

# INSPECTION REPORT

## WELLS HALL COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Great Cornard, Sudbury

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124558

Headteacher: Mrs Judith Fardell

Reporting inspector: Mr John Messer  
OIN: 15477

Dates of inspection: 29 October – 1 November 2001

Inspection number: 192754

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Wells Hall Road Great Cornard Sudbury Suffolk
Postcode:	CO10 0NH
Telephone number:	01787 373489
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Appropriate authority:	The Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Steve Coward
Date of previous inspection:	17 March 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
15477	John Messer	Registered inspector	Art and design The foundation stage	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well are pupils led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
19743	Ann Taylor	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
11810	George Logan	Team inspector	Design and technology History Equal opportunities	
16773	Raminder Arora	Team inspector	Science Geography Special educational needs English as an additional language	
7593	John Collier	Team inspector	English Music Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
8534	David Price	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This first school has 344 pupils on roll and is bigger than most other primary schools. Pupils are taught in 13 classes, including the nursery unit where 47 children are taught on a part-time basis, either in the morning or afternoon sessions. Children are admitted to the nursery two terms before they are due to transfer into the school's reception classes. The school admits children to the reception classes three times a year, usually at the beginning of the term in which their fifth birthday falls. There are more boys than girls, especially in Years 1 and 3. Almost all the pupils are from white English speaking backgrounds though a tiny minority speak English as an additional language. Most pupils come from houses that are near to the school though nearly a quarter come from outside the immediate area as a result of parental choice. Five pupils have statements of special educational need and a further 49 pupils are entered on the school's register of special educational needs because they require some extra support for their learning. This is a lower number than in most schools. Around nine per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is below average. On entry to the school, the development of children's social and communication skills is very varied, though overall their attainment is broadly typical of four-year-olds.

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

This school is effective in encouraging the whole, all round development of its pupils and has many strengths, notably in personal and social education. Pupils make satisfactory progress during their time at the school. By the end of Years 2 and 4, pupils attain average standards in most subjects. Standards are higher than usual in English, art and design and physical education. The headteacher, senior managers and subject co-ordinators work closely with the governing body to provide good leadership and management. Financial management is particularly efficient. Teaching is mostly good. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- The strong leadership of the headteacher promotes a positive ethos that is rooted in a commitment to raise standards. This places the school in a good position to develop further.
- Writing is taught well and pupils attain standards that are above average.
- Relationships throughout the school are very good and the behaviour of pupils is good; these factors have a positive impact on learning.
- Excellent provision is made for pupils' personal, social and health education.
- Learning support assistants make a major contribution to the quality of education, helping to improve pupils' learning opportunities.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is very good and these pupils achieve well.
- The school provides a warm and welcoming atmosphere and a secure learning environment.
- Good provision in the foundation stage prepares pupils well for further learning.

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

- Teachers' lesson planning; it does not include precise details of how the wide range of pupils' learning needs in each class should be met.
- The length of lessons; occasionally lessons are over long and as a result the pace of learning slows as pupils' interest wanes.
- Standards in handwriting and the presentation of work, due to inconsistent expectations and lack of systematic teaching.
- The achievement of higher attaining pupils; they are not always stretched or

encouraged to use their initiative.

- The use of computers in lessons.

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



## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was last inspected in March 1997 improvement has been good. The quality of teaching has improved significantly and now there is hardly any unsatisfactory teaching. The school has received a national achievement award for improved performance in National Curriculum tests and a nationally recognised award for its initiatives in promoting the health and well-being of pupils and staff. Pupils' behaviour is now managed effectively. By the end of Year 2, standards in English have improved. Across the school standards in art and design and physical education have improved. The standards attained by the end of Year 4 are not as high as they were previously, however, in reading, music, geography and science. The curriculum for the nursery and reception children is now monitored closely. Support for pupils with special educational needs has improved greatly and is now very good. The assessment of pupils' attainment and progress has improved and is good. A clear, corporate vision has been established and the senior management team functions effectively. The accommodation has been improved with the development of the grounds and the addition of a new learning area.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by seven-year-old pupils at the end of Year 2 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			Similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
reading	B	C	C	C	well above A average above B average average C below average D well below E average
writing	B	A	B	B	
mathematics	B	C	C	C	

Overall, most children are on course to reach the national prescribed early learning goals by the time they start in Year 1, but there are variations within this overall pattern. Most of the children who have been in the reception class for three terms attain the early learning goals, specified in national guidance, by the time they move to the end of the reception year. A lower proportion of those who spend only two terms in the reception class attain this level and a minority of those who spend only a term in the reception class attain the standard expected. In this year's National Curriculum tests for seven-year-olds, the school's performance was average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing. Inspection findings reflect these results. By the end of Year 2, and again by the end of Year 4, standards are average in most subjects. They are above average in writing, art and design and physical education. Work in personal, social and health education is especially good and represents a strength of the school. Pupils' achievement is mostly satisfactory, except that higher achieving pupils are not always sufficiently challenged to use their initiative and do not always do as well as they could. Since 1997, improvements in the school's results have been in line with the national trend.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are enthusiastic about their work and are keen to learn. They have very positive attitudes to the school.

Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is good in and around the school and this has a positive impact on their learning.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils work and play happily together and take the responsibilities given to them seriously.
Attendance	Attendance is good and pupils enjoy coming to school.

The very good relationships that are fostered throughout the school contribute to pupils' willingness to please and eagerness to learn.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	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.*

Overall, teaching is good. Teaching in the foundation stage is always at least good and in a substantial proportion of lessons it is very good and occasionally excellent. In Years 1 and 2 it is predominantly good and a significant proportion of lessons are very good. In Years 3 and 4 it is mainly good, occasionally very good and in one lesson unsatisfactory. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well but opportunities are missed to practise writing skills in other areas of the curriculum, especially in Years 1 and 2. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good and these pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Teaching is made harder by the organisation of pupils into mixed-age classes. Pupils are grouped by ability in classes but the needs of all pupils are not always fully met. Teachers are required to manage a particularly wide range of age and ability in each class. This is currently exacerbated by the unusually large intake of pupils in Year 1 who had previously only spent one term in the reception class. It is also because the range of abilities widens as pupils progress through the school. Although teaching is good, planning of lessons could be further refined to take account of this wide range to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they should.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. A wide range of lunchtime activities and visits out of school, as well as a good number of visitors to the school, promote good learning opportunities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good support is provided and pupils make good progress and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good provision is made and pupils make good progress in developing their English speaking skills.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social	Overall very good provision is made. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is good and for social and moral development it is very good. Worship and reflection are not

and cultural development	always strong enough elements of assemblies.
How well the school cares for its pupils	High levels of care are provided. The school has developed good procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress.

The school fosters a close partnership with parents who are extremely appreciative of the support provided for their children. The school ensures that the National Curriculum is taught according to statutory requirements.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides strong leadership and is supported well by staff. Subject co-ordinators strive hard to improve standards in their areas of responsibility.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body gives good support and has been successful in fulfilling its statutory responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school analyses its performance closely and takes action to make improvements. There is room for further development in the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching, and for evaluating the effect of mixed-age classes on pupils' achievements.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Resources are used well to improve standards and enhance educational provision. The governing body ensures that the principles of best value are applied to spending decisions.

The headteacher leads an effective team committed to improving standards. An adequate number of trained teaching staff is employed and there is a good number of support staff to assist pupils in their learning. Accommodation is very good though the computer area is not easily accessible. Resources are adequate. The outdoor area for the youngest pupils has not yet been developed as an effective learning resource. Although it is cramped the school is aware of this and it features as an area for development in the school improvement plan.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school, make good progress and behaviour is good.</li> <li>• Teaching is good and homework is appropriate.</li> <li>• They would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.</li> <li>• The school expects children to work hard and to do their best.</li> <li>• The school works closely with parents.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• The school helps children to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• Information about how their children are getting on.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A small minority of parents do not consider that the school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

The inspection team share many of the parents' views but find that there is a good range of activities outside lessons.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Children's attainment on entry to the school is typical of four-year-olds. There is, however, evidence of a steady decline over the past three years, especially in their understanding of number, shape and space and in personal, social and emotional development. Children's speaking and listening skills on entry are relatively well developed but standards in personal and social development are not as advanced. The relatively well developed speaking and listening skills help children to learn effectively but their relatively poorly developed personal and social skills have a negative impact on their ability to sustain concentration and complete the tasks set. A rich learning environment is provided in the nursery and reception classes and, as a result, pupils achieve well in all the areas of learning specified in national guidance. Their attainment on leaving the reception class is generally typical for their age but it is very dependent on how long they have spent in school. Most of the children who spend three terms in the reception class are likely to attain the early learning goals. Nearly three quarters of those who have spent two terms in the reception class are likely to attain the early learning goals. Fewer than half of those who spend only one term in the reception class are likely to attain all the goals in each area of learning. There was a very large proportion of the youngest children in last year's reception class. Consequently, the six mixed Year 1 and Year 2 classes all have a higher proportion than usual of younger pupils who are not as advanced in their learning as the older pupils in the same year group. They are generally less mature than the older children in the class who are in Year 2. This unusually broad range of maturity and levels of prior attainment in each of the six classes has implications for pupils' achievement. Despite the mostly good teaching in the lessons observed during the inspection, the longer term learning needs of all pupils are not always met and this leads to an element of underachievement. There are inconsistencies in rates of progress that pupils make, and not all achieve as well as they should. This is particularly so for the more able pupils.
2. Children achieve well in the foundation stage and thereafter most achieve satisfactorily. This is because over time, despite the teachers' best efforts, the planning and organisation of teaching in the mixed-age classes are not sufficiently well developed to ensure good progress for all pupils in every subject. Teachers work hard and succeed in helping pupils to make reasonable progress so that they achieve at least average levels of attainment in each subject. As a result of the good teaching of writing, speaking and listening, pupils achieve well and achieve above average standards across the school. Standards in reading are average. By the end of Years 2 and 4, standards in art and design and in physical education are higher than usual. By the end of Years 2 and 4, standards are at expected levels in all other subjects, except in history where there was insufficient evidence to make judgements. In religious education, standards by the end of Years 2 and 4 are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Standards have been maintained in most subjects since the time of the last inspection. Exceptions are in science, geography and music by the end of Year 4. Standards that were

higher than usual are now similar to those found nationally. Standards have improved in writing, art and design and physical education.

3. The results of this year's National Curriculum tests reflect inspection findings. The school's overall performance, when compared with all schools nationally and when compared with similar schools, was average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing. There has, however, been a good measure of improvement in recent years and this has been recognised by the Department for Education and Employment, which presented the school with an achievement award for the improvement in test results between 1998/1999 and 1999/2000. The statutory teacher assessments in science in 2001 indicated that the school's overall performance was slightly below average. The proportion of pupils who exceeded the national target of Level 2 and attained the higher Level 3 was average in reading. It was higher than that achieved by pupils in similar schools in mathematics, writing and science. By the end of Year 2, pupils speak with confidence and most express themselves well. This has a positive impact on their writing, which is lucid and follows a logical sequence. Pupils enjoy reading and their skills are typical of seven-year-olds though their knowledge of a range of children's literature is limited. Their number skills are developing satisfactorily and most know and understand their two, five and ten times tables. In science they have a sound understanding of a 'fair test' and know that the variables must be kept constant if the results of experiments are to be valid.
4. In Year 4 pupils read for enjoyment but they have still not developed a great enthusiasm for reading and few can discuss children's literature at any length. They write longer passages and they write in different styles, such as descriptive and informative pieces, according to what is most appropriate. They punctuate their work with capital letters and full stops and understand the use of question marks. Their handwriting is not always well formed, however, and many do not habitually join their script. The presentation of work is often untidy and pages in exercise books are not always fully used. Pupils have a sound understanding of number and know that the position of a digit in a row of digits affects its value. By the end of Year 4, pupils have a sound understanding of the different characteristics of gases, solids and liquids. They enjoy experimenting with volcanoes made from plasticene and filled with bicarbonate of soda onto which they drip vinegar to create an eruption. Higher attaining pupils draw clear diagrams and explain how they poured 100 ml of water and a few raisins into a jar, added a teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda, stirred the mixture and produced carbon dioxide. They observed the raisins dancing and explain why, 'I think they went up and down because the gas sticks to the raisins and carries them up to the surface and down'.
5. Standards attained by pupils on the register of special educational needs are as high as could reasonably be expected given their prior levels of attainment. These pupils learn effectively in lessons, and achieve well over a longer period of time, as a result of carefully targeted work.
6. The very few pupils with English as an additional language are rapidly developing good English speaking skills, are well integrated, make sound progress and achieve satisfactorily. The school is fully aware that it should ensure that the needs of gifted and talented pupils are fully met. A good draft

policy to promote improved provision for these pupils has been written. Until this policy is put into full operation the school cannot demonstrate with assurance that these pupils are achieving as well as they should. Although the needs of the higher attaining pupils are, in broad terms, referred to in teachers' planning, there are occasions when they do not always achieve as well as they could. Plans are not modified always to ensure enough challenge for the most able pupils.

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

7. Pupils' attitudes to learning and relationships are very good. Children enter the nursery with a willingness to please and this soon develops into an enthusiasm for learning. The way pupils show responsibility around the school is very good and behaviour is generally good. These are important school strengths which are contributing positively to the standards of learning. The positive picture seen during the previous inspection is still evident.
8. Pupils enjoy school and parents confirm this is the case. The amount of work pupils do at home, using their own initiative, is considerable. This is often connected to the name of their class, such as a drawing of a barn owl or research on the internet about pandas. It is valued by teachers and carefully displayed in classrooms.
9. Very good attitudes were typified in a mathematics lesson for pupils in Years 1 and 2. The pupils were learning about odd and even numbers and how to recognise patterns in numbers. The very good opening session, where pupils were questioned on what they had learnt yesterday, quickly engaged their interest and made them think for themselves. They were keen to answer but courteous in listening to the replies of others as well. The organisation of an activity where pupils got up from the carpet and collected numbers on cards, gave them chance for a quick stretch of their legs before they became fully involved in using the cards to help them with their answers. They really enjoyed this activity and some very good learning took place.
10. Occasionally in the afternoon sessions, especially where lessons are over long and there is little variety in learning, pupils become restless and their concentration wanes. Sometimes they are required to sit on the carpet for too long and are not actively involved in learning. On occasions the teachers spend too much time talking with the pupils who become distracted, their interest wanes and they start to chatter and become restless. This restlessness occasionally occurs in assemblies for older pupils and interferes with the ambience of the collective act of worship.



11. There is no evidence of oppressive behaviour and bullying. The good relationships in the school mean that pupils are happy to talk to adults if they are worried. The school is a happy place to be and pupils are very friendly and look out for each other. There were no exclusions for poor behaviour over the last year.
12. Pupils are developing as responsible citizens. They have a good sense of duty and have a strong voice in the school, mainly through the school council. The elected group of councillors wear their badges proudly and suggest ideas to help improve the school. These have included the 'Just Bin It!' campaign to reduce litter and the 'Healthy Hands' poster competition. All pupils are encouraged to show initiative and come forward with ideas; for instance an older pupil suggested an initiative to raise money for the Indian earthquake appeal that eventually raised £200. During the open day held at a weekend, many older pupils came in specially to act as guides, showing parents around and the school council held a live debate for all to see. Pupils in Year 4 run clubs for their younger peers in the summer term, including football, dance and art.
13. Pupils' attendance is good and is above the national average for primary schools. The rate of unauthorised absence is broadly in line with other primaries. The school make very good use of time during the day and the system of bells ensures lesson start and finish promptly.
14. Pupils with special educational needs have good attitudes to learning. They show pleasure in activities undertaken and are helpful to each other.

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

15. The quality of teaching is good. Across the school well over two thirds of teaching is at least good and over an eighth is very good and occasionally excellent. In around a third of lessons teaching is satisfactory. Only one lesson was unsatisfactory. This is a marked improvement since the time of the last inspection when a fifth of teaching was unsatisfactory and sometimes poor. Teaching is particularly good in the nursery and reception classes where over two thirds is very good. One lesson was excellent. In Years 1 and 2, teaching is good and occasionally very good in three quarters of lessons and it is satisfactory in a quarter. In Years 3 and 4 teaching is good in well over a half of lessons and satisfactory in well over a third. One lesson was unsatisfactory because pupils achieved little and made insufficient progress. An excellent lesson in the reception class encouraged great enthusiasm for searching for initial letter sounds and pupils achieved a great deal of understanding in a very short space of time. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall. Good provision is made for the very few pupils who have English as an additional language and they are well taught. Across the school, the teaching of English mathematics, design and technology and physical education is good. The teaching of science, geography, information and communication technology, music and religious education is satisfactory. There was insufficient evidence to make judgements about teaching in art and design and history.

16. Teaching for children in the foundation stage, the four and five-year-olds in the nursery and reception classes, is good overall and much of it is very good. Routines are well established and children are managed effectively. At the beginning of each session the children have been trained to enter the room, sit quietly and listen hard. Their listening skills are especially well developed and they listen to teachers and to each other with great concentration. In the nursery, a well-structured environment encourages children to achieve well in all the areas of learning specified in the national guidance. Children's skills in creative, personal and physical development, together with their speaking skills, are promoted well in the role-play areas. Here co-operative play is accompanied by a great deal of speech as children use and experiment with language. The nursery teacher and the nursery nurse work closely together to form an effective team. Their good knowledge and understanding of how young children learn contribute to the good teaching. The quality of planning is good. There is a common theme, for example 'Change', that gives a good focus for activities. Teaching is imaginative as when children go on a hunt for 'caterpillars' that have previously been hidden around the outside play areas. High expectations of pupils' performance are maintained, as shown by the questions that challenge children's thinking skills, and the vocabulary, such as 'symmetrical' and 'antennae', that pupils are encouraged to use accurately. Basic skills are taught well and as a result children's early reading and writing skills develop rapidly. Lessons start on time and proceed briskly. Good, detailed records are kept on children's progress and attainment. These are used well to inform plans for the next steps in learning.
17. The good teaching in the foundation stage promotes good achievement for all pupils, including those with special educational needs who are well supported and make good progress. However, this is not always the case in Years 1 to 4. Teachers and support assistants in these classes work hard and strive to improve standards. Their efforts do not always result in the achievement expected or standards that are as high as they might be. This is partly because the teachers in each class have to cope with an exceptionally wide range of age and ability. They recognise the range and provide well for those with special educational needs. The others are usually given tasks designed to match the learning needs of three broad ability groups within each class. This is not always sufficiently precise to meet the learning needs of all pupils. The classroom assistant usually concentrates her efforts on one group, the teacher on another and the rest work independently. The range, however, is so wide that it is difficult to make sure that all groups are achieving as well as they should. They are all occupied but there is often one group that is not receiving quite enough attention. The learning needs of most are successfully met in most lessons but there are often a minority who do not make as much progress as they could if they were given more focused attention. Coupled with this the most able are not always sufficiently challenged. As a result, there is an element of underachievement. These shortcomings are largely a function of the organisation of teaching and the planning systems adopted for teaching each class. The degree of underachievement is not especially noticeable in the short term but over a longer period it contributes to the school's performance not being as high as it could be.
18. Throughout the school, a particular strength of the teaching lies in the very good quality relationships that are developed between teachers, pupils and

support staff. Pupils feel that they are able to contribute to discussions without being embarrassed if they give inaccurate responses or fail to explain themselves clearly. The warmth of the relationships and the care that adults demonstrate, help pupils to feel comfortable and secure and promote effective learning. Teachers have good levels of knowledge and understanding about the subjects they teach. Teachers have a good grasp of how to implement the national literacy and numeracy strategies. The national literacy strategy incorporates a group reading sessions and these have, to a degree, replaced attention to the individual's reading development. The school has recognised this and where pupils are identified as not reading regularly at home, they are paired in school with adults to practise reading each day in school. This is a good initiative that helps these pupils to achieve satisfactorily. The school does not follow its core reading scheme systematically and sequentially. Pupils choose their books from a wide range and therefore their choice does not always match their particular stage of development in reading. They frequently choose books that are too hard or do not meet their particular learning needs. This results in a degree of underachievement in reading and means that the good foundations laid in the nursery and reception classes are not always built on effectively. Literacy is taught well in the daily literacy hour sessions and pupils achieve particularly well in writing, speaking and listening. Opportunities are missed, however, to practise writing skills in other subjects, such as history and design and technology. Handwriting and the presentation of work are not developed systematically and in several classes untidy handwriting was accepted too readily by teachers. Although standards in information and communication technology are improving steadily, computers are not yet used sufficiently to support teaching and learning across the curriculum.

19. Teachers work hard on their planning and produce detailed plans that are broadly satisfactory but they do not always indicate how the learning needs of all pupils will be met. Plans refer to groups but the range of age and ability are broader in each class than the range indicated in the plans. There are good long term planning measures in place that help teachers to ensure coverage of the National Curriculum in each subject. These promote the cumulative development of skills, knowledge and understanding. The quality of teaching is improved where teachers share the learning objectives with the pupils, often writing them on the blackboard or on a flip chart. This helps pupils to understand what is expected of them. In the minority of lessons where teaching was less successful, it was largely because the learning objectives were unclear, the teacher's subject knowledge was insecure and the pace of the lessons was slow. The teaching of some subjects, such as history and geography, art and design and design and technology, are taught in alternate blocks of time. This is effective in ensuring a concentrated session but some subjects, such as art and design, lose the sustained focus on maintaining high standards that is normally the case in other subjects. Homework makes a good contribution to learning in the nursery and reception classes and it is sound in the classes for pupils from Year 1 to Year 4.

20. Teachers share a commitment to improving pupils' achievement and further raising standards. They maintain high expectations of pupils' behaviour and sound expectations of performance. Generally they require pupils to give of their best. This promotes sound achievement. Teachers manage pupils well. In the foundation stage, routines are firmly established and this sets the tone for subsequent years and helps to lay good foundations for future learning. Teaching methods are mostly effective and are adapted appropriately to make the best use of resources. When appropriate the class is taught as a whole, whilst at other times group work is organised or extra support is provided to meet the learning needs of lower attaining pupils. Classroom assistants are particularly effective in supporting groups and individuals. They are deployed well by teachers and have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. Lessons often end with a review of learning which enables teachers to assess achievement. Carefully considered questioning strategies are used to assess levels of understanding. Questions are often adapted so that younger pupils are able to answer questions successfully whilst the questions to older or higher attaining pupils challenge their thinking skills appropriately. Expectations of pupils' performance are mostly appropriate though the highest attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. Time is not always used as well as it might be. Lessons are often too long and some span the whole of the afternoon session. This does not fit well with pupils' learning needs. Variety helps to engender and maintain the pupils' concentration. Also there is no recognition in the timetables that the youngest pupils, who are often unable to sustain their concentration for as long as the older ones in the class, should have shorter periods of activity.
21. 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. This strategy has raised teachers' expectations in terms of planning and the teaching and learning of mathematics. Pupils are taught to practise their mental skills regularly and apply what they learn to solving practical problems. The development of mathematical language is a strong feature of lessons. Pupils are given opportunities to practise and develop their numeracy skills in other subjects such as using computers to sort and classify data, but this aspect of the teaching of numeracy skills is somewhat underdeveloped.
22. Teachers offer praise and encouragement well. They show appreciation of the work produced but also suggest ways in which it could be improved further. Pupils' work is marked carefully according to a system that is well understood by pupils. Homework is used satisfactorily to support learning and makes a sound contribution to the standards achieved. In most classes it is set regularly and consistently. It usually comprises reading, writing tasks, spelling and some investigative work.
23. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers' daily lesson plans include organisation of support for those pupils identified as needing extra learning support. Learning support assistants are trained well to help these pupils. They are well briefed by class teachers and have their group or individual targets ready for each support session. They often work

with small groups and, like the class teachers, they write the learning objectives on their white boards and share them with pupils. In this way the pupils gain a clear idea of what they are expected to learn. Learning support assistants make a strong contribution to the quality of teaching. As a result, pupils achieve well in relation to their special needs. Other pupils benefit considerably from the additional support given by classroom assistants, especially when they take small groups of pupils who are working on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. The support given to these pupils is guided by well-written individual education plans. The school works closely with specialist support services to ensure effective teaching strategies are employed.

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

24. As at the last inspection, the school provides a good curriculum that is balanced and broadly based. All subjects are taught. The national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are properly planned and delivered and religious education is correctly drawn from the agreed programme of work for Suffolk schools. However, because of the development of an excellent programme for personal, social and health education, together with good enrichment through educational visits and out-of-school clubs, the quality and range of the good curriculum are even better than they were at the time of the last inspection. The school has just been awarded accreditation as the first school in the county to gain 'Healthy School' status.
25. Apart from the nursery and reception classes, the school is organised in 11 classes in each of which two year-groups are mixed. Consequently the age-range in each of these classes is wider than it would be in classes that cater for only one age band. The range of ability in each class is also wide and in each class it is different. Teachers plan together to deliver the same lesson content so that, quite rightly, no one is disadvantaged. Each subject is planned by one teacher for the benefit of the others. This system has advantages: it reduces the overall workload for each teacher and enables those with specialist knowledge to make suggestions for others who are not as confident. It also has the advantage of promoting consistency across the classes. However, there are occasions when lesson plans are observed too rigidly and are not adapted to meet the particular needs of the class. The lack of sufficient adaptation of the plans, to suit each individual teacher's style of teaching, reduces their effectiveness. Teachers are also faced with difficulties when lessons are scheduled for long periods of time. Geography and science for example last for the whole afternoon in some classes. It is not easy for teachers to maintain a brisk pace and sustain pupils' concentration over such a long time.
26. The difficulties of providing for the needs of every pupil within such a wide age and ability range are not always successfully met, even though most teachers are good practitioners and have very good support from classroom assistants. The difficulties are exacerbated this year in the younger classes because there has been a particularly large intake of pupils into Year 1 who have only had one term in the reception class. They need particular help to cope with the

work while higher attaining Year 2 pupils in the same class need work that challenges them and helps them to make sufficient progress in their learning. Their needs and those of the above average pupils in the older classes, where there is also a wide range of ability, are not always being met.

27. Teachers plan literacy and numeracy lessons well using recommendations in the national strategies. They structure lessons appropriately paying due attention to the need for class instruction as well as individual and group work. Some numeracy lessons are scheduled for longer than is recommended but all classes correctly receive an hour of literacy every day. In addition, the school provides other time for extended writing and this is having a positive effect on standards. Opportunities are often missed however to develop literacy skills through other subjects such as history especially in Years 1 and 2.
28. The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils on the register of pupils with special educational needs and supports the learning targets identified in individual education plans. There are good procedures in place for identifying special needs. A comprehensive policy provides guidance for staff. Suitable training is provided for teachers to write individual educational plans with targets that are specific and easily achievable to ensure a degree of success on a regular basis. Most support is provided in classrooms. Withdrawal arrangements are only sometimes applied, based on individual needs. The school is aware of providing a balance of support. There are no pupils for whom the curriculum is disapplied. The school's systems and planning ensure that the provision fully meet the staged approach required. The needs of the more able or gifted do not form part of special educational needs support, although there is a draft policy being considered. Procedures for monitoring and reviewing assessments, together with procedures for recording and reporting the progress of pupils with special educational needs, meet statutory requirements. The policy for pupils with special educational needs is needs to be updated and revised in the light of changes in the national code of practice which detail how provision should be organised. The school is awaiting guidelines from the local education authority in the light of new changes.
29. The school does its best to ensure that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum and that none is disadvantaged in any way. Nevertheless, due to admission regulations, it cannot admit all pupils in a year group at the same time of year. In consequence those who spend three terms in the reception class have an advantage over those who only spend one term in this class. Arrangements are made to ensure that where pupils are withdrawn from class for extra support, they follow a parallel range of experiences to those who remain in the classroom. These arrangements make sure that pupils do not miss any aspects of the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs and those few who speak English as an additional language gain full access to all areas of the curriculum.
30. As at the last inspection, the school provides a good number and range of clubs that usually meet during the lunch-break. Most are for pupils in Years 3 and 4 and this is not unusual in schools across the country. However, the 'Monday Club' caters particularly for pupils in Years 1 and 2 and provides a range of activities such as cutting out pictures and playing card games that are greatly enjoyed. Clubs for older pupils include gardening, cycling, and

calligraphy as well as music and sports activities. Competitive matches are played. The curriculum is also enriched by visits, for example to Hedingham Castle or to the local church, that bring subjects such as history and religious education to life. Visitors too widen pupils' experience, as during the recent Book Week when various storytellers came into school.

31. There are good links with the community that support pupils' personal development and learning. The 'community board' is used to display achievements outside school, often of a sporting nature and donations are sought to provide extra facilities within school. The 'Millennium Sensory Garden', for example, has been developed with money from outside agencies. Links with local schools are also good, providing for a smooth transition as pupils move to the next stage of education. Regular meetings are held with teachers in the middle and upper schools and there is close liaison to ensure that work undertaken in Years 3 and 4 is not repeated when pupils transfer. Informative records are passed to the receiving school so that teachers there know what each pupil has achieved already, particularly in English and mathematics.
32. The school has an excellent programme of work for personal, social and health education. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. In addition, there is very good overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are weekly lessons for all pupils and the school is involved in several very worthwhile initiatives, for example, a drugs' education programme that involves parents and pupils of all ages. Pupils are also encouraged to develop an understanding of a healthy lifestyle that is not only concerned with healthy eating but with having the right approach to dealing with emotional and social issues. Appropriate sex education is provided through the science curriculum. The school has received accreditation as a 'Healthy School' and the co-ordinator is recognised locally for her impressive work and has been involved in initiatives to disseminate good practice.
33. Provision for spiritual development has improved since the last inspection and is now good. It would be even better if assemblies were of a higher quality. The opportunity for pupils to experience a special time that is different from the hurly-burly of the school day is not fully exploited and the atmosphere in assemblies is not always spiritual. Except for the whole-school assemblies on Mondays and Fridays, adults do not attend and there is no warm feeling of the community being together. Music is not often used to create a particular mood and hymns and songs are not always sung. When they are, pupils join in enthusiastically, particularly if they can perform actions to accompany the words. In many assemblies, pupils sit passively. They are well behaved but they do not actively participate, for example by answering questions or giving an opinion. Assemblies are appropriately planned around a theme and convey good moral messages but the time within the assembly for reflection and for the school community to worship together is short and there is no recognition of a supreme being or an invitation to pupils to pray to a deity. However, reference is made to the beliefs that Christians hold and Bible stories, such as David and Goliath, are sometimes told. Overall therefore, assemblies comply with the requirements for the act of collective worship.

34. There are good opportunities in lessons to develop pupils' spirituality and curiosity about the world and their place in it. Many teachers exploit these opportunities well. Younger pupils are particularly open to the wonders around them. They cried out with surprise as spectacular patterns appeared on the computer screen when the teacher demonstrated the features of a program called 'Dazzle'. The beauty of an ice balloon in a science lesson was greeted by cries of, 'Wow!' In other lessons, teachers often allow time for reflection. At the end of a religious education lesson about special occasions, pupils thought about all the wonderful times that they experienced and how thankful they should be. One girl appreciated the atmosphere in the Sensory Garden: 'I like sitting on the seat and talking to my friends.'
35. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. An overwhelming 96 per cent of parents agree that the school helps pupils to become mature and responsible. Class rules are drawn up and prominently displayed. Pupils clearly know what the school expects and understand the reward system and the consequences of not complying with the rules. They have a good understanding of right and wrong and benefit from the system that praises their positive actions. Good work and behaviour are recognised in the 'Good Stuff' assembly each week. Moral issues are regularly tackled in personal, social and health education lessons and in assemblies. In a lesson with younger pupils, the issue of bullying was sensitively explored and written work in another classroom demonstrated an approach that enabled pupils to express their feelings openly. Older pupils explored the issue of waste and re-cycling by talking about the packaging that accompanies everyday items such as jam tarts. Money is regularly raised for charities and pupils are aware of the needs of others. After the recent tragedy in America, an older pupil was instrumental in suggesting that money should be collected to help the victims.
36. The school makes very good provision for the pupils' social development. Issues such as relationships are explored in personal, social and health education lessons and, in a very good lesson in Years 1 and 2, the teacher skilfully encouraged pupils to say why 'I like being me' and then emphasised the benefits that accrue from our differences. For those who find it difficult to play outside at lunchtime, activities are provided in 'The Den' and this is helping them to develop social skills. 'The Den' is a club for invited pupils who find playtimes difficult for a range of social, behavioural and emotional reasons, and is partly funded by the 'Healthy Schools' initiative. After play and craft activities in the 'The Den', sessions are rounded off by a quiet time where pupils sit in a circle, known as 'circle time', for a period of reflection. Soft music is played, a candle lit and a special marble passed round, whilst pupils take it in turns to say what they have enjoyed, who they have played with and if they have had any difficulties. This leads to telling phrases from some pupils about the worries they are facing - such as separation from a parent, a wish that 'all mums and Dads had a good time'. After several sessions of not saying anything, one child found the confidence to speak. The initiative is working well. It enables staff to understand pupils' problems and as a result, be in a better position to offer help. With gradual encouragement, time to talk and lots of praise, many are eventually able to face the playground with increased confidence and improved levels of behaviour. Generally most pupils are able to socialise in settings outside the classroom because of the good range of visits and clubs. Visitors too, such as the 'buddies' from the upper school,



enable them to mix with other people. The oldest pupils participated in a residential visit that provided other different opportunities for social interaction. Pupils act as helpers in their class and the oldest have jobs around the school, such as a responsibility in the library for keeping it tidy. In lessons however, teachers do not always exploit opportunities to allow pupils to take responsibility or exercise initiative in learning activities.

37. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good and has a positive impact on their learning. The school council meets regularly and representatives from each class discuss ways of improving the school. The members have been instrumental in introducing the 'Fruit Tuck-Shop' and the 'Just Bin It' campaign. In lessons, pupils learn about famous artists such as Matisse and about ways of living in other parts of the world, notably St. Lucia. The visit of 'Sami' in a recent Book Week is still remembered vividly and his contribution in telling African stories is acknowledged. Pupils experience the works of Holst's 'Planet Suite' and Ravel's 'Mother Goose Suite' in their music lessons and through religious education, they come to know about the beliefs, values and traditions of some religions other than Christianity. In physical education lessons, older pupils explored Indian dances as part of their study of Hinduism. However, pupils' understanding that people with widely different backgrounds and beliefs live in our community is not as well developed.

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

38. There are very good procedures for ensuring pupils' health and welfare. The good quality of care noted at the time of the previous inspection has been further improved. Important factors in this improvement have been the school's commitment to being a 'Healthy School' and a determination to achieve recognition for its work in this field. This is part of a national project, which, dependent on schools reaching certain levels of practice, leads to their accreditation.
39. There are very good arrangements for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development. Members of staff know children well as individuals from the time that they start in the nursery through to their transfer to the middle school. They are able to identify individuals who are experiencing difficulties and give them guidance that meets their needs. The quality of care is enhanced by very constructive relationships. Pupils trust adults in the school and feel free to speak to them about their problems. The school's excellent curriculum of personal, social and health education consciously fosters this kind of openness. Pupils are encouraged to talk about their feelings and to share their concerns with staff and with each other. Formal arrangements for monitoring personal development are effective. Good work and positive behaviour are acknowledged and promoted via the school's system of rewards.

40. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. The youngest children are assessed soon after entry to the school and again in the reception class and the results are used well to identify areas for further development. These assessments help to identify children who might have special educational needs and as a result a range of appropriate support is provided quickly and efficiently. Pupils take the statutory National Curriculum tests and assessments at the end of Year 2. Data from the tests at the end of Year 2 are used to inform future planning. Together with all the other schools in the county, the school also tests pupils' reading and their development in mathematics at the end of Years 1 and 3. These results are collated and analysed to determine trends. In addition, a number of ongoing assessments are made in reading, spelling and mathematics. Pupils' understanding of the topics they are taught are assessed by teachers towards the end of each unit of work.
41. The use of assessment information to guide and inform curriculum planning is good. Teachers maintain detailed records on the progress of each pupil. Teachers take time to organise short review sessions at the end of most lessons to assess the learning that has taken place, often involving pupils in the assessment of their own progress. Assessment and evaluation of lessons are particularly effective in literacy and numeracy. Broad targets have been introduced for groups in each class, such as 'We will remember to use full stops and capital letters', and these are often hung on cards over the pupils' tables. The school analyses its assessment data carefully. Pupils' statutory test results are analysed, year by year, in relation to the local education authority and national results to determine areas for development. These analyses are acted upon and have resulted in changes in practice throughout the school. For example, as a result of relatively poor test results in writing, greater emphasis was placed on the teaching of writing and this has contributed to higher standards. The information gained from assessment is used very successfully to highlight strengths and weaknesses of individual and groups of pupils and to determine ways to address them. Parents receive an annual written report of good quality, giving details of attainment and progress; reports for children in Years 2 also include details of the results gained in the statutory tests and indicate to the parent whether the child is working at the expected level for their age. At the end of every school year teachers prepare 'Pass Up' sheets that include detailed information about each child's attainment, as well as personal characteristics. These help the teachers of pupils new to their classes to gain a good overview of pupils' attainment. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are good.
42. The school has developed a 'Safely To School Project', which is a long term initiative soon to come to fruition, that involves parents, pupils and the community in seeking ways to make the road outside the school safer for pupils and residents. Posters that highlight the importance of healthy eating are displayed around the school; for example, work shows different healthy snacks that pupils have designed. The school practices what it preaches and the quality of meals is far higher than that often seen, with kitchen staff who take pride in their work and who actively encourage pupils to try new foods and to eat a balance diet.

43. The school's procedures for encouraging positive behaviour are good. They have made good progress on tackling the issues raised in the last inspection report, which indicated that the handling of behaviour was a key issue for improvement. Most staff are experienced in handling pupils with challenging behaviour, although there is occasional inconsistency in approach. A comprehensive behaviour policy, covering expectations at different times of the day, such as in the dining room and playground, for instance, clearly sets out the standard to aim for. Training for midday supervisors in behaviour management has also helped to ensure there is greater consistency.
44. The school take a pro-active approach towards involving fellow professionals from the health service. Conscious that both parties have much to learn from each other, they are both open to working together, for the benefit of those pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. An example of this willingness is shown in the 'Narrative Story' sessions held jointly by the school and the community psychiatric nurse. Here feelings and emotions are explored through the telling of stories with selected pupils. Both school and health service are positive about the benefits whilst being realistic about the need for refinements, and they will use the results from the pilot sessions to adapt future practice.
45. As might be expected from the excellence of the personal, social and health education programme, issues surrounding bullying are faced head on and dealt with very well. A display of work on the walls, linked into the teaching of literacy, has seen pupils describing what it feels like to be bullied; for example 'I feel scared and my tummy is in a knot'. Parents are pleased with the high standard of behaviour and confirm their children are well cared for.
46. Procedures for health and safety are good. Governors make regular visits to check on the premises and there is a good understanding of the importance of health and safety in the school. Child protection procedures are very good. There are two staff trained to 'named person' status with a third whose training has been arranged. One member of staff is designated as being responsible for maintaining a special interest in the welfare of pupils in community care. The staff who are responsible for child protection ensure they keep their practice up-to-date and all staff are clear about the procedures to adopt when there is concern.
47. Pupils in Year 4 take part in a 'St John's Lifesaver Award' leading to a qualification during the summer term. Parents especially value the benefits pupils derive. This course complements the school's good provision, where a significant number of staff hold a first aid qualification. Good links have been established with other agencies. The school health adviser, the occupational therapist, speech and language therapists and the educational psychologist all visit the school regularly.
48. Although pupils' attendance is good and above the national average, the school is careful to keep a close eye on those who are absent. Procedures for monitoring attendance are good and systems well thought out. An example of good practice exists in the way in which the school knows the children who travel to school without an adult, and will immediately alert parents and telephone home if they are absent, to make sure there have been are no problems en route.

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

49. The partnership with parents is very good. The positive picture seen during the previous inspection has been further improved following the appointment of a new headteacher. She has developed a relationship where parents, teachers and children are successfully learning together. Parents are very supportive of the school and it is well respected within both the educational and wider community. The very positive views of parents, expressed at the well-attended meeting with inspectors and through an inspection questionnaire, to which 158 parents, replied confirm high levels of satisfaction with nearly all aspects of the school's work.
50. There was only one area where a small number of parents expressed dissatisfaction. This related to the school not providing an interesting range of activities outside lesson. Taking into account that this is a first school and some young pupils are very tired after a long school day, the school does provide a good range of activities, much more than is usually seen for this age group. Many are held during lunchtimes, so some parents may not realise they are taking place. Clubs include dance, choir, chess and board games.
51. The high regard parents have for the school's work is translated into very good levels of support for fundraising activities. The 'Friends Of Wells Hall' organise a calendar of events throughout the year and significant sums of money are raised. This is making a huge difference to the amount of resources the school is able to buy. Their work is making a big contribution to improving the standard of education. A major project in recent times has been the Sensory Garden. The 'Friends' is a group who are confident in expressing their opinions regarding school policy and practice, especially in relation to the way money raised by them is spent. A good number of parents help regularly each week and this is important as it is providing extra support for those pupils that need it most, for example in listening to pupils read, especially those not heard read at home.
52. The school makes a priority of keeping parents very well informed about the curriculum, knowing that many parents are interested and very willing to help their child learn, if they can. Along with good quality, regular newsletters and class letters, where details of what the class will be covering is explained, the school are very good at hosting meetings about certain aspects of the curriculum. They were successful in encouraging nearly all families to send a representative, parents, grandparents, aunts, older brothers and sisters, to the 'Learning Together' drug education project. Photographs of the day show parents and pupils examining a range of substances, such as flour, white spirit, bleach, whilst discussing what is safe and what is not. This included discussions on tobacco, alcohol and drugs. Evaluations from parents show how very worthwhile they found the event and how much they learnt from the exercise.
53. There is a good partnership with other agencies, in this case the 'Family Learning Team', in order that parents can benefit from training sessions from outside specialists. For instance, a six-week course has been held to which 20

parents attended, covering how to help with reading and spelling. Recognising the need to help some parents manage their child's behaviour, the headteacher along with the 'Primary Care Group' has organised another course next term, entitled 'What Can Parents Do?' These are all worthwhile initiatives that give parents additional skills and promote a partnership in learning.

54. The school continually evaluates provision with a view to seeking improvements. The staff are very good at considering the views of parents and are sincere in their desire to consult in major decision making. They consider that the results of consultations with parents are vital to this process. For example, changes were made to timings of meetings to suit working parents. Issues concerning the swimming pool were resolved when the depth of parental feeling was made known to the school. Copies of draft policies for behaviour, drugs and sex education are sent to interested parents, whose views are then heard at open meetings.
55. Pupils' annual reports are good quality and meet all legal requirements. They include a comment about progress matched to different levels within the National Curriculum and targets for improvement are suggested to help the individual child. A handwritten paragraph by the class teacher, about pupils' personal and social development, gives parents a good insight into how their child is maturing.
56. Most parents are very positive about the provision for pupils with special educational needs and believe that individuals are well catered for. The class teachers and the co-ordinator for special educational needs liaise with parents at all stages. Parents are always encouraged to work closely with the school. They are involved in all reviews and kept informed of all individual education plans. They see and sign all individual education plans and make their own input where needed. Regular contact is established for any exchange of information.

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

57. The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are good. The headteacher took up office at the beginning of this term, September 2001, though she had been the acting headteacher during the previous school year. She has worked energetically to maintain standards and has been greatly instrumental in improving the quality of teaching and establishing a strong management team. Whilst the quality of teaching has been much improved since the time of the last inspection, it is not yet fully effective in raising standards. This is due to the difficulties that teachers face in teaching such a wide range of age and ability in mixed-age classes. Not enough has been done to evaluate the effect of this method of organisation on pupils' attainment. The governing body considers the organisation of classes each year and the senior management team consider planning systems. Both need further consideration to make sure that all pupils gain maximum benefit from the potentially good teaching. The needs of all pupils in each of the 11 mixed-age classes are not always met successfully. The headteacher has succeeded in making sure that teachers, support staff and governors are committed to

working hard and to identifying areas for development in order to improve the school's performance further. She has gained the confidence of all associated with the school. She is developing a clear vision of how to pursue excellence and raise standards. She has not been in post for long enough to have contributed to a substantial degree of improvement in the standards that pupils attain but she is determined to use all available resources to ensure high quality provision. One significant recent success is the negotiation of a grant to transform an open air quadrangle and create a superb new teaching area in the middle of the school. This is used for the 'Den' at lunchtime and for teaching groups of pupils throughout the day. Though only opened very recently, it is already having a major impact on the quality of provision. Those teachers with curricular responsibilities in the school work hard to improve standards in their areas of responsibility. The co-ordinator of provision for pupils with special educational needs has a clear understanding of pupils' learning requirements and provides effective guidance for pupils, colleagues and parents. Her action plan for developing provision further forms part of school improvement plan. She ensures that pupils on the special educational needs register are well supported by designated support staff. Teachers with subject responsibilities accept accountability for standards in their subjects and monitor provision well. As a result of their monitoring, they identify areas for development and propose effective action. The contribution of staff with management responsibilities is very good.

58. The school has introduced good performance management procedures. Staff are interviewed annually and performance targets are set. The headteacher visits classes regularly to evaluate the quality of teaching and provide supportive feedback. The acting deputy headteacher gives good support and is a valued member of the senior management team. There is no permanently appointed deputy headteacher at present, due to the present headteacher's recent promotion from that role, but the school hopes to make a suitable appointment in the near future.
  
59. Financial control is very good. The bursar has an excellent understanding of the school's financial systems and provides very good information for the governing body. Spending decisions are carefully considered in terms of what direction they should take in the best interests of the pupils in the school. Specific grants, such as that for extending the teaching area, are used prudently and for the intended purposes. The governing body is so confident in their financial predictions, and their ability to maintain staffing at current levels, that they spend their allocations to the full with very little kept in reserve. This good practice releases the maximum amount of money for current use. Tenders are sought for all major works and the governing body considers carefully the principles of best value. They seek to know how the money invested in the school is used to improve the standards that pupils attain and whether the school is organised effectively as possible to ensure that standards are as high as they could be. They study the school's results, which are well presented, and compare them with others in the county. They share the school's commitment to improve standards further. The school employs a good number of classroom assistants in order to support teaching and learning. The governing body has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They take a keen interest and are successful in helping to shape the school's direction. They ensure that all statutory

requirements are met. The key issues from the last report have been tackled successfully. One of the school's overarching aims is to work in close partnership with governors and parents to ensure that children's time is enjoyable, rewarding and purposeful. The school is largely successful in achieving its aims.

60. The school has a good school improvement plan that focuses clearly on raising standards. Priorities are appropriate. The success criteria are generally precise and describe how success will be evaluated, by for example increasing pupils' performance in spelling. The school sets itself a great deal of developmental work each year. It harnesses the energies of a broad number of people to help with these initiatives. The people identified as being responsible for sharing their expertise with children and introducing more flexibility in learning include teachers, midday supervisors, the cook and caretaker, governors and parents. This is a good indication of how the school strives to include everybody associated with the school in improving provision.
61. Procedures for the identification of pupils with special educational needs are effective. Information gathered from the tests used by the school is analysed systematically to identify any lack of progress or weaknesses in achievement. The governor who maintains an overview of provision for pupils with special educational needs is very experienced and actively involved. The governing body's annual report to parents includes appropriate information. The information in the prospectus effectively describes the school's provision of special educational needs. Monitoring of special educational needs by the headteacher and special educational needs co-ordinator is good. There are good arrangements in place for annual reviews and all parties involved normally attend these. The accommodation for pupils with special educational needs is good. Suitable resources are developed in order to meet the needs of individuals and used efficiently. Resources, including staff are managed effectively to support both special educational needs policies and pupils. Funding for pupils with special educational needs is used appropriately to enhance curricular access and progress.
62. Accommodation is very good. The school has spacious grounds, a swimming pool, two halls and spacious classrooms. The outside area for the youngest children has not been developed as an effective learning resource. The outside area for the youngest pupils has not yet been developed as an effective learning resource. Although it is cramped the school is aware of this and it features as an area for development in the school improvement plan. There is no computer room. Resources are adequate and in the main are used well. Systems to assess, record and analyse pupils' attainment and progress are not yet electronically collated. The school secretary and clerical assistant ensure the smooth day-to-day running of all administrative procedures. They are very conscious of the need to help teachers with their administrative load. The headteacher manages bureaucratic demands well but the secretary is often asked for duplicate information by the local authority or from government sources. Taking into account the relatively high costs of teaching each child in the school, coupled with the high proportion of good teaching and the generally average standards that pupils attain, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

63. In order to improve standards further, the headteacher, staff and governing body should:
- (1) Refine lesson planning so that plans include more precise details of how the wide range of pupils' learning needs in each class will be met.  
(paragraphs 6,17,19,57)
  - (2) Analyse timetables and adjust them so that the length of lessons is more closely in tune with pupils' learning needs.  
(paragraphs 10,20, 25,27,87,99)
  - (3) Improve the quality of handwriting and the presentation of work by:
    - raising teachers' expectations of pupils' performance and the quality of work that they can produce;
    - teaching handwriting and techniques designed to improve presentation systematically from the reception class to Year 4.  
(paragraphs 18)
  - (4) Ensure that higher attaining pupils are challenged appropriately and are encouraged to use greater initiative in their learning.  
(paragraphs 1,20, 26, 36)
  - (5) Make more use of computers to support teaching and learning across the curriculum.  
(paragraphs 18,121)

### **Other less significant areas for development:**

Improve the quality of assemblies by:

- encouraging greater participation by pupils;
- incorporating a greater sense of worship;
- ensuring sufficient time for reflection.  
(paragraphs 10,33)

Develop a greater enthusiasm for reading and a wider knowledge of children's literature by:

- creating interesting and imaginative displays of children's literature;
- encouraging pupils to choose reading books that match more closely their particular stages of development in reading.  
(paragraphs 18,82)



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	80
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	67

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	11	45	22	1	0	0
Percentage	1	14	56	27	1	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	23	371
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		32

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	67

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.6
National comparative data	5.2

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.5

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	43	34	77

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	35	41	40
	Girls	30	33	31
	Total	65	74	71
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (90)	96 (94)	92 (94)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	40	41	39
	Girls	31	30	29
	Total	71	71	68
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (93)	92 (95)	87 (96)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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	1
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	0
White	387
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	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

## Teachers and classes

### Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	28.5
Average class size	30.9

### Education support staff: YR – Y4

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	282

### Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	23
Number of pupils per FTE adult	12

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	690902
Total expenditure	696935
Expenditure per pupil	1900
Balance brought forward from previous year	9110
Balance carried forward to next year	3077

## Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	7

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	394
Number of questionnaires returned	158

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	62	35	3	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	54	37	1	1	8
Behaviour in the school is good.	41	54	1	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	49	5	1	6
The teaching is good.	57	40	1	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	48	8	1	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	66	32	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	37	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	61	34	4	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	69	28	1	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	40	1	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	41	10	2	17

### Other issues raised by parents

Parents are strongly supportive of the school and voiced no special concerns. A small minority felt that the school could provide a greater range of activities outside lessons but inspection findings showed that such provision is good.

## **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**

64. The youngest children, four and five-year-olds are taught in the nursery and reception classes. They enter the nursery with a wide range of attainment but, overall, their attainment is in line with expectations for their age. As a result of good teaching and good curricular provision, children, including those who have special educational needs, achieve well in the six areas of learning in the foundation stage of education. These are:
- personal, social and emotional development;
  - communication, language and literacy;
  - mathematical development;
  - knowledge and understanding of the world;
  - physical development; and
  - creative development.
65. It is not possible to make specific evaluations of changes in each area of learning since the last inspection as the last report described provision in general, rather than specific, terms. By the time they move to Year 1, most children who have spent three terms in the reception class reach the expected levels in all of these areas of learning and higher attaining children exceed them. A smaller proportion of children among those who have only spent two terms in the reception class attain such standards. Those who have only spent one term in the reception class are not as advanced in their learning and most do not attain the expected standard in all areas of learning. When this is taken in account, children's attainment by the end of Year 1 is average and most have attained the early learning goals. The new curriculum for the foundation stage is well established. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, when it was satisfactory in the nursery and mostly good in the reception class. It is now always at least good; a third is very good and occasionally it is excellent. The nursery nurse and classroom assistants play a significant role in the teaching programme. Children's development is closely studied and any children whose learning causes concern are quickly identified. Those with special educational needs are provided with good support and achieve well. Accommodation is good but the outdoor play area is underdeveloped as a learning resource. The school is aware of this and it features on the school improvement plan as an area for development.

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

66. Children enjoy coming to school and soon settle into the daily routines. On arrival, the children identify their name labels and put them on a chart to show that they are present. They settle on the carpet in the morning and browse through books until it is time for registration when they all answer their names with a polite, 'Good morning'. One child arrived during registration and, unbidden, stated confidently, 'I'm sorry, I am very, very late'. In the nursery they become increasingly aware of their surroundings as they move about the classroom and outdoor area. Four children in each session line up to take the register to the office. With sensitive adult support, they gradually become more confident in choosing activities independently. In the class 'Health Centre' and the 'Caterpillar Café', they learn to share, co-operate and relate happily to one another. In the reception class, children show increasing levels of concentration

but a significant number of them still need adult support to ensure that they complete tasks. The youngest children gain experience in being part of a larger group when they join the reception class for assemblies in the hall. In lessons on literacy and numeracy, most children become increasingly responsive to the teachers' questions so that they gain early skills in mental arithmetic and reading. In all classes, children ask confidently for help from adults and make very good relationships with the staff. They develop appropriate levels of independence as they help to clear up at the end of activities, use the lavatory independently, remember to wash their hands and deal with dressing for physical education. They learn to co-operate and help each other and to collaborate in events, as when acting together as a team to lift and lower a large parachute. They learn how other people might feel when they play the 'Hot Seat Game'. Here they took it in turns to put on a red cloak as they pretended to be little Red Riding Hood while the class asked them questions about how they felt when walking alone through the woods and when seeing the wolf dressed as the grandmother.

67. In both classes, the quality of teaching and learning is good and pupils achieve well. The welcoming atmosphere in the nursery raises children's self-esteem and encourages them to succeed. Routines are established and follow the same outline pattern each day. In both classes a 'menu' of the day's activities is displayed. This menu is illustrated with good digital photographs in the nursery. In the reception class the menu is annotated numerically and the children know exactly where they are and how many more activities are scheduled before home time. Staff have a very good understanding of the needs of the age group. They plan their lessons very well and explain activities clearly so that children understand what they should do. Staff prepare activities carefully to encourage children's independence from an early stage. They speak sensibly to the children without restricting their vocabulary in deference to the children's age. They make very good relationships with them; they listen to them carefully and engage with them sensitively. Classrooms are organised to create stimulating and positive surroundings in which children are happy to learn. The management of children is very good and all staff have high expectations of good behaviour. The children currently in the reception class will not move into Year 1 until they have completed three terms in this class. Most are well on course to attain the early learning goals in this area of learning.
68. Visitors to the nursery and reception classes help children to understand how to relate to adults. A visitor from the RSPCA, a woman police officer and a blind lady, accompanied by her dog, have stimulated great interest. A visitor from Africa showed the children how to dance in an African way. Children visit a local spice factory and find out about how a factory works. These experiences help to develop high levels of confidence and self-esteem.

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

69. Good opportunities are provided to help children to develop their speaking and listening skills. In the nursery the nursery nurse takes half the class for 'talking time' while the teacher talks with the other half. This creates relatively small groups so that children have plenty of opportunity to participate. Children talked about their activities over the half-term holiday. Most were bursting to tell of their experiences, though a minority just answered with nods when asked, for example, where they went swimming. Several show limited speech development and confuse tense, as in 'I go on holiday last week' instead of 'went'. They make connections as when one child was explaining, resignedly, why he could not make a tricycle work, 'Me legs weren't long enough to pedal'.

Both boys and girls develop confidence in speaking. One very articulate girl named many of the animals she had seen on a visit to the zoo, and one equally articulate boy asked if the class could get on with the planned activities rather than sit around talking. Children chat happily to each other as they sit waiting, with their 'babies' on their knees, for the doctor or nurse in the Health Centre. Staff model good speech patterns, speak clearly and use correct technical terms, such as 'antennae' when discussing butterflies. The teacher in the nursery speaks quietly and this encourages children to listen intently.

70. Children 'write' prescriptions in the Health Centre and take orders in the café. This play writing encourages children understand some of the purposes of writing. In both classes the children keep a diary. In the reception class the teacher showed the children her own diaries in preparation for reading a 'big book' entitled 'Kipper's Diary'. The children considered which day would come after Monday and most thought Tuesday, though several plumped for Thursday. The children studied the words in the big book in great detail. They noted details like, 'there's five words on that page'. They noticed the 'k' on the end of park and the 'c' on their sweatshirts, 'Look it's the second letter in the word 'school' and it's the third letter of the alphabet.' Most know that 'k' is the initial letter of kitten and 'c' is the initial letter of coat but several found a coach in their dictionaries and called it a bus. Most of the children in the nursery recognise their names and in the reception class most can write their names and a series of familiar words to make short sentences. They sing the alphabet well in unison and chant the words of 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' with which they have become very familiar. Most are not yet familiar with the terms 'author' and 'illustrator' but many are keen to write their own little books. Many can read words with which they have become familiar, 'such as 'caterpillar', but 'butterflies' causes much more of a problem. They enjoy exploring sounds. One child in the nursery commented that 'wobble' rhymed with 'tunnel' but on listening more closely conceded that it was a 'near rhyme' rather than an exact one.
71. The teaching of this area of learning is good and children achieve well. One lesson in the reception class was excellent. It was brisk, well structured, contained a variety of activities that captured pupils' imagination and developed early reading skills very well. In both classes activities are carefully planned and well structured to meet the learning needs of all children. Learning aims are written clearly on the white board at the beginning of lessons and good review sessions are held towards the end of each session when children discuss what they have learned. The nursery nurse and classroom assistants help to assess children's progress. They observe the children interacting with the teacher. They note, for example, who joins in with saying the 'c' and 'k' sound confidently and who is still rather unsure. They record children who track the words accurately with their fingers in group reading sessions and those whose fingers do not follow the text. This helps them to give extra support where a need is identified. Computers are used well to help children practise matching sounds and letters so that they reinforce their knowledge of phonics. They practise reciting a number of letter sounds each day and have learnt actions to go with each sound, such as miming the action of breaking an egg to signify the letter 'e'. They make 's' shapes from play dough and paint the shape in different colours. This multi-faceted approach promotes a good knowledge of phonics. They enjoy being 'sound

detectives' and in the reception searched their illustrated dictionaries for letters beginning with 'c' and 'k'. They used simple reference books to find out about different types of butterfly and where they come from. They made puppets of the characters from 'Little Red Riding Hood' and told the story, noting how oral story telling can be different from the version read from books. Many have well developed early reading skills and several can already read simple books. They hold pencils properly and form recognisable letters. Most are on course to attain the early learning goals described in national guidance.

### **Mathematical development**

72. Children are provided with a rich learning environment that helps them to achieve well. Each morning an individual is chosen to count the number of children in the class. One counted up to six and became flummoxed but the rest of the class joined in and counted up to 24 in unison. They rolled out lengths of play dough to make caterpillars and commented on their length, comparing those that are shorter with those that are longer. They counted the pieces of fruit that the very hungry caterpillar had eaten and sang a song about a bird swooping down to eat five caterpillars, one after another. They held ten green bottles and sang the song 'Ten Green Bottles Hanging on the Wall'. This developed and reinforced their understanding of subtraction. They coloured butterflies wings and matched one side with another, developing a sense of pattern and symmetry. They have explored the school to find circles, such as car tyres and those formed by the bottom of a bucket. They went on a caterpillar hunt and found a large number, made from coloured pipe cleaners. They sorted them by colour and counted how many they had found. Good links are made between the different areas of the curriculum. In assembly, for example, the theme of long and short was reflected in the story of David and Goliath with large cut out body shapes indicating their relative sizes. They studied ten fat sausages in a frying pan and took away two at a time as they learned about groups of two. They rolled cars down a ramp and measured how far they travelled and used coins as they played in the 'Do It Yourself' shop. They have painted pictures of their houses and have put them in numerical order to make a street.
  
73. Children learn effectively because the teaching is good. It is imaginative and gives children an appetite to find out more. Learning is also great fun. In one activity children explored a large number of different sized cardboard boxes and investigated how many children could fit into each box. Children enjoy their work because it is purposeful. There is scope, however, to introduce a greater degree of challenge in the reception class. The children were digging up shells and stones from the sand tray, for example, but there was no attempt to ask how many more shells than stones they had found or being challenged, perhaps, to find as many stones as would fill one plastic bucket. Homework features strongly in many of the activities. In a recent project on houses children were asked to take worksheets home to record details of the house numbers in their street and to note whether there were odd numbers on one side of the street and even numbers on the other. They made tallies to use as the basis for pictograms and bar graphs of the different types of houses they live in. They were asked to draw round the hands of all their family members and to compare them to determine the largest and smallest. This promotes an effective partnership in learning between home and school. Most of the



children in the reception class are on course to attain the early learning goals by the end of this school year.

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

74. The children enjoyed an outdoor camp day when they made dens from material stretched over frames made from chairs and from cardboard boxes. Several had tents they had brought from home. The construction of the dens called for much ingenuity. Because it rained the picnic they had planned had to be eaten indoors. This helped children to experience the realities of the world. They are developing awareness of the multi-cultural nature of our society. During book week, for example, one mum visited the classroom to read a book in Bengali as well as in English. During book week the children dressed up in clothes from different countries. They found the countries on a globe and talked about the weather in each country and how it influenced the type of clothes people wear, noting whether the clothes were designed to keep people cool or to keep them warm. Children are investigating change and as part of their investigation they have created a large wall display of photographs showing pictures of themselves, their parents and their grandparents. They have also studied how they have changed from being babies and toddlers to becoming school children. To help them in this investigation two mothers brought a baby and a toddler into the classroom. This helped the children to gain a deeper understanding of change over time and of past and present events. They cooked spaghetti and made jellies as part of their investigation. During 'Walk to School Week' children experimented with guiding remote controlled toys safely around the roads they had set out. This helped them to understand about the dangers of not steering cars accurately and about road safety. They used the computers with confidence. As part of a project on taste, they used computers as research tools to find information on lemons, for example. They used a hair drier to see the effect of the wind on straw, sticks and bricks. This activity encouraged an understanding of how to conduct experiments. They built a wall of wooden bricks that were spaced in a bonded pattern and noted that this was stronger than an evenly constructed pile of bricks. Teaching is good. This rich range of experiences helps to promote good achievement in this area of learning and most reception children are well on course to attain the early learning goals by next July.

### **Physical development**

75. This area of learning is approached in many different ways. Children play in the school hall where they dance, use small apparatus, such as specially designed rubber balls that have a knobbled surface to make them easier to catch, and large apparatus, such as climbing frames. They achieve well and make rapid progress. They run confidently and many climb fearlessly. In the outside area they pedal wheeled vehicles proficiently and push the dolls' prams sedately. Their throwing and catching skills are developing well. Few can kick a ball accurately, however. They recognise the importance of keeping healthy and of taking exercise. They are aware of space and were good at avoiding collisions when running in the playground. During a lesson in the hall, children in the reception class investigated different ways of travelling to school on different days of the week. They strode with measured strides, balanced on one foot and stretched from left to right successfully. Most found

co-ordinating a jump and a hop very challenging. They were good at moving in time to music, however, and showed a good sense of rhythm.

76. Children are taught how to use simple tools, such as scissors, safely. They manipulated construction apparatus with increasing dexterity and joined interlocking plastic bricks effectively to make houses for the three little pigs. Teaching is good and children achieve well. They are well on course to attain the early learning goals.

### **Creative development**

77. Children mixed black and white paint to make elephant colours on 'elephant day'. They used collage techniques to make a colourful patchwork picture of 'Elmer the Elephant'. They counted how many coloured squares were needed to cover Elmer and what fabric would be best as a background against which to camouflage him. They studied the work of Bridget Riley and were inspired to print a large mural made from black circles. They use paint rollers as well as different types of brush to paint carefully composed stripey pictures. Children looked in mirrors before painting bold self-portraits and experimented with pastel crayons. They used percussion instruments rhythmically to accompany their singing of 'London Bridge is Falling Down'. Children enjoy dressing up as doctors, nurses, patients when engaging in imaginative role-play in the Health Centre and as customers, waiters or managers in the 'Caterpillar Café'. They have sessions where they sit on the 'story cushion' and make up stories for a small group of their friends to listen to. They appreciated the beauty of leaves changing colour and falling from the trees. They collected some and made a picture by sticking them on to paper. Several talked to themselves as they played with small toys and entered a pretend world of their own making. They listened to a story about a violinist called Patrick and then visited the adjacent middle school to listen to the pupils playing their violins. There was little evidence of pupils being encouraged to evaluate their work or to express opinions about paintings or to explain to the class what they had created. Teaching is good. A rich range of experiences ensures that children's learning is effective. They achieve well and are on course to attain the early learning goals by the end of the year.

### **ENGLISH**

78. Standards in Year 2 have improved since the last inspection and are above average overall for English. The standards reached by pupils in Year 4 have been maintained and are also above those usually found for this age group.
79. Speaking and listening skills throughout the school are above average, as they were at the last inspection. Many pupils are able to give lengthy explanations when asked a question and teachers consciously plan to improve skills, particularly in Years 1 and 2. The focus of one literacy hour each week is on speaking and this is enabling pupils to make good progress. In one lesson, pupils listened carefully to a poem about bullying and then discussed their feelings. They closed their eyes and considered such questions as, 'How would you feel if this was our playground?' This helped to promote their spiritual development. In pairs, they then explored emotions such as

happiness, sadness, shyness and anger and practised asking a question in a manner that demonstrated their feelings. This role-play was greatly enjoyed and promoted good learning. In Years 3 and 4 teachers also plan well for the development of speaking skills. A group of pupils, that was performing 'Hansel and Gretel', knew that they should speak expressively and loudly enough for the audience to follow the story. Another class explored vocabulary using the book 'Ghost Dog'. They discussed quite maturely the meaning of 'quarry', 'intrigued', 'diminishing' and 'accelerated'. The teacher was conscious that, by doing this, pupils would be more likely in their subsequent writing to use powerful words, instead of everyday ones.

80. By the end of Year 2, pupils attain average standards in reading. This reflects the school's national test results for seven-year-olds in 2001. In Year 4, reading standards overall are average. Within each class there is a very wide range of age and ability. In each of the six mixed Year 1 and Year 2 classes, for example, the range is from a relatively immature lower attaining Year 1 pupil, who 'reads' by making up words using pictures, to a comparatively mature higher attaining Year 2 pupil, who reads a simple paperback book fluently and accurately. Teachers are faced with unusually challenging circumstances that make it especially difficult to improve standards for the whole wide range of pupils in each class. The best readers in Year 2 are fluent and accurate. They know how to work out unknown words. One boy read 'strut' by sounding out the letters but did not know what it meant. A girl however worked out the meaning of 'hollering' from the context. She also had good strategies for correcting her mistakes without assistance. Most pupils use the first letter-sound in an unknown word to give them a clue but few can blend sounds to read the whole word. 'Gloomily' and 'snatched' therefore presented problems and reading was often hesitant because of the need to stop and decipher words. Unless the lower attaining readers had a suitable book, they struggled to read and needed frequent help with many words, even basic ones such as 'went' which was read as 'was' more than once. However, these pupils also knew the sounds of individual letters. Teachers teach and reinforce the basic skills of phonics and word-building every day. In one example, the teacher made sure that pupils knew the sound 'at' and set them a quick task of writing as many words as they could on their whiteboards containing the sound. This is a good method of including everybody in the task, rather than asking a few to give examples as they sit on the carpet. All pupils produced a list and though a few words like 'lat' were discarded, the teacher was able to compile an impressive number of examples and pupils were able to blend the sounds in the words in order to read them.
81. By Year 4, the higher attaining readers used expression when reading aloud and had a clear understanding of the stories they read. Most pupils clearly explained the difference between fiction, non-fiction and poetry books. They tried to read unknown words by using phonic strategies to build words with a fair degree of success, though unsurprisingly 'Rumpelstiltskin' presented a problem. Lower attaining pupils were still struggling and had to be helped with words such as 'more' and 'surprise'. Most pupils keep good reading diaries in which entries are made by any adult who hears them read. These diaries indicate wide differences in the number of books read and the occasions on which an adult has commented on the quality of reading. A higher attaining pupil in Year 2 had read six books over the half-term holiday week. In contrast, an average Year 1 pupil had not been heard during the holiday or for four days

on either side of it. Teachers regularly hear pupils read during the group guided reading sessions that form part of the daily literacy hour. The school has introduced a new initiative designed to identify and isolate specific reading skills, help pupils to focus on one such skill, decide on targets for improvement and assess their success. Books for this activity are carefully chosen to meet the needs of the pupils. However, the principles underpinning this step-by-step, structured approach do not continue when pupils choose the books that go home, either from the class or school library. As a result, opportunities to practise skills learnt in class are lost, and this affects the pupils' progress adversely.

82. The school does have a basic reading scheme but this is not used sequentially. Instead books are colour-coded according to difficulty. However, the grading of books is very broad within each colour set and this is restricting achievement and hampering the progress that pupils make because they are likely to pick a book that is too difficult. The system for checking that there is a suitable match between pupils' stages of development in reading and the material they choose is not sufficiently precise. In the sample of readers heard by inspectors, one third had books that were too difficult. Even when pupils manage to read accurately, their understanding of the story is not always secure. The school holds special events each year, such as 'Book Week' to heighten interest in reading. Storytellers from the community come into school and pupils dress up as their favourite fictional character. Despite this many are reluctant to talk about a favourite author or book. Pupils are not sure of the system for finding particular information books in the library. The library is well stocked with books, though some are old. Books are properly catalogued and the library is kept tidy by monitors from among the oldest pupils. Pupils use it regularly to change books and some choose information books rather than story-books to take home. It is not used enough for personal research or to develop study skills, particularly for the oldest pupils, despite a good example of research into barn owls displayed in one classroom. Dictionary skills are properly developed and pupils in Years 3 and 4 confidently used a thesaurus to find alternative words for 'tiny'.
83. By the end of Year 2 pupils attain standards in writing that are above average and this is an improvement since the last inspection. As at the time of the last inspection, by the end of Year 4, pupils attain standards that are above average. Most Year 2 pupils understand the need to write in sentences and the more able write sensible news accounts and creative stories. Their letters to the 'Three Bears' show careful thought and an ability to write clearly and accurately. Class books of poems and pupils' own books, for example about snakes, show that everyone experiences a good range of writing for different purposes. Because of the wide range of ability, however, some pupils find writing difficult. Spelling is difficult for many pupils but words such as 'layt' and 'roobys' are comprehensible because they are phonetically decipherable. Last year's work for Years 1 and 2 demonstrates that pupils achieve well over the two years and make good progress. Activities in literacy lessons are generally planned to meet the different needs of pupils although some teachers are inclined to leave too little time for these activities and pupils sit through introductions and explanations that are too long. Opportunities are missed to develop literacy skills in other subjects. Very little written work is undertaken in history and religious education, for example.

84. By Year 4, pupils are writing in a variety of ways: poetry, news accounts, and play scripts as well as imaginative stories and they make steady progress during their two years in each of the mixed Year 3 and 4 classes. The higher attaining pupils use exciting vocabulary: 'I saw a hurtling comet blazing with fire' and stories are sometimes lengthy and occasionally written using paragraphs and divided into chapters. Punctuation, including the use of speech marks, is usually accurate. Most pupils also write sensibly though vocabulary is more commonplace and spelling less secure than that demonstrated in the work of the higher attaining pupils. Lower attaining pupils do not always indicate where sentences begin and finish but they are not inhibited by problems with spelling. The meaning of 'sprinckerler' is obvious. The whole school takes part in a writing task each year. Teachers assess each piece of work against the criteria in the National Curriculum and use the results to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses. Groups of pupils throughout the school have broad targets for improvement and teachers regularly refer to them in lessons. There are good systems for assessing standards using end-of-year tests. These enable teachers to predict what each pupil should aim for and then to check progress towards the predicted target. Teachers generally mark work well with supportive comments and indications of how improvements can be made; 'I would like to see more description of the scenes in your story.'

85. Handwriting is not consistent across the school. The satisfactory standards achieved when pupils practise forming letters or joining them are not maintained in independent writing activities. Presentation varies from class to class because not all teachers are setting high enough expectations of neat work.
86. Very good provision is made to help pupils with special educational needs. Learning assistants provide very good support for them in lessons, for example, two pupils in a younger class are helped to find words beginning with 'd'. The assistant helps them to write the letter correctly, drawing dots for one of the pupils to follow. She encourages them to speak, thus promoting their conversational skills. The warm relationship she has with them enables them to make good progress in a short time. Another assistant is providing additional work in literacy for Year 4 pupils who have been identified as needing an extra boost to raise their attainment. She conducts a brisk 20-minute session in which learning is well promoted. Understanding of the difference between a phrase and a sentence is reinforced enabling pupils to produce a sentence from a one-word answer to a question.
87. Teaching is good in the literacy hours throughout the school. Teachers plan lessons well. They know clearly what they want pupils to learn. Lesson aims are usually displayed and/or shared with pupils. Good resources are used effectively. An overhead projector is used, for example, to display an example of a newspaper's front page so that the layout can be explained and discussed. The literacy hour is now well established in the school and is proving effective because it enables teachers to present well-structured lessons that provide pupils with a range of work. Extra time is allocated for extended writing activities and this is helping to raise standards, even though some lessons are occasionally too long. In a Year 3/4 class, the whole afternoon was spent on a writing task, making it difficult to sustain interest. Most teachers plan different work that effectively addresses the varying needs in their class. Five groups are designated in a Year 3/4 class, for example, and each has challenging work at a different level with the overall aim of producing a play script. Two groups use computers. The most able type in the work themselves but another group dictates to an assistant what they want to say so that time is used effectively and a script for 'The Three Little Pigs' quickly emerges. Less capable pupils draw up their script on large pieces of paper, while others practise a performance or copy their script in best handwriting from a draft that has been corrected. Teachers usually keep pupils busy and have good questioning techniques. Some very good teaching in two lessons is characterised by an awareness that all pupils should speak during discussions and by an ability to keep up a brisk pace. Teachers convey their own enthusiasm, for the book 'Katie Morag Delivers the Mail', for example, and pupils respond accordingly. Where lessons are less successful, it is because pupils are kept on the carpet for too long or high expectations for good work and/or behaviour are not expressed or maintained.
88. English is well led by the co-ordinator with the support of the headteacher. The subject is closely monitored and results are properly analysed to determine the way forward. New initiatives are constantly being explored with the aim of raising standards and all teachers work very well together. Information and communication technology is increasingly being used to support work. A

spelling program helps younger pupils. Words flash up and pupils have to copy them correctly in a set time. Older pupils use a word-processor to present their work neatly. These older pupils are also offered satisfactory opportunities to practise literacy skills in other subjects. A description of a Christian baptism by a Year 3 pupil in religious education, for example, reinforces the skill of writing an accurate account.

## **MATHEMATICS**

89. The standards achieved by pupils at the end of Years 2 and 4 are broadly average. These are similar to the findings of the previous inspection. The school's performance has improved at the same rate as other schools nationally. The national test results reflect inspection findings.
90. By the age of seven, most pupils can order numbers up to 100 and understand place value. They read and write figures to 100 and distinguish between odd and even numbers. Most pupils add and subtract three-digit numbers. Pupils in Year 2 are developing an understanding of multiplication through the use of repeated addition. They recognise and write simple fractions. They use standard units, for example when measuring the length of various objects. Having learned the names and value of coins, they use this knowledge to practise addition and subtraction. Pupils carry out investigations involving numbers, for example by using three-digit numbers to find the largest and smallest number possible. They record the names of simple two-dimensional shapes such as squares and triangles and investigate their properties. They know how to use a tally chart, as they count people and vehicles passing the school.
91. By the age of nine, the majority of pupils have a satisfactory understanding of place value to 1000, with higher attaining pupils working with five and six-digit numbers. They add and subtract four-digit numbers and know how to multiply and divide by single digits. Pupils have an understanding of simple fractions. They know the names of many three-dimensional shapes and learn to classify them by their properties such as the number of faces and edges. They record time both in analogue and digital forms. They are beginning to understand a general statement from investigation. For example, by practising the addition of two even numbers, pupils discover the answer is always an even number and that adding two odd numbers also gives an even number answer. Pupils know how to collect data and record it in the form of bar and pie charts. They also know how to interpret their results from these charts.
92. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally good and sometimes very good. When not the focus of a teacher's attention, most pupils continue to work well independently. They co-operate well and are very willing to share resources. Pupils are curious and interested in seeking solutions to problems posed. They are eager to share their achievements with adults and each other.
93. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Clear targets are set for them and they are greatly helped by well-trained and dedicated special and learning support assistants. Teachers face a particularly wide age and ability range in all classes from Year 1 to Year 4. This makes it difficult for them to provide appropriate challenge for all pupils in all lessons. So, despite the good teaching observed in lessons, achievement in the longer term is satisfactory rather than good. The scrutiny of work showed that standards are broadly

average and that tasks set for pupils are not always well match to their widely varying learning needs. Staff have worked hard with the introduction of the national numeracy strategy and have produced detailed short term planning sheets that are discussed at weekly planning meetings. Clear objectives are set for each lesson and these are shared with the pupils at the beginning of the lesson, usually by being written on the white board. Most lessons contain a good mental arithmetic session before the main teaching is done, and they also finish with some form of review of the objectives, using pupils' work as examples. The activities provided for the pupils are relevant to the objectives set and are planned to cover, in broad terms, the wide range of ability found in the classes. Because of this wide range of ability and of age some activities do not always meet the learning needs of all pupils and this is especially so for some of the higher attaining ones. Support staff are used well and the quality of their work clearly enhances pupils' learning, particularly those with special educational needs. Lessons are generally well-paced, with a good mix of revision of previously learned concepts, direct teaching and individual practice. The marking of pupils' work varies between classes. In some cases work is marked well with clear indications as to what the pupils have done well and where they need to improve, however this is not the case in all classes. The standard of presentation of work in books is variable, some pupils produce extremely neat and tidy calculations, others produce rather untidy and unclear figures.

94. There is evidence of pupils using mathematics satisfactorily to help their learning in lessons such as geography, history and information and communication technology. In information and communication technology, for example, pupils record figures of where parents work and how they travel. These figures are fed into a computer and block graphs produced which pupils use to answer questions.
95. The amount of time allocated to individual mathematics lessons is rather long, particularly for younger pupils. This leads, in some classes, to pupils losing interest particularly towards the end of group activities and the plenary session.
96. The subject is managed well. The co-ordinator has been very involved in producing a good scheme of work based on the national numeracy strategy. All work is covered, with special emphasis on number work. Teaching and learning are monitored soundly through weekly planning meetings, discussions with other members of staff and scrutiny of pupils' work. Results of national and local tests are carefully analysed and are used satisfactorily to inform future planning. The co-ordinator keeps up-to-date by attending appropriate courses. Resources for the subject are adequate and are of good quality.



## SCIENCE

97. Inspection findings show that pupils attain average standards by the end of Years 2 and 4. While this represents satisfactory maintenance of standards for seven-year-olds, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 4 is not as high as that reported at the time of the last inspection. The analysis of pupils' work and observations made during lessons indicate that most pupils achieve well in investigative work, partly because the school has deliberately concentrated on the investigative strand of the subject. This is leading to a significant increase in pupils' enquiry skills and ability to record what they find independently. However, pupils do not receive enough guidance on how to record their work efficiently and present their findings systematically. This affects their overall attainment, and explains the dip in standards at the end of Year 4. There is no difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs achieve appropriate levels as a result of focused support based on carefully identified needs.
98. Year 1 pupils are beginning to make more detailed observations as they carry out investigations to develop the use and awareness of the five senses, for example when sorting and classifying different materials. A range of experiments leads pupils to acquire a secure understanding of materials and their properties. For example, they investigate which material is the most waterproof. Some older pupils are learning to use scientific vocabulary such as transparent, translucent and opaque accurately. The scrutiny of the previous year's recorded work indicates that most Year 2 pupils explain with increasing confidence what they believe the outcome of a test will be, for example when growing marigolds with and without water or seeds in light and without light. During the week of inspection, Year 1 and 2 pupils were observed carrying out 'water investigations'. They learnt about what water is like and what happens when it is frozen. As a result of the teachers' secure knowledge of the subject and their effective approach to teaching investigative science, most pupils demonstrated developing knowledge and understanding of terms such as 'liquid' and 'solid'. They also study the parts of a human body and recognise that in order to keep alive and stay healthy human being needs good diet, exercise and sleep. Pupils clearly enjoy science and are excited by it. They work collaboratively, act responsibly and share resources and ideas amicably.
99. Pupils in Year 4 develop their knowledge and understanding of materials further and recognise difference between solids, gases and liquids. The younger pupils in the combined Year 3 and 4 classes are beginning to offer well-informed, reasoned explanations of what they observe. Most pupils confidently question what might happen and predict outcomes. They are keen to offer ideas, and understand the need to control the conditions to give a fair test. In most lessons, pupils are developing sound use of scientific vocabulary. When separating materials such as soil or mud from water, for example, pupils learn to use vocabulary such as insoluble, dissolve, filter, funnel etc. In good lessons with clear planning and appropriate expectations for work set by the teacher, most pupils confidently describe what they have found out through their tests and investigations. Using the provided format and a list of associated words, pupils record their observations with developing

understanding. The use of information technology to support learning in the subject is underdeveloped.

100. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, but within the overall picture, there are many good features and a few weaknesses. In the best lessons, most teachers use probing and open-ended questions to elicit fuller responses, prompt further inquiry and provide challenge. As a result, most pupils are well motivated and engage in activities with interest. Most teachers explain new knowledge accurately and adapt their planning carefully to include appropriate sequence of activities with clear objectives. Resources are used effectively to support learning. Teachers' planning is suitably informed by ongoing assessment of pupils' progress. They use a variety of styles and techniques and encourage pupils to think independently. For example, in a good lesson for pupils in Years 3 and 4, the teacher's explanations and the use of appropriate methods encouraged pupils to apply the notion of a 'fair' test and successfully test their hypothesis that 'the fish-net material will make the best filter'. In this lesson, most pupils achieved success and reached conclusions for themselves, and many expressed amazement at the results of their predictions, as the 'net' material proved to be the least effective. In a minority of lessons the common planning, which is shared within the year group, is not adapted well enough to meet the needs of the particularly wide range of age and ability represented within each of the mixed-age classes. As a result, a significant number of pupils, particularly the higher attaining pupils in Year 4, make insufficient progress. In most lessons pupils apply themselves well and work enthusiastically. However, many lessons, particularly in Years 1 and 2, are overlong and as a result the pace of learning slows as pupils' interest wanes. Teachers regularly mark pupils' work and praise good effort. Their good-humoured management of pupils and constructive relationships encourage effective learning. In a small minority of lessons, due to weaknesses in the management and organisation, pupils become excessively noisy and this affects the quality of their learning. Throughout the school pupils find the subject exciting. When their curiosity is stimulated they love investigating to find out reasons for things behaving as they do.
  
101. The quality of assessment and the recording practice in the subject have improved since the last inspection and teachers consistently use the information to guide their planning. They have begun to sample investigations in science and record these with accompanying progress notes through the year. Teachers meet to consider the National Curriculum attainment targets and the levels that pupils have attained. The use of this information to set targets designed to improve standards is, however, at an early stage of development. The planned curriculum meets statutory requirements and is broad and balanced. Pupils visit the science museum and a well-organised science fair is held each year with the local schools. The subject is led with clear educational direction. The co-ordinator has monitored standards of attainment and the quality of teaching to identify what needs to be improved. Resources are adequate and well organised, with an appropriate range of reference books and pictures to support pupils' learning.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

102. The school teaches this subject in units that alternate with the units taught in design and technology. During the week of the inspection art and design was not being taught and it was, therefore, not possible to make judgements about the quality of teaching. Other evidence indicates, however, that pupils achieve well and that standards are above average by the end of Years 2 and 4. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards were average. Pupils' achievement is good. They develop extensive knowledge and understanding, as well as a broad range of skills.
103. Pupils learn to use a good range of different materials and experience a wide variety of techniques. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have been taught colour mixing skills as they investigated shades and tones. They learned marbling skills and used the marbled effect as a background for silhouettes of Christmas scenes that they made into Christmas cards. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have been taught how to lay a water colour wash and how to use wet paint on a wet, as well as on a dry, background to obtain different effects. They have produced good pictures in the Chinese style, having been taught to experiment with different brush strokes using different types of paintbrushes. Pupils have learned printing techniques and how to make collages from paper and fabric. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 know how to draw objects, such as their shoes, after close observation. They have used sketching pencils well and their work indicates great concentration and attention to detail. Pupils have used clay to make effective wind chimes and have been shown by a visitor from Africa how to make African tribal masks from clay. They know about the history of paisley patterns and trace the history of the design from ancient Babylon through the designs of Kashmiri shawls to the Scottish town of Paisley. Good links are made with other subjects. In Years 3 and 4 pupils make carefully crafted bowls from papier-mâché and decorate them with Grecian designs as part of their work in history. Colourful paintings of Hindu gods, decorated with appliqué work using shiny foil, are created to enhance work in religious education.
104. Pupils learn about a great number of artists and craftspeople. In Years 1 and 2 pupils have studied the surreal pictures of Arcimboldo and have used his work as an inspiration for their own portraits, using leaves or pictures of fruit cut from magazines. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have studied the work of Andy Goldsworthy and visited the nearby country park to find twigs, leaves and other natural materials to create their own ephemeral works of art. Inspired by Rousseau's jungle scenes pupils used monoprints and press prints as the basis for their own collages. The school organised a 'Pavement Day' when pupils practised using chalks on the playground to make pictures around the theme of 'Moors and Mountains'. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development. When studying Australian aboriginal designs, for example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 are made aware of how the environment affects the lifestyle of the aborigines and how this is reflected in their art forms.

105. The subject is managed well. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and provides good support for her colleagues. She plans lessons for the five Year 3 and Year 4 classes and makes any amendments to the plans that may have been revealed after she has been the first to teach each lesson. She monitors the standards attained by studying samples of pupils' work at the conclusion of each unit of work. She also makes lesson observations and offers advice as a result. The school has developed a good two-year rolling programme designed to promote thorough coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study. Good liaison with the middle school, to which pupils transfer at the age of nine, ensures that work is not repeated unnecessarily. Resources are adequate to support teaching and learning. Computers are used to support learning but the use of information and communication technology in the subject has not yet been fully developed. Good surveys are conducted by the co-ordinator through questionnaires that are presented to pupils. These provide good information on pupils' attitudes to the subject. The co-ordinator is building up a good bank of photographs of pupils at work and these provide good information about the range of work produced and the standards attained.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

106. Standards in design and technology are average both by the end of Years 2 and 4. This is a similar picture to that reported in the previous inspection. The progress made since then has been satisfactory. The quality of work evident at that time has been maintained and good quality planning has been prepared to support teachers. The subject is well established in the curriculum. The cycle of 'design, make, evaluate and improve' work is understood by pupils and their achievement is satisfactory.
107. In Years 1 and 2, pupils begin to develop simple designs to make box vehicles and learn how to join different materials in a variety of ways. They create a good design for a family shield, identify the materials needed and sequence accurately the various stages in its construction. By the end of Year 2, they have developed their cutting skills sufficiently to follow a pattern, cut out material and create a sliding portcullis. They design and make clay tiles for Mother's Day, design and make a medieval game and make unleavened bread. They design and create a woven sea picture, create an African mask, build a windmill and design and make a paper bag to carry potatoes. In the lessons observed in Years 1 and 2, all of which were similar and which focused on testing the quality of wheels and axles on pupils' recently-completed post office vans, pupils used a range of surfaces to discover which best aided the smooth running of their vehicles. These were successful sessions, although most effective for groups which were directly supported by the teacher and for the older pupils in each class. The concepts involved were not always readily accessible to some of the very young pupils. Pupils show very positive attitudes in both year groups. They are attentive and responsive when asked for ideas.
108. In Years 3 and 4, where standards are also satisfactory, the curriculum provides a wide range of experiences. This ensures that the quality of pupils' craft skills improves steadily as they move through the classes. Pupils have

designed and made their favourite sandwiches, recording the stages of their work in a topic booklet. They were observed in the early stages of a unit on clay, planning and making a nightlight holder. This involved them in basic handling and manipulation of clay. However, pupils were still very dependent on staff for guidance and support. Their knowledge of 'how things work' is developing well and their experience of design and technology is sound. They have successfully designed and made batik Christmas card and fabric containers, investigated and made strong stable structures, using construction kits, designed and made a van with moving wheels, and have produced posters with moving parts. They have worked on simple structures involving hydraulics. Pupils acquire skills systematically as they move through the school.

109. The quality of teaching was good overall in the lessons observed. The good quality of teaching has not, however, been sustained over a sufficiently long period to have had a major impact on raising standards substantially. Also as the whole class is set the same work, there is insufficient recognition of the wide age and ability spread in each of the mixed-age classes. Planning is thorough, however, and, in broad terms, takes into account pupils' previous knowledge and the extent to which they are ready to build on their existing skills. It is prepared to a consistent format by one teacher in each phase and shared by colleagues during the week. In the best teaching, teachers pose challenging questions so that pupils begin to identify the variables, both of vehicle construction characteristics and of road surface, which might affect the mobility of their vehicles. This promotes pupils' learning effectively. Some work remains to be done in implementing more systematic procedures for the recording of pupils' designs and evaluations. Opportunities are missed for the development of literacy skills because pupils are not always required to annotate their designs with written explanations or prepare written evaluations of their work. Design and technology does, however, make an increasing contribution to pupils' learning in other subjects, such as history and art.
110. The co-ordinator has been successful in taking the subject forward, and has a clear view of what has been achieved so far and of areas still requiring development. She provides advice to colleagues and has developed detailed planning, based on national guidance, which provides a clear framework for the teaching of both knowledge and skills. Assessment remains underdeveloped, although teachers know their pupils well and available information is used appropriately to inform planning.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

111. As at the time of the last inspection, the standards of work achieved by most pupils by the end of Year 2 are at expected levels. The quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2 has improved, however. At the time of the last inspection, though no teaching was seen in Years 3 and 4, standards were judged to be above average by the end of Year 4, whereas they are now at the usual levels. The teachers are guided satisfactorily by the national schemes of work in their planning and are aware of the need to effectively build on pupils' previous learning. Younger pupils confidently answer questions about geographical topics and use appropriate vocabulary such as hill, river, map, village, forest

etc. They develop adequate understanding of different seasons and types of weather. The scrutiny of pupils' completed work reveals that most Year 4 pupils have adequate knowledge and understanding of keys and symbols when using atlases and maps. They compare their own houses to those in a contrasting location overseas, for example St. Lucia. Pupils including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in lessons and overall.

112. Year 1 and Year 2 pupils in their mixed-age classes are currently learning about features of an 'Island'. The younger pupils successfully mark features such as post office, house, beach etc. Older pupils know about other features of an island such as 'mountains', 'waterfalls', 'mainland' and 'bay'. In a lesson observed, they learned to name the countries in British Isles and accurately identify these on a map. Pupils have limited skills in the use of sources of information, such as books, maps and plans. Teachers have plans for pupils to learn about 'Brunel the bear' visiting different parts of the world, in order to support their understanding of different countries and make simple comparisons. The children were encouraged to bring postcards and pictures of summer holidays to different places in preparation of the topic, which generated a lot of interest and excitement. Teachers make good links with stories pupils use in their literacy lessons, for example, as part of their topic on 'islands', they used a map of the 'Island of Struay' where Katie Morag lived
113. Most pupils in Year 4 have adequate knowledge of their own locality and its attractive and unattractive features. They confidently use atlases and globes to mark places, map out the route from home to school and locate own homes on the map showing all streets in the local area of Great Cornard. As part of their local study, pupils in mixed Year 3/4 classes consider the possible effects of a specific change, a new supermarket in the village. In one lesson they discussed the pros and cons, and carefully considered varying points of view and different scenarios. Another such lesson made a good link with 'drama' as groups were encouraged to conduct interviews and ask very astute questions to taxi-drivers, shoppers etc. in respect of change on the environment. Most pupils successfully formulate questions in relation to the issues raised by them and draft letters to be sent to the supermarket. These lessons link well with skills learnt in literacy lessons. The topic is suitably extended to include a survey of parents' views, thus enhancing pupils' enquiry skills in geography. A good link is made to learning in other subjects such as mathematics and the information technology, when pupils enter the information gathered on a database and produce graphs of different types.
114. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. This is an improvement since the time of the last inspection when poor behaviour disrupted lessons in Years 1 and 2. Teachers have adequate geographical knowledge and understanding. Praise and encouragement are used to good effect in lessons and this helps pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning. Most pupils are eager, work with enthusiasm and collaborate well in small groups. They apply themselves well to practical tasks, particularly where the work provides appropriate challenge. For example, in a good lesson in one of the mixed Year 1 and 2 classes, pupils looked at the aerial photographs of an island, used their own observations about places and asked or answered appropriate questions. Most teachers plan well and their lessons are based on clear objectives which

they share with pupils. Teachers use appropriate methods and effective questioning. There is limited evidence of the use of information technology to promote pupils' geographical skills through research. Most lessons are overlong and affect pupils' interest, concentration and pace of learning. Effective questioning and encouragement to use appropriate terminology, improve pupils' speaking and listening skills and extend their vocabulary. There is no formalised assessment in the subject. The subject leader is aware of what needs to be done in the near future.

115. Resources are sufficient. The school has an appropriate number of reference books and materials, including suitable atlases, maps and the globes. These are well maintained and centrally organised. The local area is studied in detail and pupils benefit from a residential visit and other educational visits to local places of interest.

## **HISTORY**

116. No lessons were observed during the inspection week, as history is not taught in this part of the autumn term. Only a limited amount of written work or other evidence was available for inspection. As a result, no judgement was possible either on the standards attained or on the quality of teaching of history in the school. There is insufficient evidence to support the judgement, made at the previous inspection, that standards achieved by the older pupils are higher than usual. Little evidence is available from work produced by pupils in Years 1 and 2. Little work is recorded and then only in the context of a termly topic. History is not, at present, making a significant contribution to the development of pupils' skills in literacy and there are opportunities are missed to extend pupils' writing in this subject.
117. The school's guidelines for history indicate that younger pupils have a broad coverage of historical topics. This includes units of work on famous people such as Mary Seacole and Alexander Graham Bell. They study castles and life in medieval times, making satisfactory use of the local area as a source for study. They look at Sudbury now and in the past, at different types of lighting and compare how we shop now and how our grandparents shopped in years past. They learn about the plague at Eyam and the effects of the plague on isolated rural communities. Much of this work is oral and the amount of recorded evidence is limited. While this accurately reflects the needs of the younger pupils, more could be expected of the older Year 2 pupils whose skills are significantly further advanced.
118. In the classes for pupils from Years 3 and 4, pupils study Invaders such as Anglo-Saxons and the Romans. Good work on the Romans was produced that culminated in a 'Roman Day' when pupils used the knowledge they had gained to dress in Roman clothes, make Roman food and conduct a Roman feast in the school hall. For homework over the spring half-term holiday, pupils created Roman artefacts, such as shields, swords and jewellery, with which they created a museum and opened it to the public. They have covered work on Ancient Greece and dovetail a unit of local history with a parallel unit in geography. Opportunities are missed to extend literacy skills through making individual books or creating class collections of illustrations and writing on the

subject. Good use is made of visits and visitors to extend pupils' understanding of history. On a recent visit to Thornham, the pupils' imagination was captured by the legend of the Christian martyr, King Edmund who is said to have been buried in the church they visited. They knew that the Vikings had used the king for target practice and of miracles that are said to have occurred after his death. The provision made for pupils with special educational needs, and for those with English as an additional language, is similar to that for other pupils. All classrooms have timelines that show historical events and when famous people lived. It was evident in conversation with pupils, however, that they do not necessarily have any real understanding of their significance.

119. Resources are satisfactory, although very little use is made of information and communication technology to enhance pupils' learning. The co-ordinator manages the subject effectively and has some opportunities to monitor teaching.



## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

120. The standards achieved by pupils are broadly average by the end of Years 2 and 4. These findings are similar to those found at the time of the last inspection.
121. By the end of Year 2, pupils develop satisfactory skills for word-processing. Skills for using graphics packages are developed appropriately as pupils' work is linked to other subjects such as art and design and design and technology. Pupils operate the mouse appropriately to click on colours and use tools to produce patterns containing lines of various thickness and circles of different texture. They use appropriate vocabulary such as mouse, keyboard, monitor and printer. Pupils show confidence and skill as they click on appropriate icons and manipulate the mouse. Some lower attaining pupils can use the Starspell program to recognise simple words and manipulate letters to form different words with efficient use of the mouse. Other pupils show their skill at using the mouse by drawing down circles or squares to ring odd and even numbers on a 100 square.
122. By the end of Year 4, pupils become more competent with word-processing. They are more adept at using tools on the computer. They know how to change font styles, colour and size. They can enlarge such things as logos and titles for front pages of topic books. Pupils from one class were producing the script of a play on the computer, and showed good skills in using correct punctuation and different fonts and sizes to emphasise the speech of the characters in the play. Pupils are beginning to understand the term 'field' and are practising the input of data and saving it for future lessons. During the inspection there was little evidence of computers being used in other subjects. There was some evidence of their use in English, mathematics, geography and art but the work produced was limited.
123. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall with some good lessons, particularly in Years 1 and 2. Teachers are responding well to training through the New Opportunities Fund. Generally teachers have good classroom management skills and the lessons are well planned, enabling pupils to understand what they are expected to learn during a given lesson. Teachers give competent demonstrations due to sound preparation and this enthuses pupils who take an active part in lessons. Teachers often show pupils how to use programs by instructing the whole class. This is difficult when 30 or more pupils are trying to see one monitor. Ongoing assessment is not sufficiently systematic to provide good information on which to base future planning.
124. Pupils enjoy using computers and respond well to their teachers' instructions. Older pupils can be trusted to work well together, in pairs, using computers set up outside the classroom. The majority of pupils have good attitudes to learning.
125. The co-ordinator is responsible for planning for the pupils in Years 1 and 2. Another teacher plans for the Year 3 and 4 pupils. The sound curriculum planning is based on national guidelines and covers all the requirements of the National Curriculum. Additional information technology equipment such as a digital camera and programmable roamers are used

effectively. Separate banks of computers are available for pupils in the lower and upper year groups, together with individual computers in classrooms.

## MUSIC

126. At the last inspection, standards were judged to be above expected levels for the pupils in Year 4 and at expected levels for those in Year 2. Standards are similar to those found nationally in both these year-groups now. Although this suggests a decline in standards for the older pupils, they still achieve well in certain aspects of music. Singing is good, both in class and during assemblies. Pupils of all ages are enthusiastic, particularly with more lively songs where actions can be added. Singing is reasonably tuneful and words are clearly enunciated. Songs with a different, quieter mood are approached sensitively and the tone becomes softer. The school also continues to provide good opportunities for pupils in Years 3 and 4 to learn the recorder or sing in the choir. These activities are open to all pupils. Large numbers attend the three recorder clubs and the most proficient play tunefully together with due regard to the rhythm.. A video recording of a performance by the choir from last term demonstrates good singing of songs such as 'Molly Malone'.
127. Pupils in Year 2 quickly learn a new song about 'Fireworks' that has contrasting textures. They recognise the clipped nature of the chorus and beat the time accurately using fingers. The smoother verse is accompanied by swaying movements using the whole body. In smaller groups they then pick sound-words such as 'pop' and 'whoosh' to describe the fireworks and combine these into a 'sound-phrase' that they perform for their classmates. Evidence gathered from pupils' music folders indicates that other aspects of music are covered satisfactorily and that progress is sound. Pupils begin to create simple graphic scores, sometimes inspired by music that they have heard. Contrasting pieces are played so that they recognise different moods, for example by listening to different extracts from Holst's 'Planet Suite'.
128. The graphic scores in the folders of the Year 4 pupils are more detailed and easier to follow for those playing instruments. In their lessons they create a space chant, having quickly learnt a lively song about the planets. The teacher introduces correct musical terms – *staccato* and *legato* – to describe the contrasting sections of the song and pupils quickly realise that space-words can be categorised by their rhythm, Moon/Sun/Earth and Venus/Pluto/Neptune for example. Many create impressive lists of words, grouping them according to the number of syllables and then combining them to make a 'space-rap'. All of them are involved. They enjoy the activity and are keen to perform.
129. Across the school, the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory and a quarter is good. A commercial programme of work enables teachers to plan their lessons well and there are good resources to help them, such as recordings of songs. Some teachers claim to lack confidence in teaching music, but those observed structured their lessons appropriately and included a variety of activities to keep the pupils interested. In one good lesson, the teacher managed to maintain a brisk pace and had no trouble in harnessing the pupils' excitement and maintaining high levels of motivation. In a small minority of lessons, the pupils' enthusiasm bubbles over and time is wasted calling them to order. Speaking skills are well promoted during lesson introductions, for

example when younger pupils discussed the Gunpowder Plot and explored the meaning of words like 'treason' and 'plot'. However, information and communication technology is not used regularly to support music.

130. Some pupils enter Year 1 with a basic background understanding of the elements of music. They make satisfactory progress between Years 1 and 4. The co-ordinator is experienced and has a reasonable understanding of how the curriculum is being delivered and received. Some particularly useful interviews with pupils have been conducted recently to inform her but she has not observed teaching in lessons. Pupils' attainment is assessed at the end of every unit of work and these assessments are kept in pupils' music folders. There is close liaison with other local schools and pupils take part in concerts with them, at Christmas for example. Music also plays a key role in school events such as Leavers' Assembly and the Christmas Fayre.

### **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

131. The standards achieved by the end of Years 2 and 4 are above expected levels. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards were typical overall, though higher than this in dance in Years 3 and 4. All pupils have opportunities for gymnastics, dance, and games. Older pupils also gain skills in athletics and outdoor adventurous activities as they go on residential visits. The school has its own swimming pool, but because of faults with the lining, no swimming is taking place at the present time. Pupils achieve well and make good progress because lessons are well structured and the teaching is generally good.
132. The younger pupils are currently developing their physical strength through running and balancing and controlling themselves in a confined space. For example, in warming up exercises they show that they can respond to teachers' directions and stop themselves quickly. Ball skills are beginning to develop well and pupils improve the accuracy of their throwing and catching during the lessons. Year 1 and 2 pupils develop confidence, co-operative skills and spatial awareness and many find imaginative ways to move. They can run, move quickly and slowly in different directions. They develop an understanding of teamwork as they work in pairs and in groups. Pupils are learning to evaluate their progress in order to improve their performance by watching the different demonstrations done by individuals.

133. By Year 4, pupils throw and catch with increased accuracy. They develop the skills of holding and passing a rugby ball, firstly by walking and passing and then by running and passing. They are physically strong, have good body control, develop a good sense of teamwork and understand the importance of fairness. Standards in dance are particularly good. Pupils 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 3/4 class where pupils were beginning to develop an Indian dance based on a Hindu story. They developed a wide variety of shapes, at different levels, to represent cities. They showed good ability at retaining shapes and repeating sequences. The majority of pupils made very good attempts at holding the Indian dance position of Arai Mandi. Pupils are involved in other sporting activities such as football, rugby football, netball and athletics at appropriate times of the year. Pupils in Year 4 go on a residential visit where they take part in outdoor activities, including orienteering.
134. Pupils enjoy their lessons and almost all try hard to achieve and perform well. They are willing to learn from one another and are happy to give demonstrations of their skills. Pupils are conscious of safety when moving around in the hall and realise the importance of listening to, and following, the teachers' instructions promptly.
135. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are carefully planned to build on what pupils know and can do. The sound range of resources is well organised and used effectively. Lessons move at a brisk pace and little time is wasted. When necessary, teachers give appropriate demonstrations and handle pupils' responses very effectively. This gives the pupils a clear idea of performance techniques and enables them to improve their skills. Relationships with pupils are very good and this enables the majority of teachers to manage their classes easily and effectively. Care is taken to ensure that all pupils are included in the activities, whether in pairs or, if necessary, threes and in teams for games lessons. Where necessary, support assistants are used to help individual pupils. All lessons provide opportunities for pupils to extend their health and fitness. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
136. Co-ordination is good. The curriculum is good, with planning based on national guidelines. Due to good community links, a number of professional coaches come along and help pupils. The co-ordinator's involvement with 'Top Sport' and the organisation of a local rugby football tournament benefits pupils at the school. These enterprising ventures and the school's general ethos of fair play and team spirit in games and outdoor activities, means that physical education makes a good contribution to pupils' social and moral development.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

137. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection in Years 2 and 4. Pupils' progress is now entirely satisfactory and this represents an improvement. Pupils achieve the standards expected in the locally agreed programme of work. Teachers plan their lessons with due regard to the programme and cover all the required aspects of the subject. Throughout the

school, pupils study Christianity as well as Judaism in Years 1 and 2 and Hinduism in Years 3 and 4 with aspects of Islam being touched upon where comparisons are useful.

138. Much of the work in the younger classes is covered through discussion and activity and there is not a great deal in books. Sometimes stories are represented pictorially, as when Year 1 pupils record the 'Feeding of the Five Thousand' but opportunities to develop literacy skills through the subject are not regularly exploited. Pupils have a good basic understanding of Jesus' life and of His teachings. 'Jesus came to show people what to do,' says one boy and a girl remembers clearly the events of His birth because, 'We did a show about it.' They know that Jesus healed people and recall the story of the ten lepers, remembering that such people had to ring a bell to warn others that they were coming. They talk about how Zacchaeus had to climb a tree so that he could see Jesus above the crowds. Their knowledge of Judaism is less secure at this early stage of the school year but they recall the festival of Hanukkah when prompted. Currently, with their friends, they are studying special occasions and how they are celebrated. Pupils enthusiastically set about drawing pictures of Christmas, birthday and wedding celebrations among others and are quick to identify the purpose of each greeting card that the teacher holds up.

139. A greater volume of work is contained in the books of pupils in Years 3 and 4 and literacy skills are practised satisfactorily in the subject. Information and communication technology however is not widely used to support work in the subject in any part of the school. The older pupils are currently studying Hinduism and have a good understanding of the religion. They know where and when it originated. They know about the traditions of worship and about the festival of Divali. They see the similarities between this festival of light and Christmas in that light triumphs over dark and evil and Jesus was born and is the 'Light of the World' in the eyes of Christians. Like the younger pupils they enjoy their work, decorating Rangoli patterns with care, although not always with appropriate colours. Displays in their classrooms testify to the good work that has been done. They have satisfactory knowledge and understanding of Christianity. They know that Jesus wants people to love their neighbours and that the Bible contains advice about how to resolve everyday issues. The events of Easter are conveyed in pictorial form with captions underneath and the features of a church are drawn and their purpose explained.
140. Only three lessons were seen and in two of them teaching was good. Taking other evidence into account, the teaching overall is judged to be satisfactory. Pupils therefore make sound progress in lessons and achieve satisfactorily during their time in the school. They respond positively in lessons and particularly enjoy the visit to the local church that brings the subject alive for them. Teachers have good resources in school to support them. Teachers relate the work to the everyday experiences of pupils whenever possible and, in class, they have a warm rapport with them. Everyone, including those with learning or behaviour difficulties, is drawn into the lesson and all opinions are valued. One teacher, for example, holds the Year 3 and 4 pupils spellbound as he tells the story of Rama and Sita. Teachers are skilled at introducing and explaining new words. Some Year 1 and 2 pupils do not fully understand 'celebration' but the teacher uses the expertise of other pupils to explain it. Teachers are good at posing questions that do not give clues about the answer but that encourage pupils to think for themselves.
141. The subject is well led by an experienced co-ordinator. She scrutinises books and teachers' plans to know what is being taught but does not regularly observe lessons. At the end of each unit of work, pupils' achievement is assessed systematically. The assessments are used satisfactorily to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching of the programme of study. Major Christian festivals, such as Christmas, Easter and Harvest, are celebrated in school. Occasionally, those from other religions are celebrated in assembly.