unsatisfactory. Below the national average because of persistent absences among a few 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.*

Teaching is good in mathematics. The basic skills of numeracy are taught well and the children are encouraged to use them in other subjects. The teaching of English is satisfactory. Literacy skills are taught effectively in English lessons but are not taught as well as they could be across the curriculum. The needs of all the children are met, though in some classes the Individual Educational Programmes for children with special educational needs are not followed as closely as they should be. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 94 per cent of the lessons seen, good or better in 74 per cent of lessons and very good in 29 per cent. Teaching is consistently good in the nursery and reception classes and in Key Stage 1. The quality of teaching is inconsistent across Key Stage 2. It is very good in 40 per cent of lessons, mostly in Year 5 and Year 6, but is unsatisfactory in 12 per cent of lessons in the lower key stage. Achieving consistency in the quality of teaching across this key stage is a key priority for the school. The teachers manage the children well. They have a good knowledge and understanding of most subjects but not throughout the school in history, geography, art and music. Too few lessons were seen to judge teaching in history and geography but the children's work reflects unsatisfactory learning in some classes. In music, insufficient composing and appreciation is taught and in art there is not enough development of skills because of lack of written guidance for teachers. Learning is now satisfactory in design and technology, reflecting improved teaching. In information and communication technology, teaching is now good. As a result, the children are beginning to catch up in basic computer skills, though they are not yet using them sufficiently across the curriculum. The children are making good progress in many areas but are not developing their speaking, reading and independent learning skills as effectively as they need to. They are interested in lessons and work hard but are not sufficiently independent in their learning in some classes. Teaching is very good in PE, resulting in the children learning rapidly and acquiring good skills. The teachers also use this subject well to develop the children's self-confidence, speaking and listening skills and creative thinking.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect  | Comment  |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum             | Satisfactory. Schemes of work are in place for all subjects but these are not consistently used across the school to ensure that the children build on what they have already learned, especially in history and geography.  |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Satisfactory. Good in the nursery and reception classes. In the rest of the school, the children have good Individual Educational Programmes but the teachers do not always take these sufficiently into account in lessons. |
| Provision for pupils'                               | Good. Very good for moral and satisfactory for cultural development. The school  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | sets high standards for behaviour and relationships and all members of staff are good role models. Assemblies are spiritually uplifting and the children are taught to value each individual. They are given a sound understanding of some aspects of their local and national culture, including the religious practices of ethnic minorities, but more could be done to enrich their education in this area. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils                              | Good. Procedures for promoting good behaviour are very good and contribute to the school's good learning environment. Child protection and health and safety procedures are good. The school knows its children well and keeps good track of their personal development. Good records are also kept of their achievement in English, mathematics and science.  |

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect   | Comment  |
|--|--|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Good. The headteacher gives the school clear educational and pastoral guidance. The senior management team provides good support to the headteacher and is an effective vehicle for managing school improvement.   |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities             | The governing body is now well established and is beginning to build a clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses as a basis for its spending decisions. The enthusiastic and committed chairman provides good leadership and ensures that all legal requirements are met. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance                       | The headteacher gives a good lead in tracking standards and evaluating teaching, bringing about improvements at a manageable rate. The governors and management team know what still needs to be done to continue improving standards.   |
| The strategic use of resources                                   | The school has put in place sound procedures for linking budget spending to the school's educational priorities and for keeping track of expenditure. The principles of best value are rigorously applied to the purchase of goods and services.                                       |

Staffing levels are adequate, but the continued absence of a full-time teacher is having a detrimental effect on learning in lower Key Stage 2. Resources are generally satisfactory. The accommodation is adequate in size with some good features, but is in need of much repair and decoration externally and does not provide an attractive environment for the children to learn in.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most   | What parents would like to see improved   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school expects the children to work hard and achieve their best.</li> <li>Teaching is good.</li> <li>The school is well led and managed and is open and friendly.</li> <li>The children behave well and make good progress.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A small number of parents were not happy with the amount of homework given and the range of activities provided outside school hours.</li> </ul> |

The inspection team supports the parents' overwhelmingly positive views of the school. The inspectors judged the amount of homework given as satisfactory and the range of activities that the school provides

as good.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. The standards that the children reach by the time they leave the school have improved since the last inspection, which reported unsatisfactory progress in most subjects. The children now make good progress overall, reflecting improved teaching, and reach higher standards than children in similar schools<sup>1</sup> by the end of Key Stage 2. The children enter the nursery with very low attainment, especially in language and communication skills, mathematics and personal and social development. They make good progress in the nursery and reception classes, which comprise the new "Foundation Stage"<sup>2</sup>. Despite this, they still have well below average speaking and communication skills when they begin the National Curriculum in Year 1. Their achievement in creative development is good at this stage. Standards are below average at the end of Key Stage 1 in English, mathematics and science and below expectations in information and communication technology, history, geography and music. Standards are in line with expectations in design and technology, art and design and religious education. In PE, the children achieve standards above those expected for their age because of good teaching of a well-organised and closely supervised curriculum.
2. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards are only slightly below national expectations in mathematics and science but are lower than this in English. Despite some very good progress in Year 5 and Year 6, the children's attainment in speaking, reading and writing remains considerably below expectations for their age. A contributory factor to this slow development is the lack of opportunity the children have, in other subjects and outside lessons, to practise and extend these skills. Standards are in line with expectations in art and design and in design and technology but are below expectations in history and geography and the children's achievement is unsatisfactory in these subjects. Their computer skills are well below average, because the provision for information and communication technology has been inadequate until recently, but the children are now making good progress and beginning to achieve satisfactorily. The children achieve standards in line with the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus in religious education at the end of both key stages.
3. The school's results in the national tests for seven-year-olds in 2000 were well below average in reading writing and mathematics. The Teachers' Assessments in science were also well below average. The results have been well below average at best over the past four years in all subjects and were very low in mathematics until 2000. The results have shown a more marked and sustained improvement in mathematics than in the other subjects. Compared to similar schools, the Key Stage 1 results were average in mathematics in 2000 and below average in reading and writing. The Teachers' Assessments of the children's speaking and listening skills show that they perform well below the expected level for their age in this area as well as in reading and writing. These test results and assessments reflect the problems that the children have with speaking and writing skills throughout the school. Over the past four years, the boys have achieved better results overall than the girls have, especially in writing and mathematics. This varies from year to year, with girls sometimes doing better, but in some lessons it was noticeable that the boys demanded and got more attention than the girls, indicating that this might be an area for the school to monitor more closely.

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<sup>1</sup> Similar schools are defined as those primary schools that have a similar proportion of children eligible for free school meals – in this case, more than 50 per cent of the children. This is a fairer reflection of the school's performance than comparing it with all other primary schools in the country.

<sup>2</sup> The "Foundation Stage" was introduced in September 2000. It is for children in nursery and reception classes and is intended to prepare them for the National Curriculum through a programme of "stepping stones" of learning through play, with a gradual introduction to more formal learning. It replaces the preceding "Early Years" curriculum for under fives and extends this stage to the end of the reception year.

4. The school's results in the national tests for 11-year olds in English, mathematics and science have improved at a faster rate than the national trend over the past four years, though standards remain below average in English. The mathematics results have shown the sharpest and most sustained increase. They improved from well below average in 1997 and 1998 to average in 1999 and remained in line with the national average from 1999 to 2000. The English results improved from well below average in 1996 to average in 1998 but have fallen behind the national average again over the past two years. In science, the school's results have been slightly below the national average over the past two years after improving to average in 1997 and 1998. Compared to similar schools, the results were above average in English and science and well above average in mathematics in 2000, reflecting good progress overall during the key stage. The main area of concern at this stage is the children's continuing low performance in all areas of English.
5. Children with special educational needs make good progress in the Foundation Stage and satisfactory progress overall in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The progress the children make varies considerably, however. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) has made considerable efforts to ensure that the children's individual learning targets are specific enough to assist the teachers to plan appropriate work. However, teachers do not consistently implement the targets, particularly in lower Key Stage 2, and the children make unsatisfactory progress. By contrast, they make very good progress in years 5 and 6, with more carefully targeted support.
6. Levels of achievement in literacy<sup>3</sup> are satisfactory. The children make good progress in reading overall, despite some unsatisfactory progress in lower Key Stage 2, and achieve satisfactorily by the time they leave the school. They do not use their reading skills as effectively as they should, however, to aid their learning across the curriculum because the library is not as well-organised and accessible as it should be and not all teachers encourage and facilitate reading as much as they could. Standards in writing are also below average at the end of Key Stage 2. Achievement in this area is unsatisfactory in Year 3 and Year 4 but some very good teaching towards the end of the key stage enables the children to achieve satisfactorily by the time they leave the school. The children have good listening skills but their speaking skills are under-developed because they have insufficient opportunities to practise and improve them over the school as a whole. The children spend too much time in literacy lessons, which often last more than an hour, and this limits the time available for them to develop their language and communication skills in other ways.
7. Although standards in mathematics overall are slightly below average at the end of Key Stage 2, the children achieve well in numeracy<sup>4</sup> and reach average standards in this key area. The teachers have very successfully implemented the National Numeracy Strategy and look for opportunities to extend the children's learning outside lessons. They give the children plenty of opportunities to develop and practise their mental skills and to use and apply their number knowledge in a variety of practical situations, from simple counting in the nursery and reception to the measurement of temperature using negative numbers in Year 5 and Year 6.
8. The children achieve well in science by the end of Key Stage 2, largely due to good teaching of experimental and investigative skills in Year 5 and Year 6. The children learn by discussion and testing their ideas, which improves their language and communication skills as well as helping them to become independent learners. Achievement is also good in this aspect of science in Key Stage 1, although the 2000 Teachers' Assessments show very low attainment compared to national expectations. The children's computer skills are well below expectations in Year 6, reflecting the poor provision in recent years. They do not know their way around the keyboard very well, for example, and are less confident and proficient in their use of the mouse than most children of their age. The introduction of regular lessons in the new computer suite has led to good progress and improving achievement, so that the school is on course to enable the children

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<sup>3</sup> Literacy is the word used to describe the basic English skills of speaking and listening, reading and writing.

<sup>4</sup> Numeracy is the word used for the basic number skills in mathematics.

to achieve well, although opportunities for them to apply computer skills in other subjects are still too limited.

9. Levels of achievement are unsatisfactory in history and geography and this is a cause for concern. Despite the co-ordinator providing good guidelines, teachers are not systematically teaching the basic skills in these subjects, so the children are not reaching the standards they are capable of. Nor are the subjects used as they could be across the school to develop the children's language and communications skills. In design and technology, significant improvements in the curriculum have led to standards rising from below to in line with expectations. Achievement is satisfactory in art and in singing but is unsatisfactory in composing and performing music because the children have not had enough experience of this aspect of the subject. The children achieve very well in PE due to very good teaching and reach standards above expectations for their age by the end of both key stages. The expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus in religious education are met at both key stages so that the children have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of different religions and of how religious beliefs can affect people's lives.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

10. The children have positive attitudes to their learning and they like coming to school. In most lessons they are well motivated, keen to participate and responsive. They are enthusiastic, work well in pairs and co-operate effectively when opportunities arise. In PE, for example, older children show a high level of commitment, concentration and motivation and work together very effectively to improve their team skills.
11. At the time of the last inspection, behaviour was judged to be good. It is now very good. The children are friendly, welcoming to visitors and very polite. Behaviour is good in lessons, in assemblies, in the dining room and around the school. The children are eager to be of help, to hold doors open for visitors and show them around. Though, as in all schools, there are instances of challenging behaviour and of bullying, none were witnessed during the inspection and children do not consider bullying to be a serious concern. No child has recently been permanently excluded from the school. Last year one child, now in secondary school, was temporarily excluded.
12. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Many very positive relationships were observed between teachers and children. Relationships between children are also almost all very good. When given responsibility, children accept it willingly. For example, Year 5 children help in the nursery. This encourages good citizenship and a sense of responsibility. When the nursery children join the reception class they get a sense of security in knowing members of Year 6 whom they can ask for help, for example in the playground or the dining room. A small number of children from Year 4 upwards have formed a committee to edit the school newspaper. This is an excellent opportunity for them to gain self-confidence and enhance their personal development. However, opportunities in lessons for children to show initiative and take responsibility for their own learning are limited.
13. Attendance is now below the national average for primary schools, although the rate has improved somewhat since the last inspection. There is, however, very little unauthorised absence. Much of the absence is caused by families taking holidays during the local works' holidays, which fall during the latter part of the summer term.
14. Children with special educational needs in Key Stage 1 have a positive attitude to work and have formed very good relationships with the learning support assistants and teachers. They behave well in lessons and can remain focused on tasks when supported. In lower Key Stage 2, the children do not have such a positive attitude because, in some lessons, the work they are given to do is not matched to their needs. However, in other classes in Key Stage 2, especially in Years 5 and 6, the children's attitudes are very positive. They are interested in their work and have formed very good relationships with teachers and support staff, and this leads to their trying hard

and making very good progress.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

15. The standard of teaching has greatly improved since the last inspection, when it was unsatisfactory in more than one in three lessons. The teaching is now of good quality overall, although teaching is still weak in some classes and occasionally unsatisfactory, especially at the beginning of Key Stage 2. Over the school as a whole, the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 94 per cent of lessons and good or better in 74 per cent. Nearly one third of the teaching seen was judged very good. The bulk of this was in the top juniors, with the teaching in the Year 6 class of a consistently high quality. The teaching in the Foundation Stage is consistently good, by both the teachers in the reception classes and the nursery nurses in the nursery, giving the children a very good start to their education. This is continued in key stage 1 where teaching is also consistently good.
16. The basic skills of literacy are taught satisfactorily overall, with good teaching in the Foundation Stage and in English lessons in Key Stage 1 and Year 5 and Year 6. A weakness in the school as a whole is the provision for the children to develop and practise their speaking, reading and writing skills beyond the dedicated literacy lessons. In the classes where teaching is strong, this happens to some extent. The children are given opportunities to put forward their views and to discuss and evaluate their work, as was seen, for example, in science lessons in Year 1 and Year 6 and in PE lessons in Year 2 and Years 5 and 6. In other lessons, however, there is too much input by the teacher and too little discussion among the children for speaking skills to be developed properly. History is used effectively in some classes, particularly in Year 6, to extend the children's writing skills, for example by describing in detail how life would have been for a Roman soldier during the Roman occupation of Britain. However, over the rest of the school, this subject, along with others, is not used as effectively as it could be for this purpose. The samples of children's work in Year 3 and Year 4 in particular indicate that the children record too much of what they have learned on worksheets to a common format, restricting their opportunities to write creatively and at length. This reflects low expectations on the part of some teachers and a lack of challenge for potentially higher-attaining children. Reading is also not nurtured as effectively as it could be. The way the children's individual reading is organised leads to some of them undertaking very little private reading. The range and quality of books in the library and the limited access the children have to them also discourages reading for information and pleasure. This also restricts the opportunities the children have for developing their independent learning skills.
17. Numeracy skills are taught well. The children in the nursery and reception are introduced to the skills of counting in a gradual way through rhymes, songs, games and play so that they always relate the numbers to real practical experiences and therefore learn them well. The school has successfully implemented the National Numeracy Strategy in both key stages, so that the children practise their mental skills regularly and apply what they learn to solving practical problems. They are given opportunities to practise and develop their skills in other subjects, especially towards the end of Key Stage 2, by taking measurements in science experiments, for example. They also apply and extend their skills using computers, for example in sorting and classifying data, but this aspect of the teaching of numeracy skills is still underdeveloped. The samples of work from the children in Year 3 and Year 4 indicate that, in these classes, the children do not have as many opportunities to develop and apply their skills as they do in the rest of the school. There is an over-reliance on worksheets at this stage, and less good quality marking to show the children how to improve. The needs of the higher attaining children are well catered for because they join Year 5, but the work provided for the rest of the children is less closely matched to their requirements.
18. Good teaching in the Foundation Stage ensures that children with special educational needs are identified early and given appropriate support. The interesting range of activities they are given stimulate and enrich their early language skills and ensure that they make good progress relative

to their ability. In Key Stages 1 and 2, the teaching of children with special educational needs varies considerably. Where teaching includes a variety of interesting activities that are enjoyable and matched to the children's abilities, very good learning occurs. For example, in a Year 5/6 lesson, in which the children made simple words and non-words with dice, they made very good progress. In some classes, the teachers are very skilled at enabling children of different abilities to learn from each other. For example, in a very good lesson in Year 6, children with special educational needs made very good progress in their geography skills when they discussed photographs of Kenya with higher attaining pupils. In lower Key Stage 2, however, the work is often not sufficiently matched to the children's needs or to the targets set in their Individual Education Plans. In addition, too much of the work that is set is in the form of worksheets that are either too difficult for many of the children to read or are merely colouring exercises. As a result, the children develop negative attitudes to their work and make slow progress.

19. The learning support assistants, who support children with special educational needs throughout the school, work very closely and effectively with the teachers. Their commitment and professionalism make a very important contribution to the children's learning.
20. The nursery nurses in the nursery and the teachers in the reception classes provide a consistently good quality of education for the youngest children in the school. They enable the children to learn through a wide variety of play activities in a secure and stimulating environment. The nursery is very effective at teaching the children the early social and personal skills, which form the basis for the rest of their learning. The children quickly learn the classroom routines and begin to make sensible choices about what they want to do. They are taught to take part in group activities, to listen to the teachers and to take turns when necessary so that by the time they join the reception classes they have the necessary skills and positive attitudes to take advantage of the increasing learning opportunities. A particular strength in the nursery is the way the children are introduced to a range of music, which they listen and respond to with pleasure, developing their own tastes and preferences. The reception classes are effective in enabling the children to develop the full range of skills in the six areas of learning for the Foundation Stage, especially their artistic expression. An area for development in these classes is the provision of a more interesting range of different areas in the classroom where the children can choose to play together and develop their communication skills.
21. Teaching is good in science. Very good lessons were observed in Year 5 and Year 6, in which the teachers enabled the children to discuss and test their own ideas, enabling them to develop and extend their speaking and listening as well as their experimental skills. Good teaching was also seen in Key Stage 1. In Year 1, for example, a range of interesting resources was used to enable the children to test materials for their reflective properties. In these good lessons, the children show interest and enthusiasm, work hard and learn how to undertake effective investigations. In the less successful lessons, the teachers direct the children too much, giving them too few opportunities to experiment for themselves and discuss what they have learned and their interest and work-rate are correspondingly lower.
22. The teaching of information and communication technology is good. It is in its early stages but is beginning to be effective in developing the children's computer skills. In the lessons that were seen, the teaching was always at least satisfactory and was sometimes good or very good. The very good teaching achieved a good balance between teacher-input to the whole class and the children having guided "hands-on" practice at the specific skills that had been introduced. When the teacher talks to the whole class for too long, valuable time when the children could be operating the computers is lost. The skilled teachers are aware of how much they can expect the children to absorb in one lesson and tailor their input accordingly. When the children are working on the computers, they are fully attentive and learn the required skills quickly. The teachers do not, however, provide enough opportunities for the children to apply computer skills in other subjects on a day-to-day basis, as they are not yet familiar enough with the possibilities.
23. The quality of teaching in PE is very good. In all the lessons seen, the teachers demonstrated very good knowledge of the subject and how to enable the children to learn through a combination of practising skills and observing and evaluating each other. The teaching of art and design and



design and technology is satisfactory, with examples of good teaching in Year 5 and Year 6. However, in the absence of a co-ordinator for these subjects, the quality of teaching is variable across the school because some teachers lack the knowledge and confidence in the subject to teach them well.

24. Teaching is unsatisfactory in history and geography overall, despite some very good teaching in Year 6, because too few of the teachers incorporate the subjects properly into their planning. Insufficient time is devoted to these subjects, and in some classes, the basic skills of historical and geographical enquiry are just not taught, despite the co-ordinator having provided very clear guidelines. The detrimental effect this has on the children's learning is very clear. Children in lower Key Stage 2, where the teaching is unsatisfactory, produce mechanical worksheets that contribute very little to their knowledge, understanding and skills. In marked contrast, children in Year 6 produce reflective pieces on what it is like to live in different historical periods and take part in lively discussions on the similarities and differences between one part of the world and another because of stimulating, good quality teaching.
25. Singing is taught well in the school, leading to good quality performance in this aspect of the subject throughout, for which the school is known and respected in the local music fraternity. Other aspects of the subject are not taught to a satisfactory standard, however, resulting in the children having lower composing and performing skills than they should have by the end of Key Stage 2. In the lessons that were observed, too much of the time was taken up with the teacher talking to the children and too little time devoted to focused group activities. The children are clearly inexperienced at working in small groups to create musical pieces, which they can then perform for one another before going on to evaluate and improve their work. The teaching of art and design is satisfactory but the children's creativity is not fully nurtured throughout the school. Teaching in design and technology is satisfactory from the evidence of the children's work, which reflects some testing, evaluation and improvement of designs in Year 6.
26. The teaching of religious education is satisfactory. The teachers plan their lessons according to the Locally Agreed Syllabus and ensure that the children have a suitable knowledge of the different religions and how religious beliefs can influence the way people live. The subject is not used as well as it could be, however, to generate discussion and debate with a view to improving the children's speaking skills. For example, when some children from another faith visited the school, the children were not given the opportunity to ask questions or express their views. This kind of over-direction by the teacher is an example of how many opportunities are lost to develop the children's learning and communication skills through other subjects.

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

27. The school has made significant improvements in the planning of the curriculum since the previous inspection. At that time, the curriculum was unsatisfactory because it was not broad and balanced and did not meet legal requirements to teach the full National Curriculum. The curriculum for children under five was also unsatisfactory because it was not effectively planned.
28. The curriculum for children in the nursery and reception classes – the new Foundation Stage – is good. The teachers and nursery nurses plan activities according to the “stepping stones”, which define children's progress through the six “areas of learning”. This ensures that the children make a smooth transition into Key Stage 1 of the National Curriculum. The curriculum enables the children to make good progress in all the areas of learning. However, because the children enter the school with very poor speaking skills, they need more opportunities to engage in stimulating play, right through the stage, in which they can learn from talking to one another and to adults.
29. The last inspection report indicated that there were no schemes of work for subjects of the National Curriculum except physical education, music in Key Stage 1 and religious education. The school has worked hard on this and made good improvements to curriculum planning. There are now detailed schemes of work for all other subjects. The curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2

is satisfactory overall, with good provision for physical education. English and mathematics are planned according to the National Guidelines for Literacy and Numeracy and the curriculum for religious education is based on the Locally Agreed Syllabus. In art and design, there are only draft outlines to guide planning and this has resulted in the children not doing enough creative art and design work. In music, there is insufficient emphasis on the development of composing and performing skills, although the concentration on singing leads to good standards in this aspect of the subject. A further area for development in the creative aspect of the curriculum is role-play and drama, which are not used as effectively as they could be to develop the children's speaking skills. There are also too few opportunities across the curriculum for children to use their own initiative, discover things for themselves and become independent learners.

30. The good planning of the curriculum that has been developed is not consistently implemented in all classes and for all subjects. For example, the variety of teaching and learning methods used in order to develop the children's skills of historical and geographical enquiry that were in evidence in the upper Key Stage 2 classes was not in place for the lower Key Stage 2 classes. In general, there is an imbalance in the timetable in the times allocated to different subjects. The children spend too much time in formal English lessons, for example, and too little time on other subjects that could provide more interesting and effective ways for them to develop and apply their language skills.
31. The school makes effective use of parents and visitors to the school, such as speakers in assembly and groups of musicians, to enrich the curriculum. The educational visits that are arranged for all age groups to such places as Lakemore Country Park, Cannock Chase Forest, Stanley Head Outdoor Centre and the Deva Roman Experience at Chester also help to extend and enrich the children's learning opportunities. Consideration should be given to providing even more of these valuable learning opportunities so that the children have a wealth of first-hand experiences to motivate them and to develop their expressive language and general learning skills at a faster rate.
32. The school's programme for personal and social development, including sex and drugs awareness education, is satisfactory. It includes useful opportunities for children to consider important aspects of health, family life and the environment and to express their views and feelings about sensitive and personal issues in a secure and supportive environment such as the "circle time" sessions<sup>5</sup>. There is a commitment, written into policies, to ensure that all children are given equal access to the curriculum and this is satisfactorily implemented.
33. The provision for children with special educational needs is good in the Foundation Stage and satisfactory in the rest of the school. The policy is good and has clear aims and objectives. All the requirements of the Code of Practice for children with special educational needs are met and these children receive a broad and balanced curriculum on the whole. However, despite the hard work of the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), who writes the children's Individual Education Plans, some teachers do not implement these plans effectively. This is an inefficient use of the SENCO's valuable time and effort and limits the progress the children make towards their individual learning targets.
34. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, including netball, football, hockey and cross-country running, a choir and recorders. In addition, a group meets to produce the school newspaper. There is a breakfast club and a homework club to provide for the needs of different families and tuition on brass instruments often takes place in the mornings before lessons. Key Stage 1 children have the choice between a mathematics games and investigations club, a poetry and drama club and an religious education activity.
35. The school has good links with the community, which contribute positively to different areas of the children's learning. For example, some PE lessons are taught at the local sports centre and

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<sup>5</sup> "Circle Times" are lessons in which all the children sit in a circle with the teacher to discuss issues, express feelings and views and consider the views and feelings of others.

sports fixtures are arranged with other schools. In addition, links with Stoke City Football Club and the negotiated use of a neighbouring primary school's training facilities help to make up for the school's lack of a playing field. Relationships with the local secondary school have also enabled the children to share in some of their facilities, such as science areas. Some volunteers from the community come into the school to help children with their work. In some cases this has involved the volunteers hearing children read regularly and there is evidence of very good progress being made by some of the children concerned as a result.

36. The school's overall provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children is good and is a strength of the school. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when provision was judged satisfactory.
37. Provision for children's spiritual development is good. The daily acts of collective worship, which give children good opportunities for reflection and prayer, make effective contributions to the promotion of spirituality. The whole-school assemblies are uplifting experiences because they are planned with clear objectives around a different theme each week. The music played as the children come in for assembly sets the right atmosphere and the songs sung reflect the theme. In religious education lessons, children learn the meaning of prayer and write their own prayers to reflect how they feel about important issues. In other areas of the curriculum, there are moments when the children have experiences that give them a sense of wonder, such as in one geography lesson when, looking at photographs taken in Kenya, children were amazed to find that the cities had street lighting and modern hotels. In one particular religious education lesson there were gasps of amazement from the children as they watched two Muslim children from another school show their prayer mat and the Arabic script of their holy book.
38. The school's provision for children's moral development is very good. The school promotes a clear understanding of right and wrong and the policy that the school has developed helps the children to understand its expectations for good behaviour. There are rules relating to behaviour in all the classrooms and the children are reminded of these when necessary. Good behaviour is regularly rewarded with stickers being given to children. All members of staff guide the children well and are very good role models for them to follow. They value the children's comments and efforts. Moral issues are frequently explored to good effect; for example, the theme for assemblies for the week of the inspection was 'working together'. The school emphasises the importance of all members of the school community being equal and this helps the children to value and respect each other.
39. The school makes good provision for the children's social development, with an appropriate emphasis on consideration, tolerance and understanding that promotes socially acceptable attitudes. Boys and girls are provided for equally in all aspects of the curriculum. The teachers are both professional and caring and relationships between children and staff are positive and successful. There are many examples of children working well together in lessons, sharing and helping one another. The children are friendly and welcoming to visitors. Physical education lessons and other sporting activities give the children excellent opportunities to learn fair play and co-operation as team spirit is promoted. The school strives to develop the children's self-esteem, as well as a strong school identity and a pride in the school. Visits outside school provide valuable opportunities for the children to develop a sense of responsibility. Older children are given some responsibilities, such as organising the production of a school newspaper, but there is room for even more opportunities to be given in this area.
40. The overall provision for children's cultural development is satisfactory. History lessons provide children with insights into British culture and ancient civilisations and how they influence lifestyles today. In geography, teachers use photographs to provide opportunities for children to understand the different ways in which people live. In religious education lessons, the children learn about people who belong to such faiths as Christianity, Judaism and Islam and the ways in which these people live and celebrate their faith. The children's understanding and appreciation of minority ethnic cultures in this country is limited. The school is aware of this and for the need to develop multicultural education so that the children are prepared for life in contemporary British society.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

41. Procedures for ensuring the well-being, health and safety of children are good, maintaining the standards reported at the time of the previous inspection. Pastoral care and support is central to the ethos of the school and all members of staff, including the lunchtime supervisors and school-meals providers, have the welfare of the children at heart. A good example of the sensitive provision is the breakfast club which enables the children to get a good start to the day. The school also ensures that children experiencing problems have access, where necessary, to a children's counsellor. There are secure and sensitive methods to deal with child protection issues. All teachers keep personal records on the children in their classes and, although not all staff have had formal child protection training, there is careful induction for new teachers. The designated teacher is convinced that staff will pick up any adverse signs. Though the buildings are old and the site is not easy to run, no serious health or safety issues were noted.
42. The teachers and classroom assistants know the children, and often their families, well and so informal monitoring of their personal development is good. In addition, the teachers maintain written records and there are good procedures for passing these on to the next class teacher as the children move up the school. The positive discipline policy is very effective and the school has very good strategies to discourage and control bad behaviour. The school nurse plays an important role in health education and sometimes contributes to science lessons, for example when teaching human biology. She also helps children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. There is a policy designed to combat bullying and this works well. Emphasis is placed on the importance of instilling good manners and social skills and these strategies are very effective.
43. Procedures for recording and reporting attendance are satisfactory, though there is occasionally some leniency in authorising absences, for example when children are away for more than ten days' holiday during term-time. Children with poor records of attendance are targeted and parents are telephoned on their first day of absence. There has been a recent reduction in the role of the Education Welfare Officer. She used to visit the school weekly but is now only involved when invited by the school. Currently, in an effort to improve attendance, a grant has been obtained to run a free "breakfast bus". It is hoped to continue this in winter time even if a small charge is levied.
44. The school has good procedures for the early identification of children with learning difficulties. These young children are fully included in the foundation curriculum and receive support appropriate to their needs. Children with Statements of Special Educational Need have very good support from the SENCO, who liaises very effectively with parents and outside agencies to provide additional support and guidance for the school. In addition, the SENCO has provided relevant guidance to staff on the identification of children's special educational needs in order to ensure that they are correctly identified and supported at an early stage. However, not all staff follow this advice. As a consequence, some children's needs are not identified until later in their school career than they should have been. The teachers rely on the SENCO to write and review children's Individual Educational Plans (IEPs). This places an undue administrative burden on her and leads to the risk of provision being interrupted. For example, no reviews were undertaken or new individual targets set when the SENCO was absent on long term sick leave, denying many children the opportunity they should have had to continue making progress towards their individual improvement targets. Procedures for writing, implementing and reviewing IEPs should therefore be reviewed to ensure that the class teachers more consistently share responsibility for them.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

45. The school has good links with parents, most of whom loyally support it. There was a very good attendance at the pre-inspection parents' meeting and most parents were positive when responding to the questionnaire. All felt comfortable approaching the school with problems or concerns and also felt the standard of teaching was good. They consider that the school is well managed and that it expects their children to work hard and achieve their best. They felt that their

children were making good progress and were happy.

46. Though the number of parents actively involved in helping in school on a regular basis is quite small, those involved are keen and generous in their support of school functions. A number are also readily available to help with trips and educational visits. A small and committed group of parents run the Friends of the School and manage to raise considerable sums each year to support the children's education. As well as the usual fairs, parents run a car boot sale every Sunday and there is a small weekly income from a national lottery "bonus ball" competition.
47. Parents and carers feel well informed about the school and their children's progress. Annual reports include targets and offer suggestions for improvement. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting were pleased with the information given about the curriculum to be studied. The prospectus meets statutory requirements and is very detailed. Parents are also given a very useful information leaflet for quick reference.
48. Parents are encouraged to become involved with their children's work at home. In the nursery, the children are given "homework" once a week and there is a display board to exhibit their paintings, etc. This encourages all children and their parents to participate. Year 2 children take mathematical games and book sacks home so that their parents can become thoroughly involved. In the rest of the school, the provision of homework and support given with it is satisfactory. The school has run several initiatives to help parents, such as a family literacy course and a course designed to help parents manage their children's behaviour. However, it has proved difficult to get enough parents with sufficient commitment to attend regular sessions. Most parents have signed the new home/school agreement and the headteacher always welcomes positive suggestions from parents and is always willing to act on complaints. There is an open door policy for parents, who are always welcome to speak to the headteacher or the class teachers.
49. Parents are fully informed and involved with the individual reviews of their children who have special educational needs, especially those at stage three and above. Parents who have concerns are able to meet and discuss issues with the SENCO, who ensures that advice and guidance is provided from outside agencies if required.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

50. The headteacher has continued to provide good, effective leadership since she was appointed shortly before the last inspection. Since then, many improvements have been made to the way in which the school is managed, the net result being that it now gives good value for money compared with unsatisfactory value for money last time. The school has achieved this very good gain in value by improving the quality of teaching and learning through extensive monitoring and evaluating. It has also ensured that budget planning is closely linked to the educational priorities identified in its development plan.
51. The headteacher provides clear educational direction for the school. She has established straightforward, relevant aims – "work hard, aim high" –, which are prominently displayed and which have helped to focus the efforts of the school on raising standards. She has successfully led the school along the path of implementing the National Literacy Strategy and the National Numeracy Strategy, ensuring that the basic skills are taught effectively. The priorities she has established for improving the school reflect its most important current needs. These include raising attainment in information and communication technology and making the standard of teaching and learning consistently good across the school. Suitably challenging targets have been set for English and mathematics in the national tests for 11-year-olds and the school carefully monitors its progress towards achieving them. This ensures that everyone's attention is focused on raising standards in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. The amalgamation of the nursery into the school, which the headteacher persuaded the governors to agree to, has been of great benefit in providing the children with a very good, smooth start to their school life.

52. The members of the senior management team in the school are committed to raising standards and to improving the quality of education in the school. They are very open-minded and keen to consider any advice and guidance that may be available. They have very useful discussions in which a whole range of views about school improvement are considered. It was heartening during the inspection process to feel that whatever suggestions were made for further consideration would be taken seriously and acted upon. This aspect of the school's leadership and management is central to the good capacity the school has to continue improving.
53. Two members of the senior management team, including the deputy headteacher, have unfortunately been absent through serious illness. This has limited the effectiveness of the team over the past year, placing too many specific responsibilities on the headteacher. A further long-term absence has affected the management of art and design and design and technology, which are not taught as extensively and as well as they should be because the teachers have not had the necessary support and guidance.
54. This continuing absence is also affecting the quality of teaching available in lower Key Stage 2. There is great uncertainty over a possible return date for the teacher, leaving the class to be taught by temporary supply teachers. As a result, the children are not receiving the same standard of teaching that would be expected from a permanent member of staff. Managing this issue is very difficult because of the uncertainty over if and when the absent teacher will return but the issue should be resolved as quickly as possible, so that this group of children do not continue to have a disrupted education.
55. The headteacher has also introduced very thorough procedures for monitoring, evaluating and improving teaching. These have been successful in raising the quality of teaching in most parts of the school. Problems still persist in lower Key Stage 2, however, and the goal of achieving a consistently good quality of teaching across the school has yet to be achieved. The good procedures for appraisal and performance management that the school has now introduced contribute to the school's capacity to do this by improving its ability to agree demanding performance and improvement targets for all members of staff and insisting that they are met. The headteacher has made new appointments wisely and deploys her teachers to the best effect over the school as a whole. Procedures for the induction of new staff, including newly qualified teachers, are good, so that new appointees quickly become settled and effective members of staff.
56. The school's special needs provision is very well led. The co-ordinator is extremely hard working and dedicated and has a very good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses in the school's procedures and practices. She gives a good lead to the school. However, the management of this potentially very good provision is not as efficient and effective as it could be because there is insufficient delegation of responsibility to the class teachers. The current arrangements for reviewing children's needs, setting new targets and monitoring their progress rely too much on the SENCO, who has insufficient time to undertake all these duties as well as the other administrative tasks associated with the post.
57. The governing body, including some recently appointed key governors, is committed to the school and conscientious in the discharge of its duties. The governors have a sound grasp of the school's main strengths and weaknesses, through a supply of good quality, clear information from the headteacher and visits to the school to see it working. The chair of governors is particularly active within the school through his regular work in the classrooms as a mentor. He is very aware of the key areas for improvement, including raising standards in self-expression and ensuring a consistent quality of teaching. This puts him in a very good position to ensure that the governing body fulfils its role of "critical friend" to the school. The headteacher is very appreciative of the support the governors give and the probing questions that they ask.
58. The school's financial planning is now on a much stronger footing than it was at the time of the last inspection. The School Development Plan is used as the basis of discussions and decisions on spending plans and the headteacher is developing good systems for checking the effectiveness of individual spending decisions. The need to supply cover for continuing staff

absences, over and above that provided by insurance policies, has led to the school spending all its reserves, which were already depleted because of the spending on resources that was necessary following the last inspection. However, prudent management has ensured that the school is now on track to break even again and to build up a reasonable minimum contingency fund. The day-to-day administration of the budget runs smoothly, thanks to the conscientious efforts of the school secretary and her assistant. Financial and pupil records have been computerised and suitable training undertaken to ensure that the staff understand and take advantage of the new systems. The most recent auditor report was not available during the inspection but the school had acted on its recommendations. These included tightening up procedures for the collecting, recording and banking of school fund money, although all these duties are still undertaken by one person, which is not the best practice of providing clear checks and balances.

59. The school is well staffed with sufficient suitably qualified teachers for the age range of its children and a number of very effective classroom assistants, some of whom are very well qualified for their work. The nursery nurses fulfil an extremely important role in the school. The education they provide for the youngest children in the school is at least on a par with most other areas in the country, where normally a qualified teacher has to be in post to supervise this provision. The school gets very good value for money indeed from this arrangement because the nursery nurses are on a much lower salary scale than qualified teachers.
60. The accommodation, though adequate in size, is unsatisfactory in many respects. The layout is poor as it comprises five separate buildings. This makes it expensive and inefficient to heat and maintain and difficult to work in. On the positive side, there are two halls as well as a dining room and a new computer room and some of the classrooms are spacious and pleasant. However, the library is too small to hold a whole class and is not used to best effect to improve the children's reading and independent learning skills. There are no lavatories in the block used by Years 3 and 4, which means children have to cross the yard to another building. Parts of the building, especially the dining room block, are sorely in need of redecoration. The nursery is housed in an old, high building, with ill-fitting windows that are not double-glazed, and it therefore gets cold and requires supplementary heating in cold weather. It does, however, benefit from an excellent, refurbished cloakroom and lavatories, complete with shower. The state of decoration externally is very poor and gives a dismal impression. The playground is spacious but the surface is uneven, leading to persistent puddles remaining after rain. There is no seating, no grass play area, no wildlife area and little externally to excite the imagination of young children. The school recognises these limitations and is working with local agencies to plan improvements to the site.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

61. In order to continue raising the standard of education provided by the school and improving the levels of achievement of the children, the headteacher and governing body should:
- 1) Ensure that the quality of teaching in lower Key Stage 2 is brought up to that in the rest of the school. (*paragraphs: 15, 16, 17, 24, 54, 55, 81, 82, 83, 93, 94, 98, 99, 109, 112, 113*)
  - 2) Raise standards in history and geography and in the creative aspects of music and art by:
    - ensuring that all subjects are taught in each year group according to the guidelines provided and that comprehensive guidelines are provided to enable the full range of creative activities in art and music to be taught. (*Paragraphs: 9, 24, 25, 29,30, 53, 57, 101,103, 104, 105, 110, 111, 112, 116, 124*)
  - 3) Extend and improve the opportunities provided for the children to develop and practise their speaking, listening and writing skills across the full curriculum by:
    - extending and enriching the children's first-hand experiences, for example through more local visits and motivating them to communicate in different ways, for example, through role-

play, discussion and drama;

- providing as many opportunities as possible within lessons for the children to speak, read and write in a range of different settings for a variety of different purposes and audiences. (Paragraphs 9,16, 21, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 57, 60, 80, 82, 83, 85, 87, 103, 104, 124, 137)

- 4) Continue to work towards improving the rate of attendance so that the children have maximum opportunities to benefit from the education provided.

(Paragraphs: 13, 43)

In addition to these key issues, the governing body should consider including the following considerations into its action plan:

- Ensuring consistency in the application of Individual Educational Plans for children on the special educational needs register. (Paragraphs: 14, 18, 33, 44, 56, 86)
- Giving the children more opportunities to use their computer skills across the curriculum. (Paragraphs: 8, 17, 21, 121, 125)
- Further extending the opportunities the children have to understand and appreciate the full range of cultural influences that contribute to modern life in their country. (Paragraph: 40.)
- Monitoring gender differences more rigorously, in terms of expectations and behaviour as well as standards and achievement. (Paragraph: 3)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### ***Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection***

Number of lessons observed

|    |
|----|
| 49 |
|----|

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

|    |
|----|
| 26 |
|----|

### ***Summary of teaching observed during the inspection***

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 0         | 29        | 45   | 20           | 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 |
|---------|

|            |
|------------|
| YR- Year 6 |
|------------|



|   |    |     |
|---|----|-----|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)      | 28 | 226 |
| Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals | 13 | 140 |

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

| <b>Special educational needs</b>                                    | Nursery | YR – Y6 |
|---|---------|---------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs       | 1       | 6       |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register |         | 54      |

| <b>English as an additional language</b>                | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 0            |

| <b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>                                | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 32           |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving           | 43           |

## **Attendance**

### **Authorised absence**

|                           | %   |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data               | 7.3 |
| National comparative data | 5.2 |

### **Unauthorised absence**

|                           | %   |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data               | 0.0 |
| 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 |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
|  |      | 2000 | 16    | 19    |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results       |          | Reading | Writing | Mathematics |
|---|----------|---------|---------|-------------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above   | Boys     | 9       | 10      | 13          |
|   | Girls    | 13      | 13      | 13          |
|   | Total    | 22      | 23      | 26          |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above | School   | 63 (76) | 66 (68) | 74 (68)     |
|   | National | 84 (82) | 85 (83) | 90 (87)     |

| Teachers' Assessments                       |          | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above   | Boys     | 10      | 13          | 12      |
|   | Girls    | 12      | 13          | 12      |
|   | Total    | 22      | 26          | 24      |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above | School   | 63 (61) | 74 (71)     | 69 (61) |
|   | National | 84 (82) | 88 (86)     | 88 (87) |

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
|  |      | 2000 | 17    | 17    |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results       |          | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above   | Boys     | 9       | 11          | 12      |
|   | Girls    | 13      | 13          | 16      |
|   | Total    | 22      | 24          | 28      |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above | School   | 65 (76) | 71 (76)     | 82 (73) |
|   | National | 75 (70) | 72 (69)     | 85 (78) |

| Teachers' Assessments                       |          | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above   | Boys     | 8       | 10          | 12      |
|   | Girls    | 13      | 12          | 15      |
|   | Total    | 21      | 22          | 27      |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above | School   | 62 (54) | 65 (54)     | 79 (62) |
|   | National | 70 (68) | 72 (69)     | 80 (75) |

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                   | 0            |
| Indian                          | 0            |
| Pakistani                       | 0            |
| Bangladeshi                     | 0            |
| Chinese                         | 0            |
| White                           | 254          |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 0            |

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

|                              | Fixed period | Permanent |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage   | 0            | 0         |
| Black – African heritage     | 0            | 0         |
| Black – other                | 0            | 0         |
| Indian                       | 0            | 0         |
| Pakistani                    | 0            | 0         |
| Bangladeshi                  | 0            | 0         |
| Chinese                      | 0            | 0         |
| White                        | 4            | 0         |
| Other minority ethnic groups | 0            | 0         |

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y6**

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 11     |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher   | 20.5:1 |
| Average class size                       | 22.6   |

#### **Education support staff: YR–Y6**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 9   |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week   | 143 |

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 0 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher   |   |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Total number of education support staff | 2  |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week   | 65 |

|                                |    |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Number of pupils per FTE adult | 14 |
|--------------------------------|----|

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

|                |           |
|----------------|-----------|
| Financial year | 1999/2000 |
|----------------|-----------|

|  | £      |
|--|--------|
| Total income                               | 489665 |
| Total expenditure                          | 478447 |
| Expenditure per pupil                      | 1728   |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | -12790 |
| Balance carried forward to next year       | -1752  |

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

|                                   |     |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 254 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 70  |

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

|  | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school.   | 63             | 33            | 3                | 1                 | 0          |
| My child is making good progress in school.  | 59             | 38            | 1                | 1                 | 0          |
| Behaviour in the school is good.   | 56             | 30            | 7                | 2                 | 3          |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.                              | 57             | 25            | 12               | 1                 | 3          |
| The teaching is good.  | 70             | 30            | 0                | 0                 | 0          |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.                          | 57             | 31            | 9                | 1                 | 1          |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 77             | 23            | 0                | 0                 | 0          |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.              | 84             | 11            | 3                | 0                 | 1          |
| The school works closely with parents.   | 53             | 36            | 9                | 0                 | 2          |
| The school is well led and managed.  | 70             | 27            | 0                | 0                 | 2          |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.                      | 69             | 26            | 4                | 0                 | 1          |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.            | 39             | 39            | 13               | 3                 | 4          |

### **Summary of parents' and carers' responses**

The parents are very supportive of the school.

### **Other issues raised by parents**

No general issues were raised by parents.

## **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**

62. The quality of provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good, a consistent strength being the work of the nursery. In the previous inspection, only the reception classes were inspected. Children are admitted to the nursery in the September following their third birthday and transfer to the reception classes at the end of one year. The induction process is very carefully managed and supported by suitable arrangements for visits by parents and their children in the summer term before they begin. All parents and children have opportunities to visit the school and all families receive detailed information about the curriculum, organisation and activities. These arrangements help the children to settle in very well. Parents appreciate the staff's efforts to involve them in their children's education. Good examples of this were seen during the inspection. In addition to books, children were taking home activities connected with aspects of work undertaken during the school day, which are regularly returned completed. The children and their parents enjoy these shared learning activities. There is an attractive home/school corner in the nursery, which includes a display of children's work that they have undertaken at home. This is part of the very good provision for the children's personal and social development. There are plans to extend these already effective home/school links by organising a 'Toy Library'.
63. The high quality of leadership and management is reflected in all aspects of planning and teaching and in the rigorous assessment and monitoring of all children. The co-ordinator has a high level of understanding of the many strengths and areas for development in this stage. Resources are good; they are well used and contribute positively to children's progress. The staff's daily interactions with children and their curricular planning reflect their understanding that effective learning cannot take place until children feel secure and valued. Very good provision for children's personal and social development is therefore a priority in all lessons and activities.
64. Assessments of the children when they enter the nursery classes show that they have poor levels of attainment in reading, writing, speech, mathematics and personal and social skills. During the two years in the nursery and reception classes, children make good progress in communication, language and literacy and mathematics, and very good progress in all other areas of learning, especially personal and social development. Because of the high quality of provision for personal and social development, which includes consistent praise for success and appropriate reminders about unsatisfactory behaviour, the children learn very quickly and exceed their Early Learning Goals in this area. The nursery nurses and teachers provide a wide range of opportunities for the children to work in different groups, make choices and learn when to sit quietly and listen attentively; all these activities improve their attitudes and behaviour. Children with special educational needs within the nursery make good progress due to the very early identification of their needs, good quality support within lessons, strong emphasis on language development and early involvement of specialist support staff from the Local Education Authority.
65. By the time they leave the reception classes, despite the good progress they have made, the children's levels of attainment are still well below the national average in communication, language and literacy and mathematics. Of the remaining areas of learning, their attainment is just below average in their knowledge and understanding of the world and is in line with expectations in their physical development. In the area of creative development, the children exceed the Early Learning Goals.
66. The quality of the teaching and curriculum throughout the Foundation Stage is good. A particular strength of the provision is the way in which the children are gradually led from the known to the unknown by a rich variety of experiences which enhance their skills in observation, prediction, classification and description. A particularly good example was seen in a reception class where the children were blindfolded and used their sense of taste to identify a range of familiar fruit. This was later extended to tasting more unusual fruit. The staff use challenging questions to

encourage the children and they ensure that the children respond. In most cases, especially in the nursery, the rigorous observation and tracking of individual children are very effectively used when planning the next stage of learning and to identify key areas for development. This is effective in most, but not all, aspects of the reception year.

### **Personal, social and emotional development**

67. By the end of the reception year, the children's attainment in personal and social skills is above the expected standards. The children in the nursery soon begin to relate well, both to adults and each other. They have made very good progress by the end of the first term, one example being their willingness and enthusiasm to participate in the Christmas performance. They know the daily routines, readily help to tidy the room and at story time take turns in speaking. They enjoy group participation and respect the rights of other children. They are keen to join in action rhymes and songs and the repetitive aspect of stories. In both the nursery and reception classes, adults show care and consideration for the needs of individuals and are very good role models. This helps children to develop confidence in exploring and discussing and to build effectively on their prior learning. On the few occasions where children do not behave according to the required standards, the adults take time to discuss how their behaviour may affect others, the consequences of their actions and how they can improve. These high expectations contribute well to the good behaviour. Children make good progress from requiring high levels of adult support in the nursery to working with a high degree of independence in the reception classes.

### **Communication, language and literacy**

68. The large majority of children enter the nursery with language skills that are poor in comparison with the expected levels. By the time they are five, the attainment of many children has improved but it still remains well below the expected standards for children of this age in speaking, reading and writing.
69. In the nursery, there are good opportunities provided for the children to develop their speaking and listening skills through participation in stories and rhymes, group activities and role-play but the children have such a lot of ground to make up in this area that their attainment remains very limited. They are happy to join in the activities and they make good progress in some areas, for example in their understanding of rhymes and stories. The children also begin to extend their vocabulary through other activities. For example, they know the words related to physical education lessons. A small group of children spoke animatedly about their partnership with Year 5 pupils and their work on buildings, reflecting how the lively learning environment is motivating them. However, most children do not have a wide vocabulary and frequently give one word answers unless asked for more detail. In a "classification" game, for example, most children recognised the words red, brown, yellow and green and matched objects to the colours but a significant number could not say the correct two words together very clearly to identify a particular object. This is an example of the continuing slow progress in the children's development of speaking skills compared to the good progress they make in their listening skills.
70. The nursery children are also given an appropriate range of opportunities for making marks on paper as an introduction to writing and focusing on different sounds as a preparation for learning to read. This results in a few of children knowing the initial sounds for the key features of the stories they listen to. The majority of children distinguish between picture and print and the frequent small-group story activities enhance their enjoyment of books and their ability to discuss their favourite stories.
71. The teaching of literacy skills is strongly emphasised in the reception classes. Lessons are planned following the National Literacy Strategy guidelines. There is an appropriate emphasis on learning about the letters of the alphabet and the development of phonic skills<sup>6</sup> and a small percentage of children are learning to form letters correctly. The teaching in these sessions is

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<sup>6</sup> Phonics is the systematic teaching of the sounds that individual letters and groups of letters make.

good. In one effective lesson, for example, based on an animal story, the teacher used very good methods for maintaining a very high level of motivation throughout by skilfully using the book and a related frieze and characters. The excitement engendered by the story resulted in more speaking by the children than in any other lesson observed in the reception classes and in some very good progress. Higher-attaining children, for example, identified and described their favourite parts of the book, while average-attaining children answered factual questions with one word and occasionally a phrase. There was a wide range of attainment among the children, however, with many still showing well below average communication skills.

### **Mathematical development**

72. By the end of the reception year, attainment is well below the national standards for children of this age. However, children are learning at a good rate and are making up for their poor levels of attainment on entry to the nursery. In the nursery, children have regular and very effective opportunities to develop their counting skills and the wide range of number rhymes and apparatus used enhances their understanding of numbers to 10. Children recognise rectangles, triangles and squares and identify these mathematical shapes in other parts of the classroom. The children's learning is reinforced as they participate in a wide range of practical activities. This is reflected, for example, in their understanding of the concepts of 'full', 'empty' and 'half full', and 'more than' or 'less than'.
73. The teaching is good in this area of learning. There are many opportunities provided for the children to learn numbers through games, songs, stories and physical activities. Most children understand 'big', 'small', 'taller', shorter' and 'longer'. Children in the nursery are developing their understanding of these concepts, for example, by comparing their own height with other members of their families. The children's awareness of space and knowledge of positional words are developed effectively through floor-play and physical activities. Their mathematical knowledge is reinforced by regular opportunities for counting and comparing length, shape and weight. This learning is extended to the reception classes where children sequence patterns and colours or use role-play to show the sequencing of a school day from waking up to going to bed. The teachers also make effective use of puppets to make lessons interesting and to reinforce learning. For example, the puppet 'Clive the Camel' was used in one reception class to help the children to identify which number was missing in a line from one to 20.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

74. In the nursery children's knowledge and understanding is enhanced through a wide range of visits, both locally and further afield. Children are aware that objects are made of different materials and explain these differences, for example during water play, when they also show an understanding of the difference between floating and sinking. They develop their understanding through role-play and construction activities, as they did when they made an African-style home related to the class book on different types of homes. This area of learning is developed well in the reception classes, where, for example, the children study the senses. The "Sensory Room" makes a good contribution to their learning, as it gives the children many opportunities to feel different textures and see different images. They apply their new knowledge in practical ways, for example when they discuss their favourite food and design a meal on a plate. Progress in using information and communication technology skills is good because the children have plenty of opportunities to play well-chosen games on the computer. For example, in the nursery children control the mouse well to select colours, draw lines and make different shapes. This learning is extended and refined to the reception stage where children use the mouse to make a duck drop shapes into the correct containers. They can also dress a teddy by selecting and ordering the clothes. By the time they reach the end of the reception year, however, the children's attainment is still below average.

### **Physical development**

75. Children make good progress in most aspects of physical development and this reflects good teaching. Strengths are in the development of the children's hand/eye co-ordination and their

skills in handling scissors, brushes, pencils and other equipment with increasing accuracy and creativity.

76. Children in the nursery know the difference between slow and fast movements, stretches and curls, and use the wide range of apparatus in the secure area with increasing levels of creativity and expertise. They curl, slide and balance well. They use the wheeled equipment with good levels of skill and change speed and direction well. In the nursery, music is used very effectively to encourage movement as well as listening skills and all the children respond well by skipping, stretching, crouching and marching. In the reception classes, children use both small and larger wheeled apparatus with greater levels of control and well-developed awareness of the space around them. By the time they reach the end of the reception year, they have achieved the Early Learning Goals in this area.

### **Creative development**

77. Children's attainment is above the requirements of the Early Learning Goals in this area by the time they reach the end of the reception year. In the nursery, children have a wide range of experiences that enhance their creative skills. Strengths are in the opportunities for painting and model making. They have many opportunities to explore and experiment with paint, pencils and a wide range of media. With an appropriate amount of adult support they produce a wide range of observational and imaginative work. They recognise most colours and mix colours to produce effects such as 'stormy', having looked at a picture of a stormy scene. Some children mix colours to produce lighter and darker shades of one colour.
78. In both nursery and reception classes, the children make good progress in music and by the age of five sing with accurate pitch and a good feel for rhythm. During the inspection, the children in the nursery developed very good listening skills, clapped with a very good feel for rhythm and listened carefully for musical cues before beginning to play a range of percussion instruments. During the Foundation Stage assembly most children sang the hymn with accurate pitch and good rhythm. Children in the nursery enjoy role-play, particularly dressing up, for example as the king or the postman, and this makes a good contribution to their personal, social and language development as well as extending their creative expression.

### **ENGLISH**

79. At the time of the last inspection, standards were well below the national average. Since then, they have improved, although the school's results in the 2000 national tests were well below the national average in both key stages. When compared to similar schools, however, by the time children reach age 11 they are attaining above average standards. There has been a steadily improving trend since 1996, although there was a dip in standards in 2000 in both key stages. This was due in part to a long-term staff illness and the differing abilities of children in each year group. Attainment in all aspects of English is weak, with writing the weakest element. The school recognises this and has implemented measures to rectify the situation. Current inspection findings confirm that standards in both key stages remain below the national average in all aspects of the subject. However, the children are making good progress from the very low levels of attainment they have on entry to the nursery and well below average attainment at the beginning of Key Stage 1.
80. When the children start school, they have very low levels of ability in speaking and listening. They make good progress and become more confident as they move through the school. This is an improvement from the last inspection. Teachers develop the children's confidence and skills effectively by encouraging them to join in discussions. This was evident in year 2, through the teachers' good use of questions about the story of 'The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig'. The children grew in confidence when asked to predict the ending of the story, contributing increasingly interesting endings. Similarly, in Year 6, in a pertinent debate about foxhunting, the discussion was based on children's own research and developed through very incisive,



challenging questions which led to the children making very effective points. This was because all the children were involved and encouraged, not only to carefully consider the arguments but also to use them forcefully in the debate, listening carefully to the opinions of others. Children of all abilities developed their skills because they recognised that their contributions were valued. However, there are generally too few opportunities in most subjects to enable children to develop their speaking and listening skills in a range of creative, formal and informal settings. Opportunities for this are not always fully developed when they do arise. For example, when children from another school visited in an R.E lesson to explain their Muslim faith, the children were not given the opportunity to ask questions.

81. Given that children have very limited language skills when they start school, they make good progress in reading but this varies from unsatisfactory to very good progress, according to the class the pupil is in. In Key Stage 1, the children are developing a good sight vocabulary and high-attaining children can use letter sounds to read simple unfamiliar words. Through literacy lessons, the children are now taught skills more systematically and successfully than was the case at the time of the last inspection and they read regularly, as part of a group, with the teacher. Most of them do not read individually to adults on a regular basis, however. An exception seen was a pupil in year 2, who reads regularly to a volunteer adult in the school and has made rapid progress. During the inspection, he read confidently and competently to an inspector, choosing a more difficult book than the one he had been given and correcting his mistakes when the text did not make sense. The limited progress that the children make in lower Key Stage 2 suggests that here the teachers are not using the group reading strategy effectively to develop reading skills. This leads to the children lacking in confidence to read and tackle unfamiliar words. Older children, although able to read more difficult texts, often do not understand the meaning of words. This has a negative impact on the children's understanding of what they are reading. They lack confidence to read unfamiliar words and do not realise the lack of meaning in the text as they interpret it. One girl, for example, thought that 'swindlers' were dressmakers, because she was reading "The Emperor's New Clothes".
82. The provision for reading throughout the school is not good enough to ensure sufficient progress for all the children. There is a structured reading scheme in Key Stage 1 to help beginners. In Key Stage 2, the reading scheme is not so well structured and the library is not used well to improve the children's reading and research skills. However, there is a range of interesting books for the children to choose from in the classrooms. In many cases when children read to inspectors during the inspection, the books they had were either not matched to their reading abilities or were uninteresting, and therefore unlikely to inspire them to read regularly. Some children, for example, had not read a book since November. Nor is reading for research sufficiently developed through subjects such as history.
83. Writing is the weakest element of the subject. In Key Stage 1 higher-attaining children can write simple sentences using full stops and capital letters appropriately and are beginning to spell more complex words, using these when writing about the characters in stories. The teachers' marking is positive and encouraging and the children make good progress. By the age of 11, some children are beginning to use a range of interesting words when writing but most are unable to extend their writing into more complex sentences. Simple scripts, written in Year 6, show a good use of punctuation and an awareness of character, illustrating the children's potential when they are motivated and given interesting tasks. Similarly, the Year 6 children's written accounts, stimulated by their visit to a 'Roman experience', also indicate the good quality and amount of writing that can be attained when their interest and experiences have been enriched. In general, however, opportunities to write across the curriculum are not developed. In lower Key Stage 2, teaching is not as effective as it could be because of an overemphasis on worksheets and missing words exercises, which do not reinforce or develop the children's writing skills. Their spelling is weak, their handwriting is often immature and their presentation is untidy. This is especially so in classes where teachers' marking is infrequent or cursory at best. Where teachers mark work carefully indicating improvements and praising efforts, as in Years 5 and 6, the children make more effort, take increasing pride in their work and present it neatly. This is similar to the findings of the last inspection, indicating the continuing need to achieve consistency in the quality of teaching across the school.

84. Overall, the standard of teaching it is satisfactory, which is an improvement from the last inspection. In general, the teachers follow the format of the Literacy Strategy well and have developed positive relationships with the children. They make sure the children understand what is to be learned and use interesting texts and resources. In response, the children are interested and eager to learn. In Year 1, for example, the children were introduced to a non-fiction text for the first time. They found the book on animals and their homes fascinating and the teacher's good use of home-made resources, humour and simple games, led to these young children learning to recognise increasingly complex word endings. Good links to previous learning and the use of interesting resources were key strengths that contributed to the good teaching. For example, in good Year 5 lessons, the teachers used videos of "Robin Hood" and "Jason and the Golden Fleece" to stimulate the children's imagination and enrich their learning experiences. This led to children of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, learning to talk about the contrast in characters and, with help, to write a narrative for a story.
85. In general, literacy lessons are too long, making it difficult for teachers to sustain the pace of the lesson and maintain the children's interest. Within the lessons, the 'whole-class' activities often last too long, leaving the children insufficient time to consolidate and practise skills in individual and group activities. These in turn are not always well matched to the children's ability levels. On one occasion, for example, high-attaining children were given a challenging spelling investigation but this was completed quickly. No other work had been planned, so the children chatted and as a consequence did not make the progress they were capable of. Lower-attaining children, on the other hand, are often given 'cut and stick' activities in some classes, or worksheets that are too difficult for them to read. They, too, fail to make good progress on these occasions. Although the teachers' planning follows the National Literacy Strategy for each year group, this is not always matched to the ability of the children, many of whom lack the reading and writing skills to work at that level. More adaptation of the Strategy is required in order to meet the children's needs more fully.
86. Children with special educational needs are well supported by dedicated and well-trained classroom assistants, with whom they have good relationships. When they work with the assistants outside the classroom, they make suitable progress because the work is matched to their needs. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) have specific targets that take into account each pupil's individual needs, indicating suitable strategies that can be followed within class to support progress. However, there was little evidence to indicate that class teachers were using these IEPs sufficiently to plan activities matched to the children's targets. As a result, progress is varied, with children in some lessons making unsatisfactory progress, for example, in lower Key Stage 2, though some of this is due to long-term staff absence.
87. The management of English is very good and is much improved since the last inspection. The co-ordinator has worked hard to improve teaching and to support staff to improve and develop their teaching strategies, which has resulted in improved teaching and learning. Analysis of assessment data is used well to set school targets but this would benefit from further development in order to track individual progress and set increasingly more specific work. Group targets are having a positive impact on standards, especially in writing, as children recognise what they need to do to improve in general terms. Again, these would benefit from being even more specific, with short-term targets set which children can easily work towards, thus recognising their improvement and so boosting their confidence. In general, the children's use of literacy skills is restricted to literacy lessons and insufficient development of skills across other subjects is slowing progress. There is also little use of drama and few opportunities for children to speak in a variety of situations in order to develop their language skills. Although resources have improved, the library, which is not the responsibility of the English co-ordinator, is insufficiently developed. Insufficient effort has been made to make it a welcoming environment in which children can take pleasure in a variety of reading materials and use reading skills to develop independence as learners.

## MATHEMATICS

88. The inspection found that, currently, the children in both Year 2 and Year 6 are attaining standards that are slightly lower than those expected nationally for children of their ages in most aspects of mathematics. Standards in numeracy are in line with the national average, however. This is an improvement compared with the findings of the previous inspection report where the levels of attainment of children at the end of both key stages were below average in all areas. Since the last inspection, there have been significant improvements in provision for mathematics. Teaching and learning are better, the children have better attitudes, leadership and management are much more effective and the children's attainment and progress is more closely monitored. These improvements have led to rising standards. Since 1998 there has been a high level of improvement at Key Stage 2. Last year, the school's results in the national tests for 11-year-olds were well above average compared with similar schools. The test results in Key Stage 1 have improved from very low to well below average compared to all schools and below average compared to similar schools in 2000. The improving standards reflect the successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy, the rigorous monitoring of children's work, more thorough analysis of test results and target setting. During the inspection, no significant differences were observed between the performance of girls and boys, although girls have achieved higher standards than boys.
89. The improving standards in Key Stage 1 are reflected in Year 2 where the higher-attaining and average-attaining children understand place value in tens and units up to 100 and know addition and subtraction facts to 20. They also identify a wide range of two-dimensional shapes and some three-dimensional shapes and can tell the time to half-past the hour.
90. In Year 6, the majority of children have an above average knowledge of number, which is reflected in their understanding of place value, decimals, fractions and percentages and a secure understanding of the relationships between them. Higher-achieving and average-achieving children understand the effects on numbers of multiplying and dividing by 10, 100 and 1,000. They also know their multiplication tables very well and apply this knowledge to a wide range of mathematical calculations. The majority of children apply their number skills to many aspects of measurement, including length and capacity, and to calculations involving area and perimeter. In addition, they identify a wide range of regular and irregular two- and three-dimensional shapes.
91. In data handling, the majority of children understand mode, median and mean (different kinds of average), and the higher-attaining children's knowledge of probability is above the national average. Their knowledge of shape is extended to lines of symmetry and the measurement of area and perimeter of regular and irregular shapes. The children understand negative number and apply this to recording temperatures below zero and distances below sea level.
92. Although these standards indicate that the majority of children are well placed to achieve the national average, with some children achieving higher results, there are also a significant number of children who are achieving below, and in some cases well below, the national average. Their understanding of fractions extends only to halves and quarters, for example. However, they have a sound understanding of multiplying tens and units by units and work with money up to £1.00. It is the effect of the low test scores predicted for this relatively large group of children that is likely to bring the overall results for the school to below the national average.
93. Children in most classes throughout the school make good progress in all aspects of mathematics. There is a significant improvement in the challenge for higher-attaining children compared to the findings of the previous inspection report. Children with special educational needs make good progress because of the setting arrangement in mathematics. They are given activities appropriate to their attainment levels and are included in all aspects of the curriculum. However, evidence from the lessons observed, analysis of children's work and discussions with them during lessons identified variable progress across the school. Children in Years 1, 5 and 6 were making very good progress. The rate of progress in Year 2 was good, but there was evidence of unsatisfactory progress in some classes in lower Key Stage 2. These different rates of progress reflect the variable quality of teaching across the school.

94. During the inspection week, the teaching in a very high percentage of lessons was good or better, although there was a wide range of teaching, from very good to unsatisfactory. Very good teaching is exemplified by the planning of activities that match the ability levels of all the children and maintain their interest. The group-work is well planned and challenging and time is set aside for revising and consolidating what has been learned. In the best lessons, the children also have opportunities to explain what they have learned and ask for clarification if necessary. Relationships in these lessons are very good and the children have the confidence to answer questions. They respond well to additional and sensitive guidance. In this way, the children learn from their mistakes. The teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well to question the children and reinforce their learning. The school's policy of sharing the lesson objectives with the children is very effective. The children understand what the teacher expects and then review their success in meeting these demands, gaining a clear understanding of their progress. The teachers also make good use of the available resources in the best lessons. For example, the overhead projector was used very effectively in one lesson to reinforce the children's understanding of equivalence in fractions by manipulating shapes on the screen. Unsatisfactory aspects of teaching include examples of insufficient challenge for higher attaining children and insufficient support for children who need help. The quality of presentation is good overall, with examples of very neatly presented and carefully marked work, but there is some unsatisfactory presentation, with untidy worksheets and unfinished or unmarked work, especially in Years 3 and 4, reflecting lower expectations from some teachers.
95. There are insufficient opportunities for children to use information and communication technology in mathematics. Good examples were observed where children used calculators and the overhead projector but there was little evidence of computer programs being used. The leadership and management of the subject are good. With the support of the headteacher, the co-ordinator has observed lessons to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching. This has enabled good practice to be spread across the school. Good assessment procedures have also been established, helping the teachers to plan lessons from suitable starting points. This has made a significant contribution to the good progress made by children of all attainment levels.

## **SCIENCE**

96. In the year 2000, the school's performance in Teacher-Assessments in science at Key Stage 1 was well below the national average. When compared with similar schools, the performance was below average. These results accord with the previous inspection report where attainment was recorded as well below those expected nationally.
97. By the end of Key Stage 2, in 2000, results of National Curriculum tests for science show that the standards were below average in comparison with all schools but were above average in comparison with similar schools. This rise in standards from Key Stage 1 to the end of Key Stage 2 is the result of effective planning for science and good and very good teaching at the top end of Key Stage 2.
98. An analysis of children's work shows that in their early years they make good progress from a low level of understanding as a result of the enthusiasm and subject knowledge of the teachers. In Year 1, for example, the children experiment with torches to determine which torch produces the brightest light. They then go on to shine light on various materials, looking at the reflective properties of those materials. In their work on materials in Year 2, children were challenged to experiment with a variety of materials and decide and record, for example, whether the materials, if squashed, returned to their original shape. This good progress is not maintained in the early part of Key Stage 2 but good progress is again seen at the top end of Key Stage 2 and standards are just below what would be expected nationally. Most teachers are improving children's enquiry skills by giving more emphasis to experimental work. All the children enjoy the investigative work, especially those with special educational needs, who receive encouragement and good-quality support from classroom assistants and other children. Year 6 children, for example, enjoy carrying out experiments to determine the length of time a sugar cube takes to dissolve, taking

into account such variables as temperature and volume of the water used and whether stirring makes a difference. In some classes, the teachers carry out most of the practical work themselves, giving the children too few opportunities to learn through their own experiments and investigations.

99. The quality of teaching is good overall with some very good teaching at the top end of Key Stage 2. The best lessons are based on clear objectives and these are conveyed effectively to the children so that they understand what they have to do and how they are to do it. Most lessons are well balanced and include whole-class teaching and stimulating activities in which the children investigate and find out things for themselves. Teachers organise a wide range of appropriate resources to increase the effectiveness of their teaching and use their good subject knowledge to ask probing questions that make the children think. The practical sessions are nearly always well organised so that little time is wasted. As a result of this very good teaching, the children are interested and enthusiastic about what they are doing and understand the purposes of their investigations and the results they achieve.
100. A significant contributory factor to the improvement in progress and standards is the good leadership and management of the subject. The co-ordinators are enthusiastic and determined to continue to raise standards in science throughout the school. They have produced a carefully thought-out and progressive curriculum plan that provides clear guidelines for all teachers and covers all the requirements of the National Curriculum. They have also provided very useful assessment sheets for teachers to complete at the end of each science topic, showing the National Curriculum level that each pupil in the class has attained. This enables the teachers to track the children's progress very accurately and plan suitable future work.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

101. The children make satisfactory progress throughout the school and attain standards that are expected for their age at the end of both key stages. Basic skills, especially those involving paint, crayons and other aspects of two-dimensional art, are developed satisfactorily and in Years 5 and 6, there are examples of good progress in some aspects of art, for example in designing print patterns. This represents an improvement compared to the previous inspection. Overall, however, the children's creative skills are not developed as fully as they could be.
102. Children in Year 1 print using a variety of objects. Before Christmas, parents and children in Key Stage 1 were involved in a joint activity of designing and making Christmas decorations, which were used to decorate the classrooms and then taken home. The children use an appropriate range of two-dimensional and three-dimensional materials.
103. In Key Stage 2, the children are given appropriate opportunities to develop their expertise in working in two dimensions but fewer opportunities for working in three dimensions. Children in Years 5 and 6 have produced well-designed mosaics related to the historical topic of the Romans. In the lesson observed, the children used a wide variety of techniques, including pencil sketches, string collage and printing. They used drawings of patterns drawn on polystyrene tiles, based on observations of the lines on their hands, to print with. This was a very good example of creative work interesting and motivating the children. They worked with precision and enjoyed all aspects of this lesson.
104. Children in a Year 3 class, who used colours inspired by the eclipse, achieved dramatic pictorial effects and Year 4 used a range of delicate colours effectively to suggest movements such as swirls and different weather conditions. In addition, there has been a focus on weaving and children in Years 3 and 4 wove strips of paper showing accuracy in cutting, awareness of colour and thickness of the weave and neat finishing. This work was extended in Year 5, where children painted in the style of Miro and developed an appropriate level of understanding of this artist. However, there are generally few references to the work of other artists, although this aspect of art and design is part of the subject policy. No judgements can be made on teaching throughout the school as only one lesson was observed during the inspection. Children in one Year 5 class have

concentrated this term on art-work related to the joint nursery/Year 5 initiative. In these activities they designed, built and painted a range of buildings made from recycled materials, improving their personal and social skills as well as artistic development.

105. Currently, the art and design policy gives insufficient support and guidance for teachers to develop the children's skills, which was an area for improvement identified in the previous inspection. The long-term absence of the co-ordinator has been the main reason for lack of progress in this area. The headteacher and staff are aware that the absence of clear leadership and management for the subject has led to the children having insufficient opportunities to develop this creative side of their learning and have plans in hand to develop a scheme of work to provide more detailed guidelines.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

106. At the time of the last inspection, attainment was deemed to be unsatisfactory at both key stages. From the evidence of the one lesson seen during this inspection, the small amount of children's work available for scrutiny, the teachers' plans and discussions with children, standards have improved and are now broadly in line with expectations by the end of both key stages. All children, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily. By the time they are eleven, the children design and test products and modify their designs to make improvements. For example, they made careful drawings of their ideas for the construction of a car which would best withstand the force of being knocked by a heavy vehicle coming down a slope. After the initial test, they evaluated their product, considered what they could do to improve it and constructed further cars for testing. Throughout Key Stage 2, the children use an increasing range of tools and materials, including wood, textiles and plastic to construct the components of their designs. This is demonstrated, for example, in the children's designing and making of mechanical monsters, using card, plastic tubing and syringes to make various parts of the monster move. The children's work is also usefully linked to other subjects, as when the children made a variety of musical instruments and considered how the sound was produced and altered, extending and using their scientific knowledge and understanding.
107. It was not possible to make a judgement about the quality of teaching on the basis of one lesson. At the beginning of Key Stage 1, children are taught to observe, discuss and record their ideas. For example, in one class, they looked at various fruits and when these had been dissected, they recorded what they saw through drawings and paintings, making a good link with art. They talked about and how the fruits and vegetables are prepared for eating and then recorded what they thought about them under columns of likes and dislikes. This lesson illustrated how the subject can be used to improve the children's literacy skills. The children enjoy the subject; they work sensibly and safely together and help each other when working in teams.
108. The main reason for the low standards at the last inspection was the absence of a scheme of work to guide teachers' planning. This issue has been addressed. The school now uses a scheme, based on national guidelines, that covers all the requirements of the National Curriculum for design and technology. However, at the present time, there is a lack of leadership for the subject to guide the implementation of the scheme of work as the co-ordinator is unfortunately on long-term sick leave.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

109. No geography was observed in Key Stage 1 due to planning of the topic cycle. However, the evidence from talking to children and from the work seen in their books is that standards are below expectations, with unsatisfactory progress. This is similar to the findings of the last inspection. In Key Stage 2, standards remain below expectations. Progress overall is also unsatisfactory in the juniors but, in some classes towards the end of the key stage, children make good progress.

110. In Key Stage 1, the children's knowledge and understanding is weak and they have limited geographical skills. They study a contrasting area but this does not develop from an appropriate awareness of their own locality. The children cannot say, for example, in simple terms, what they like and dislike about the local area. They cannot say why another place, like St Malo, is different, other than "people eat croissants and speak differently". Children are able to say where they live but cannot recognise places on a simple map or follow a simple route. Some of the work they do is based on interesting experiences, such as tasting French food and following the journey of Barnaby Bear. However, in this case the written guidelines are not detailed enough to show the teachers how to develop the children's skills and understanding to the right level.
111. In Key Stage 2, the children develop some relevant skills. In Year 3 and Year 4, for example, the children are studying climates. This has interested children in Year 4, who have linked with a school in Scotland to compare weather measurements. The work has stimulated some interesting discussions about journeys and children are very eager to develop their skills in order to progress with their project. However, this enthusiasm and good standards of work are not evident in the other classes studying this topic. In Year 5 and Year 6, the children are currently studying an underdeveloped region of the world. The topic has only just been introduced but has already stimulated some very interesting discussions. Very effective use of photographs, group discussions and research has stimulated the children to develop their enquiry skills. In a good lesson in Year 6, for example, the children's image of life in a poorer country was very effectively challenged and extended. They gasped in wonder when they realised that there is electricity in some areas and 'nice hotels'. Lessons such as these indicate how effectively this subject can develop children's speaking and listening skills and stimulate their interest to enable them to research independently. However, the failure to teach and build on basic geographical skills from an early age is impeding the children's progress and limiting the standards they can achieve by the time they leave the school.
112. The management of the subject has improved since the last inspection. A policy and scheme of work have been produced to support non-specialist teachers and to develop skills. However, this is not yet sufficiently followed in practice to ensure the development of geographical skills across the school. Although visits are planned, the local area is not well developed as a resource and the choice of a contrasting area to study is uninspired. Teaching in general is inconsistent because some teachers lack the confidence to teach this subject and would benefit from further training. The co-ordinator has sufficient skills and expertise to make the improvements that are needed in the subject given the necessary resources and the commitment of all the staff.

## **HISTORY**

113. No lessons were observed during the week of the inspection because the topic focus was geography. Very limited evidence was available for analysis, especially in Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2. From conversations with children, it is evident that levels of achievement are unsatisfactory and that standards are below expectations in these year groups because a very limited range of skills have been taught. In Year 5 and Year 6, more evidence was available, showing that the children have studied their topics in more depth. However, because they had not built up their skills sufficiently lower down the school, achievement remains unsatisfactory and standards are below expectations. Although no lessons were observed, indications from the analysis of work are that teaching is unsatisfactory overall.
114. In Year 1, the children have been looking at old toys. They remembered their visit to a toy museum and talked about it with some enthusiasm. However, they had a limited understanding of the concept that life in the past was different and could not say why new toys and old toys were different. In Year 2, children remembered that they had listened to a story about Florence Nightingale and could say that she was a nurse but had little understanding about the change over time, or how to find out.
115. In Year 3 and Year 4, the children's study of the Greeks was superficial. They had little sense of

chronology or understanding of the important events and could not compare that period of history to the present day. The children's work generally consisted of worksheets, which were the same for all ability levels. There was limited use of dates and historical terms, with minimal evidence of research skills being developed. In Year 5 and Year 6, the quality of the children's work and learning improves significantly. They recognise the key dates for the Roman invasion of Britain, for example, and have produced simple time lines. Work that followed a visit to a 'Roman Experience' indicates a mature understanding of life in that time. For example, one pupil wrote that "there would be rats and mice in the soldiers' barracks and that means that your blankets would be itchy and you would be uncomfortable". However, although children know in detail the key facts of that period, they have limited understanding about the effects of the Roman occupation on life in Britain.

116. The co-ordinator has worked hard, despite serious illness, to develop a policy and scheme of work. These are now in place and a suitable curriculum has been planned, which is an improvement since the last inspection. However, despite the scheme of work being detailed and supportive for non-specialist teachers, it is not being consistently implemented across the school. As a result, children do not progress in their skills, learning is superficial, and the work set does not take into account the children's abilities or what they already know. Opportunities for the subject to enrich and develop the children's speaking, writing and independent research skills are insufficiently developed.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

117. At the time of the last inspection, provision for information and communication technology was unsatisfactory. There was no scheme of work, no systematic teaching and no checking of the children's skills. Teachers were lacking confidence and standards were too low across the school. Many improvements have been made since then but significant progress has only begun to happen recently, and standards are still below expectations throughout the school.
118. The current Year 6 children are well below expectations for their age in terms of computer skills. They have less confidence and skill on the keyboard and with the mouse than would be expected and are familiar with a much narrower range of software than children of this age in most schools. However, they are learning fast and growing in confidence under the newly established programme of systematic teaching. They can write and edit text on the screen, draw pictures, input data and print out their work. They continue to need a lot of support with this work, however, and are not on course to achieve the expected standards by the time they leave the school.
119. Younger children in Key Stage 2 have more appropriate skills for their age. For example, Year 3 children use a data-handling program to input data then extract the data they need, for example, to show how many children in a group have a birthday in a particular month or are taller than a given height. They are learning rapidly through good teaching in the computer suite, with expert volunteer support from one of the classroom assistants, who is also a grandparent of children in the school. The rate of learning at this stage of the school suggests that the school is on track to provide the children with the appropriate skills by the end of the key stage in the near future.
120. Standards are in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1. The only children seen using computers in this stage were in Year 1. They demonstrated good skills for their age in the areas they were working on. They know their way around the keyboard, using the shift key to make capital letters, for example, and are confident in their use of the mouse. Their familiarity and confidence with computers is much more in line with expectations for their age than that of the older children, indicating the capacity the school now has to ensure that the appropriate skills are developed. The children leaving the reception class already have the skills expected for their age, so the future looks promising.
121. The recently appointed co-ordinator has introduced a very clear scheme of work for teachers to follow and a good system for tracking the children's progress and recording the skills they have



acquired. This was a key area for development at the time of the last inspection report. Staff confidence and expertise also needed developing and the school is addressing this with a good programme of in-service training in which the staff will learn together. The provision of a new computer suite has enabled a systematic programme of teaching the basic skills to be established throughout the school. However, care needs to be taken to ensure that this facility is put to maximum use for the children to practise and develop their skills across the curriculum. There was little evidence during the inspection that this is happening yet, which is understandable at such an early stage with a new system.

## **MUSIC**

122. The quality of provision for music has not improved since the last inspection. Standards are still good in singing, but other areas of the subject remain underdeveloped. Standards in composing and performing music, for example, are below expectations by the end of Key Stage 2 and the children are making unsatisfactory progress throughout both key stages in this aspect of music. The quality of resources, which was criticised at the time of the last inspection, has hardly improved and the available instruments are not stored in an attractive or accessible way to encourage their use.
123. Music is taught well in the nursery and used effectively to improve the children's listening skills as well as their appreciation of pitch and rhythm and the characteristics of different kinds of music and composers. Very young children, for example, express a preference for Strauss rather than Tchaikovsky and enjoy moving to the music along with their nursery nurses. Their attainment in appreciation of music and in accompanying a piece of music using simple instruments is above expectations for their age because of the enthusiastic teaching and high expectations. The children listen attentively to a piece of music, wait for the introduction to finish and join in at the appropriate time with their instruments.
124. Progress in this aspect of music is not sustained in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 because too much of the available lesson time is spent singing along to the piano. This ensures that the children learn a lot of songs and reach a good standard in their singing but does not develop their accompanying or composing skills. By the age of eleven, the children do not have the expected skills to enable them to compose in small groups, incorporating specific musical ideas. Nor do they have the skills to perform and evaluate their pieces in order to improve their compositions. In general, the lessons are too teacher directed, giving the children too few opportunities to develop their musical tastes, improve the way they express their preferences and develop the skills of listening to, evaluating and making music. The children enjoy singing, work hard to learn new songs and are generally well-behaved in lessons. The subject is not being used as it should be, however, to aid the children's creative and personal development and their language and communication skills.
125. The teaching of singing is satisfactory but the teaching of the wider music curriculum is unsatisfactory. The music co-ordinator leads singing lessons competently and ensures that the children learn to sing well. The headteacher assists this process and gives the children plenty of opportunities to sing songs and hymns in assemblies. However, the range of songs that was observed being taught to the infants, reception and nursery classes was not suitable for the younger children, who gained little from the experience. There is a need to tailor the choice of songs and methods of teaching to engage this age group in appropriately active learning if they are to benefit from these sessions. The range of teaching methods used generally is too narrow, with an over-emphasis on the teacher directing the whole class. On the occasions when the children were observed working in groups, they were still not encouraged to listen to and evaluate their work with a view to improving it. There was no evidence that computer programs are yet being used to enrich the children's musical experience and improve their skills. The children who learn brass instruments make very good progress under the enthusiastic tuition of their visiting teacher. Their enjoyment and confidence shine through when they play, for example, in a school

assembly that was observed. This is an invaluable asset to the school.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

126. Levels of attainment at the end of both key stages are above national expectations. This reflects a significant improvement in all aspects of physical education since the previous inspection. During the inspection, children were observed in games, gymnastics and dance lessons. The full range of physical education activities, including athletics, is undertaken throughout each year. Children in Year 6 have very good opportunities to take part in outdoor adventurous activities, including orienteering when they go on a residential visit. The school makes very good provision for swimming, but no swimming lessons were observed during the inspection.
127. At the end of Key Stage 1, the children's high standards are illustrated by their ability to sequence a range of movements when creating a dance. They think carefully about the sequence and control their actions, using space and direction very effectively. This was reflected in a Year 2 class when children performed a Chinese dance based on the story of Pangu – a Chinese story about the creation of the world. They used sharp, finger-probing movements very effectively to represent Pangu feeling the shape of the egg and angrily punching and kicking as he breaks out. Other very good features included the wide variety of shapes at different levels and their ability to retain shapes and repeat sequences. These high quality movements and very high levels of concentration and commitment from all the children reflect very good teaching, especially in terms of high expectations. The direct teaching of physical education skills is very good and the teachers use demonstrations by the children very effectively to demonstrate good practice. These children show very high levels of control and fluency in performance and reflect the mood and rhythm of the music. They increase their physical skills by running, balancing and controlling themselves in the space available. The children develop confidence, co-operative skills and awareness of space to levels higher than those expected of children of this age as they use imaginative ways to move. By watching the performance of others, and with the teacher's guidance, children learn to evaluate other children's work, compare this to their own and improve their own performance.
128. By the time they are 11, children have refined the ways in which they move and perform gymnastics to a high level. For example, during a Year 3 and 4 gymnastics lesson, the children showed good awareness of shape, contrast and time and the smooth development of flow from one sequence to the next. They remembered the initial shapes from the previous week and incorporated more advanced skills into their movements, for example taking their weight on different parts of the body to perform more complex movements. Aspects of the good teaching include good pupil management and clear explanations based on the teachers' good knowledge of the subject and understanding of how to improve the quality of the children's performance. Children in Year 6 achieve levels of attainment in games above those expected for this age, for example in positioning, agility, and the ability to pass, tackle, retain possession and score goals in hockey. Children in Year 2 understand the reasons for warming-up and cooling-down exercises in terms of the effect on muscles and breathing. By Year 6, the children explain the advantages of physical activity as an essential part of a healthy lifestyle and understand the advantages in terms of muscle development and general agility.
129. Physical education contributes very positively to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The very high level of pupil responsibility in setting out equipment, collecting it and carrying it to the stadium, for example, reflects the teachers' very high expectations and their success in motivating the children. The children are eager to learn from one another and the teachers and are extremely confident in demonstrating their skills. All the children are conscious of safety and realise the importance of following the teachers' instructions promptly and obediently. An outstanding feature of this was at Northwood Stadium when three teachers taught all children in Years 5 and 6. Each teacher specialised in one specific aspect of hockey and the extremely smooth organisation of children reflected meticulous organisation by the teachers and high levels of personal skills by all children.

130. The very high standards of teaching are based on the teachers' knowledge and understanding and the very good teaching of basic skills. The teachers develop the children's creativity as well as their physical development by getting them to think about their movements and help them to improve their speaking skills through discussion and evaluation of their work, especially in Years 5 and 6. The school's policy and scheme of work were reflected in all lessons observed and the recently appointed co-ordinator has taken over the role with enthusiasm, a very high level of commitment and well thought-out areas for development. All lessons begin and end in a very orderly manner and contain very well planned warm-up and cool-down activities. The teachers set challenges that make the children think and extend their imagination, creative skills and physical abilities. They also provide very clear instructions and explanations and encourage children to refine and improve their skills. The children enjoy the opportunities to take part in both the physical education lessons and the wide range of extra-curricular activities. They behave well, even when unsupervised, for example, when they are practising skills. They are very highly motivated, purposeful and extremely well organised and they try hard perform to the best of their abilities. They have a very good sense of fair play and understand and abide by the rules.
131. The teachers plan lessons on the basis of the skills already learned and there are plans in hand to develop assessment procedures to make this even more effective. The good range of resources are very well organised and effectively used. Lessons move at a very brisk pace and time is maximised at an exceptional level. All the teachers observed have very good subject expertise and this is reflected in their demonstrations, handling of children's responses and the development of previously acquired skills. All these attributes give children very clear ideas of how to improve their performance techniques. This ensures that all children leave the lessons understanding the gains in knowledge and skills that they have acquired and what they need to do to improve further. All the lessons observed provided very good opportunities for children to extend their health and fitness. Children with special educational needs and also those with higher levels of attainment make very good progress because of the teachers' very high levels of awareness of the levels of support and challenge needed.
132. Effective use is made of the community in ways that enhance children's physical education development. The children benefit from the school's use of Northwood Stadium for indoor games and also athletics in summer. They visit the local swimming pool regularly and make good use of the grassed areas in nearby schools. There are many inter-school matches and some children have been chosen to represent Hanley Town in some sports. Players from Stoke City Football Club are involved in charity 'Penalty Shoot-outs' and the co-ordinator intends to contact local and national bodies for financial support for additional games equipment.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

133. The last inspection report stated that the overall attainment in religious education was in line with expectations and that statutory requirements were being met. This is still the case. At the ages of seven and eleven, children's knowledge and understanding of religious education is in line with the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. It is not possible to report on the quality of teaching overall as this was assessed in only one lesson during the inspection.
134. Through talking to children and a scrutiny of the work they have completed, it is clear that they develop a sound knowledge of the practice of Christianity and to a lesser extent of other world religions such as Judaism and Islam. Children of all ages, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in their knowledge of religions and their understanding of how religious beliefs affect the way people live and the choices they make.
135. The children's work reflects the school's efforts to continually develop positive attitudes towards relationships and values through talking about friendships and how people can live and work together. Young children know of the importance of Jesus within the Christian faith. They can recognise a church as a building within the local area and understand that people go there to pray to God and read the Christian holy book, the Bible. These young children know the story of the

birth of Jesus in Bethlehem and how 'wise men' or 'kings' came to visit Jesus. Their understanding of the idea of praying to God is reflected in the prayers they have written. Older children have extended their knowledge of other faiths. In Year 4, the children were excited by the visit of two Muslim children from another school. They learned of the Muslims' holy book, the Qu'ran, the use of a prayer mat and the washing of hands before times of prayer. The children also have some knowledge of Judaism by the end of Year 6. For example, they know that followers of that faith have a holy day called the Shabbat and that their place of worship is a synagogue.

136. The children are well behaved and attentive in lessons. They show respect for other people's beliefs and cultures as they study some of the world's major religions. Most children are keen to answer questions and offer opinions during religious education lessons. The relationships with teachers are good and children recognise that the answers they give to questions will be valued.
137. The subject co-ordinator has made good use of the Locally Agreed Syllabus to produce its own comprehensive scheme of work. This enable teachers to plan their lessons effectively but at present there is no formal assessment to check what the children know and understand in order to guide future planning. There is no systematic planning, either, for the use of the subject to extend the children's language skills.