

INSPECTION REPORT

JOHN RANDALL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Madeley, Telford

LEA area: Telford and Wrekin

Unique reference number: 123445

Headteacher: Mr R W Daly

Reporting inspector: Hugh Protherough
8339

Dates of inspection: 4th – 6th June 2001

Inspection number: 192982

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3-11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Queen Street
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr K Young

Date of previous inspection: 24th – 28th February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
8339	Hugh Protherough	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities Information and communication technology Physical education	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9510	Christine Murray-Watson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
19387	Mari Powell	Team inspector	English Art and design Design and technology History Geography Religious education.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
16892	Julia Elsley	Team inspector	Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage Music	
20350	Vivien Davies	Team inspector	Special educational needs, mathematics, science.	How well does the school care for its pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is an average sized primary school with 219 pupils on roll including the 48 pupils who are educated in the nursery class on a part time basis. One hundred and seventy one pupils attend school full time and there are far more boys [104], than girls [67]. Virtually all of the pupils are of white ethnicity. The school serves an area of considerable social and economic disadvantage. Unemployment is high so the number of pupils entitled to free school meals (44%) is almost double the national average. Nearly a third of the children either arrive or leave the school at times other than the start or end of the school year. Although the attainment of the pupils on entry covers the full range, it is heavily weighted towards the lower end of the scale and is generally well below average. There are 67 pupils on the school's register for special educational needs including 8 children from the nursery. They comprise 32% of the school roll, which is above the national average. There are four pupils with statements of special educational needs, one in the nursery and three in the rest of the school. Over the past three years there have been considerable uncertainties over the leadership of the school and more than twenty changes of teaching staff within the four Key Stage 2 classes.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is gaining in effectiveness day by day, but much remains to be achieved. The appointment of a new headteacher has provided the school with a strong leader who is setting a clear agenda for improvement. The quality of education is good because the staff team works together effectively. Most lessons are interesting and motivate the children to work hard so that in the words of the school motto "Only my best is good enough for me." As a result, the pupils are starting to achieve more. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are similar to the national average and the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels at the end of Key Stage 2, although below average, is higher than it has been for several years. The school offers satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The school provides a calm and supportive environment where the pupils encounter high expectations for good behaviour and hard work.
- The children achieve appropriately because the teachers know them well and often make learning fun.
- The children in the Foundation Stage get a good start to their education, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development.
- Standards in English and mathematics are improving at the end of both key stages.
- The headteacher and his new senior management team have an accurate view of the strengths of the school and what needs to be done to improve further.
- The arrangements for the management and support of the pupils with special educational needs are very good.

What could be improved

- Standards in science and music at the end of both key stages.
- The systematic development of the pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in science and the non-core subjects of the National Curriculum.
- The pupils' attendance and punctuality.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in February 1997, the school has made reasonable progress in addressing the issues raised in that report. The rate of improvement has increased since the appointment of the new headteacher and the greater stability in the teaching team in Key Stage 2. For example, although the improvement in test results for eleven-year-olds over the past three years has been slower than the national trend, this year the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels has increased. The school now makes much better use of the information it gains from tests and assessments to chart the pupil's progress and to plan of future work. The governors have an improved oversight of the running of the school and use their finances with prudence. The provision for the teaching of information and communications technology is stronger because of the improved resources and the teachers' increasing confidence. Similarly, the pupils have far greater access to the full breadth of the geography curriculum because the headteacher and staff have sensibly adopted the national guidance for teaching the non-core subjects of the National Curriculum. However, the teachers now need to ensure greater coherence in the implementation of these curriculum frameworks so that the pupils' knowledge, skills and techniques build steadily as they move through the school.

STANDARDS

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

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

This table shows that the results in the national tests for eleven-year-olds have been well below average for several years. The rate of improvement has lagged behind the national trend and the girls have generally performed much better than the boys. In last year's national tests, standards in English and science were in the lowest five percent of all schools both nationally and in comparison to similar schools. The pupils' results in mathematics were also well below average in these contexts. These results were very low because of the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs within this cohort of pupils and the frequent changes of teachers. However, the pupils who had taken their Key Stage 1 tests at the school tended to do much better than those who had arrived after the age of seven.

This year there have been no changes amongst the teachers working in Key Stage 2. This new stability in staffing and the good quality of their work has clearly had a positive effect upon the rate of the pupils' progress. The inspection findings show that although standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are still below the national average in English and mathematics, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels has increased and is now closer to the school's realistic and challenging targets. The vast majority of the pupils are achieving appropriately in relation to their prior attainment including those with special educational needs

who are supported very effectively. There is no significant difference in the achievements of girls and boys.

Last year's results at the end of Key Stage 1 show that standards in reading were above the national average and well above those achieved by pupils in similar schools. The results in writing and mathematics, however, were below the national average, but were better than those of similar schools. This year the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics is close to the national average. This is because these children are being well taught by well-established and effective teachers.

The school has correctly identified that standards in science and music are not as good as they should be, especially at the end of Key Stage 2.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The majority of the children respond positively to the teachers' high expectations for hard work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The vast majority of pupils behave well and show consideration for others in lessons and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships within the school are good, and the pupils respond positively to the school's strong provision for their social development.
Attendance	Below average. A significant minority of the pupils are missing too much school on a regular basis.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Very 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.

Taken overall, the quality of the teaching is good. During the course of the inspection, 21% of the lessons seen were judged to be either very good or excellent, 42% were good, 33% satisfactory and 4% unsatisfactory. The strongest teaching is found in Key Stage 1.

The teachers have successfully adopted the national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy. Their lessons are thoroughly planned. They make clear to the children what they are going to learn and check their understanding and progress at the end of the lesson. The teachers' classroom management is generally very good indeed and underpins the successful learning that occurs in the vast majority of lessons. This is particularly the case in Key Stage 1 where the teachers' consistent approaches to managing behaviour are particularly successful in keeping most children focussed and hard at work. The learning support assistants are effectively deployed and make a significant contribution to the support of vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs. The teachers know all the children very well because they make good use of the information they gain from careful questioning and the thorough

marking of work. The recent investment in new computers has led to a significant increase in the pupils' use of information and communications technology across the curriculum.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The school offers a broad and reasonably balanced curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The wide-ranging needs of these pupils are met successfully through the well-orchestrated support of teachers, learning support assistants and specialist outside agencies.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Not applicable.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school's programme of personal and social education is very good and reflects the teachers' commitment to ensuring the pupils' all round development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The teachers take very good care of the pupils. They know them well and support their personal and academic development effectively.

The implementation of the national guidance for science and the non-core subjects of the National Curriculum requires further work. The school strives to develop and extend its links with parents to involve them in their children's education. Many parents welcome this, but a significant number find it difficult to join in an educational partnership. Although the school monitors carefully the levels of attendance, more should be done to follow up the significant minority of pupils whose attendance is less than 90%.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and his new senior management team have established a clear vision for the school and are successfully building a staff team that is committed to improving further the quality of education they provide.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors have an improved oversight of the work of the school and fulfil all of their responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher and the senior management team have carried out a thorough review of the school. They now have a keen understanding, based upon a good range of first hand evidence, of what needs to be done to improve both standards and the quality of education.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes effective use of its delegated budget by linking expenditure to the priorities of its well-considered school development plan. However, the arrangements for assessing how far purchases are helping to improve the quality of education are at

	present inadequate.
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The staffing levels are good because the teachers are ably backed by a number of appropriately trained and highly effective learning support assistants. Despite the problems caused by occasional vandalism at night, the school and its grounds are well maintained, clean and attractive. The provision of books and computers is good. However, there are gaps in the equipment and resources for music and geography.

PARENTS’ AND CARERS’ VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoy coming to school • The teachers make learning fun and this helps the children to make good progress in their work • It is easy to approach the school with questions because teachers welcome opportunities to work closely with parents • The firm leadership of a headteacher who gets to know the pupils very well • The school’s emphasis on encouraging the children’s all round development • The provision of care clubs before and after school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few parents would like to see more homework being set

The inspectors agree with the parents’ positive views. They consider that appropriate homework is being set, but few pupils manage to complete these tasks. This makes the job of the teachers that much harder.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Since the last inspection, the results achieved by pupils in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 have continued to be well below the national average and the rate of improvement in the pupils' scores has lagged behind the national trend. The girls have generally achieved slightly better results than the boys, but on average the pupils have been leaving school about a year behind where they should be in English, mathematics and science. For instance in last year's national tests the pupils' results in English and science were in the lowest five percent of all schools nationally. This was also the case in science when results were compared with those of similar schools. The pupils' results in mathematics were well below average when compared both with schools nationally and with those with a similar intake.
2. A range of significant factors has contributed to this state of affairs. The school has been through a period of considerable staffing turbulence in Key Stage 2 with over twenty changes of personnel in the four classes over a three-year period. The uncertainties caused by the long-term illness of the previous headteacher and the problems associated in finding teachers at short notice led to the deputy headteacher attempting to carry out the jobs of headteacher, Key Stage 2 co-ordinator and class teacher. This is too much for one person to manage, especially in a school where there are significant demands made upon the time of the headteacher in meeting the needs of the third of pupils who either enter or leave the school at various times during the school year. Many of the new arrivals are vulnerable pupils with troubled backgrounds. Those who leave are often from families where the parents or carers find work elsewhere, and thus move on. The continuing high proportion of pupils with special educational needs also affects the school's ability to reach the national targets in English and mathematics.
3. Despite these difficulties, a closer scrutiny of last year's test results provides more positive indicators about the quality of education provided during this period. For example, the results showed that most of the pupils in Year 6 who had also taken their key stage test 1 at the school had made steady progress. Around two thirds of them reached at least the expected level in English and mathematics. This represents good achievement because a significant proportion of these pupils had special educational needs, including two who often presented very challenging behaviour.
4. The picture this year is much more positive. Following the retirement of the previous headteacher last July, the deputy headteacher was appointed headteacher designate during the autumn. The staffing turbulence has subsided and throughout the year the same teachers have taught each of the Key Stage 2 classes. The quality of their teaching is good and as a result, the pupils have settled down, worked hard and achieved well in relation to their prior levels of attainment. Although standards at the end of Key Stage 2 remain below average, the inspection findings indicate that this year's results are likely to be close to the challenging targets set last year, with slightly less than two thirds of pupils reaching the expected levels in English and mathematics. A strength of the school's performance is the way that the many pupils with special educational needs are working well towards the very relevant targets of their individual education plans, particularly in relation to improving the key skills of literacy and numeracy. Although most of these pupils are unlikely to reach the national expectation in either subject, the good support they receive from the teachers and the classroom assistants is

often helping them to achieve to the best of their abilities. Currently, there is no significant difference in the performance of the girls and the boys. The inspection team observed no bias in teaching methods that might explain the small difference noted in the results of previous years.

5. The attainment of the children entering the nursery class is generally well below average. On arrival, most children lack social confidence and speak very little. Many find it hard to listen to instructions, take turns and to share books and equipment. Activities such as cutting and sticking, painting and playing with sand and water are strange, new experiences for the vast majority. The nursery does a good job in getting the children ready for school. Many parents are amazed at what their four-year-olds are capable of achieving. For instance, the inspectors spoke with one parent who was clearly delighted that a few weeks after starting at nursery his son began to tidy up his own toys at home. Shortly after the children start full time school, the teachers carry out a series of assessments. The results of these tests confirm that despite considerable progress in their personal, social and emotional development that the children's make in the nursery, their general attainment remains well below average. However, the well considered approach of the teacher and other staff in the Reception class builds successfully on the effective work of the nursery. The children make good progress in the areas of learning set out in the Foundation Curriculum so that by the time they start work on the National Curriculum in Year 1 most have attained the early learning goals in their personal, social and emotional development and in their physical development. However, their levels of attainment in the other areas of the Foundation Curriculum remain below the expected levels.
6. The teaching team in Key Stage 1 is firmly established and has suffered few of the uncertainties experienced in Key Stage 2. The quality of their teaching is very good and this is reflected in the results achieved by the pupils in the national tests each year. For example, last year the standards in reading were above the national average and well above those achieved by pupils in similar schools. Although the results in writing and mathematics were below the national average, the pupils had achieved well because these results were better than those of similar schools. The reason why the results compare so favourably with those of similar schools is because the few higher attaining pupils in Year 2 are challenged in lessons and encouraged to exceed the expected levels. The inspection findings show that this year the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly average. Once again, a small but significant proportion of higher attaining pupils are reaching the higher levels in all three subjects.
7. The school continues rightly to focus much of its efforts on raising the levels of pupils' attainment in English and mathematics. However, there have also been some important improvements in the pupils' work in information and communication technology (ICT). This is the result of prudent investment in resources and additional training for the teachers that has raised the quality of their teaching. Similarly, in geography, despite some shortcomings in resources, the pupils are now receiving a fuller, broader and more balanced curriculum that enables them to achieve an appropriate quality of work. The school development plan correctly identifies that standards in science are not yet high enough. **This is a key issue for action.** The teachers have realised that the extensive use of worksheets limits the pupils' ability to devise their own experiments and to set out their findings for themselves. The recent, sensible changes in these areas are important steps in the school's review of this subject.

8. By the end of Key Stage 2, the quality of the pupils' work in music is below the expected levels. Although there is appropriate opportunity for the pupils to sing together, they have insufficient occasion to listen and evaluate different types of music and to create their own compositions. **This is a key issue for action.**

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Most of the pupils have a positive attitude to their time in school and enjoy the lessons and activities provided for them. In well-planned, lively lessons, they tackle most tasks with confidence and are developing a good understanding of their own learning and abilities, particularly the younger pupils. For example, when one class was asked, "Do you think you can be very clever and do this?" one pupil announced "We're very clever already!" This growing self-confidence is actively and consistently fostered by the teachers and classroom assistants, who take every opportunity to offer praise and encouragement when any progress is made. However, a significant number of pupils find it hard to concentrate for any length of time. The teaching staff address this by providing work set at an appropriate level of challenge for each pupil and by organising the lessons so that many pupils are able to work in small groups with adult support.
10. The great majority of the pupils behave well and the school provides an orderly and calm environment within which they are able to make good progress in their learning. In many cases, however, this is only achieved because of the skill, enthusiasm and consistently high expectations for good behaviour of the class teachers. Poor behaviour is promptly challenged, and is balanced by lavish praise when pupils who find self-control a problem manage to behave well. Where the relationship between the class teacher and her pupils is secure, the pupils' behaviour is sometimes very good. Consequently, many are able to work with little supervision and take pride in what they are achieving. In those classes where there have been many staff changes or where the lessons are not taken by the usual class teacher, the staff concerned have to work very hard to keep the behaviour of some pupils within acceptable limits.
11. The pupils respond well to the school's very good provision for their social development. As a result, they are generally able to work sensibly together in lessons and play in a friendly way on the playground. At break times, they benefit from a high level of adult involvement in organising, supervising and encouraging different play activities. There is a range of opportunities for the pupils to assume responsibility for routine tasks, such as classroom and hall monitors, that are undertaken in a sensible and positive way. Their personal development in other areas, such as initiating activities or personal projects, is less well established. The effective use of "Circle Time" is helping to promote the pupils' understanding of their own feelings and those of others.
12. The levels of attendance are well below those found in primary schools nationally and a significant minority of the pupils are missing at least 10% of their time in school. Much of the absence and persistent lateness relates to pupils who have entered since the start of the school year. Similar numbers of pupils are absent from each class, although proportionally there are slightly more girls than boys.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

13. Taken overall, the quality of the teaching remains good. However, the proportion of lessons that were judged very good and excellent has increased since the last inspection, especially in Key Stage 1 where the teaching is generally very good. During the course of the inspection, 21% of the lessons seen were judged very good or excellent, 42% were good, 33% satisfactory and 4% unsatisfactory.
14. The major strength that underpins much of the successful teaching is the very effective classroom management of the teachers. Despite the fact that many of the pupils often find it hard to concentrate and a few with emotional and behavioural difficulties may occasionally behave in an inappropriate and challenging fashion, the pace of learning is often brisk. This is because the teachers recognise the crucial importance of

establishing their high expectations for good behaviour and hard work from the start of each day. They manage this by setting a familiar pattern of routines and activities that help the pupils to know what is expected and to feel secure. For instance, as the pupils arrive in class each morning they know exactly what to do. Sometimes it is reading, at other times there may be a mathematics activity or handwriting practice. In some classes, the teachers will spend time with individual pupils reviewing work and setting targets for improvement.

15. A further common feature of the successful classroom management is the highly effective way that the vast majority of teachers reinforce their expectations for good behaviour. A great deal of time has been spent usefully in establishing common approaches amongst the staff. Throughout each lesson the pupils who are polite, helpful or working hard are commended for the effort with remarks such as, 'Well done X, I like that comment. I can tell you've been listening really hard.' Even so, a significant minority of the pupils find it extremely hard to behave well all day. Most of these pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs and are integrated within classes with great care and consideration. A telling example of this occurred early in the inspection when a teacher in the lower part of Key Stage 2 shared with the class the targets for good behaviour agreed with such a pupil. She subsequently led a brief discussion with the class about how they might help their classmate succeed in meeting his targets and he identified the times he thought he might need their help. This was clearly part of a regular routine and in the subsequent lesson the pupil took full part, making several pertinent, useful contributions and no sign of any challenging behaviour.
16. The effective introduction of the national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are further examples of the way that well structured lessons are helping the pupils to gain both confidence and higher standards in English and mathematics. These lessons are thoroughly planned with generally clear objectives that set out what the children are expected to learn. In the most effective lessons, the objectives are made clear to the children at the outset and referred to regularly to ensure that the teacher's intentions are being met. This feature is particularly strong in Key Stage 1 where the objectives are particularly well focussed and the teachers' planning is meticulous in ensuring that each section of the lesson rattles along at a brisk pace. For instance, in a Year 2 literacy lesson it was the pupils who were encouraged to read aloud the lesson objectives. The teacher further boosted the confidence and self-esteem of many pupils by encouraging them to read the blurb of the book they were studying. Her thorough preparation of resources ensured that everyone had access to a whiteboard to practise writing and improving their own sentences. Despite the wide range of abilities within the class, the teacher took great care to ensure that in the group work session the tasks facing the pupils were suitably challenging. The higher attainers were expected to achieve far more independent writing whilst the lower attainers received well-targeted help from the learning support assistant.
17. A further strength lies in the effective way that the teachers work closely with the well - trained learning support assistants. These additional adults make a significant contribution to the support of vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs. For instance, in Key Stage 2 one classroom assistant provides regular additional literacy support for small groups of pupils. She has a thorough understanding of what she has to do because she has been properly trained. She knows the children very well and applies the same positive approaches to encouraging and supporting the pupils as the teachers. Thus the pupils achieve a great deal in the brief fifteen-minute sessions and clearly enjoy the interesting range of games and activities that make their learning fun. Elsewhere the

classroom assistants were observed providing effective support during the literacy and numeracy lessons, especially when helping the pupils during their group work activities.

18. Throughout the school, there has been a marked increase in the use of information and communications technology to support the pupils' learning across the full breadth of the National Curriculum. The teachers make appropriate use of the school's computers to enhance the pupils' work in both literacy and numeracy. For instance the Year 6 pupils have been surfing the Internet to find web sites that will give them more information about William Shakespeare because they are studying a scene from "A Midsummer Night's Dream." Similarly, a Year 1 mathematics lesson on data handling was considerably enhanced when the pupils had to load their data on to the computer to create a simple line graph. This strategy not only saved time, but also introduced the pupils to an important new program. Once again the work of the learning support assistants is frequently invaluable in working with a group of pupils whilst the teacher focuses on the rest of the class. The reason they can do this is because they have joined in staff training to learn more about computers and their uses in school.
19. The teaching of the children in the Foundation Stage is good in both the nursery and the Reception class. The teachers have a secure understanding of the Foundation Curriculum and are providing a good range of valuable and interesting experiences for the children that are preparing them effectively for the National Curriculum. The major strength lies in the way that the teachers and other staff help the children to settle in quickly to the nursery and set about enhancing their personal, social and emotional development. This is achieved through simple routines and a strong emphasis upon small group activities where the children learn to share and take turns. The teachers are skilled questioners and take great care to ask the children questions that encourage them to speak at length rather than in one-word answers. At the same time, the teachers ensure that whenever possible they extend the children's vocabulary. A good example of this was observed when the children were planting out seedlings into a large plant pot. As well as getting the children to say the names of the plants, the teacher also used words like 'compost', 'roots' and 'leaves.' The need for this type of language enrichment is best illustrated by response of the pupils to the teacher's question 'What's the plant pot made of?': 'Wood' and 'Squodgy stuff' were just two of the responses to describe the plastic pot.
20. The teachers have improved the use they make of the information they gain from the national tests and their other informal assessments. As a result, they know the children very well and speak knowledgeably about individual strengths and targets for improvement. The effective questioning skills observed in the Foundation Stage are also evident in much of teaching elsewhere in the school, especially in English, mathematics, history and information and communications technology. It helps the teachers to check just how much the pupils have understood in lessons. The teachers' subsequent marking of the pupils' written work is also a positive feature of the teaching. In English and mathematics in particular, there is frequently a detailed commentary that informs the reader of the context of the work. The teachers' notes also give the pupils positive feedback about any successes and how they might improve in future. The teachers were observed setting relevant and interesting homework, such as asking the pupils to keep a diary of what they eat as part of their work in science. However, too few children complete these tasks so that the usefulness of homework in supporting and extending what happens in class is limited.

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

21. The school provides a broad and reasonably balanced curriculum that satisfactorily meets the needs of all its pupils. It enables the pupils to participate in a range of relevant experiences that support their all round development. The senior management team, together with the co-ordinators for literacy and numeracy, have devoted a significant amount of time to producing clear policies and planning frameworks for the teaching of these core subjects. The implementation of the guidance produced for science, however, is not so far advanced and needs further work.
22. Since the last inspection, the non-core subjects have been reviewed and are now on a more secure footing. Effective use has been made of national guidance for the teaching of these subjects and this has contributed to better provision than was described in the previous inspection report for subjects such as geography. The school recognises that the next task is to ensure that its curriculum framework is more coherent so that as the pupils move through the school their work increases steadily in demand. **This is a key issue for action.**
23. The implementation of new guidance for the Foundation Stage is being effectively managed and monitored by the teachers involved. However, the time allocation within the weekly timetables for Key Stages 1 and 2 is not always well balanced. Some lessons, such as science in lower Key Stage 2 and history in Year 1, are too long. The strength of the curriculum is the wide range of interesting activities that are planned in areas such as art, writing, history and information and communication technology. In many cases, the links between subjects such as art, history and geography provide a valuable additional dimension to the pupils' learning. For instance, the pupils in Year 6 have been able to link their knowledge of the importance of rivers in providing water, to the centrality of the river Nile in ancient Egypt.
24. Since the previous inspection, the range of educational visits has narrowed somewhat as a result of financial constraints, but those remaining, such as the visit to Blists Hill, provide a very stimulating first hand experience. Visitors, too, help to enliven aspects of certain studies. For instance, a Sikh visitor vividly extended knowledge and understanding of the Sikh religion and way of life with a class of older pupils. Members of the health service and the police force have provided experiences such as "Crucial Crew" which have contributed materially to the pupils' personal development. Lessons in religious education have been supported well by local clergy who have also facilitated visits to local churches. These experiences, as well as being enjoyed by the pupils, have made very effective contributions to the development of the pupil's social skills. A good range of extra curricular clubs is well supported by the pupils who enjoy sharing interests in groups which cut across the age range.
25. The school is committed to fostering the pupils' all round development. There are thoroughly planned programmes for sex education and for raising the pupils' awareness to the dangers of the misuse of drugs including medicines. "Circle Time", where the pupils talk about issues relevant to them personally and to their life in school, has a carefully dedicated slot in the weekly curriculum. Periods of school worship effectively support the all round efforts to raise the pupils' self esteem through praising their good work and their broader contributions to the life of the school.
26. The teachers have a keen awareness of the very wide-ranging needs of the pupils in the school. There are many children with special educational needs including some with considerable emotional and behavioural difficulties and a few who are higher attainers. The provision for all these pupils is good because the school has an ethos that is

strongly inclusive. The staff strives to ensure full access to the curriculum for all their pupils.

27. The school enjoys good links with its neighbouring secondary schools. They collaborate effectively to ensure that transfer arrangements work well. The teachers value the personal meetings with secondary school staff to ensure that they get a clear, well-rounded picture of their future pupils. The pupils have also benefited from using secondary school ICT facilities and being involved in theatre and embroidery workshops.
28. The provision to foster the pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. The pupils have opportunities to focus on some of the larger questions of life during school assemblies where their self-esteem is consistently raised through reference to their personal and academic achievements. There are, however, missed opportunities for providing focal points for reflection and experiencing the awe and wonder associated with the development of spiritual awareness. In Key Stage 1, however, the work on growth and observation of the habits and habitats of "minibeasts" has helped to raise the pupils' awareness of the wonders of the Creation.
29. The provision for the pupils' moral development is strong, especially in relation to its social aspects. A clear and consistent ethos permeates the work of the school. The pupils are expected to know the difference between right and wrong and are consistently helped to acquire an appropriate range of moral principles. The teachers have high expectations of their pupils and have effective policies and approaches for managing behaviour. In particular, the adults provide very good role models for the pupils. They treat them with respect, provide clear expectations and miss no opportunities to praise them. They also provide regular opportunities for the pupils to assume routine responsibilities around the school. Most pupils enjoy giving out resources, tidying book displays and helping other pupils in the playground.
30. The cultural provision through the curriculum is sound. The strongest aspect of the school's work in this area is art. The pupils are made aware of the rich artistic traditions not only of Europe, but also Africa and other continents. For instance, their work on the art and artefacts of the Benin is of high quality. When questioned, the pupils had good recall of how the lifestyle and culture of that country is reflected in its art. Work in geography; history and religious education also makes a very satisfactory contribution to the cultural development of the pupils. However, the music curriculum is very underdeveloped in terms of its cultural potential.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

31. This school cares very well for its pupils because all members of staff are committed to raising standards for all pupils in every aspect of their development. The pupils' behaviour is good. It is reported to have improved dramatically, partly as a result of the positive systems the school now has in place. The pupils' have targets that relate to personal as well as academic development so they are clear about what they need to do to improve. The school has secure systems for monitoring the pupils' attendance although the rate of improvement is slow as a result of the considerable turn over in pupils each term.
32. The safety and welfare of all the pupils is a priority for the school. The pupils say that they would feel comfortable talking to their teacher about any concerns they may have and are confident that they would be helped. The procedures the school has for health and safety are good. It recently commissioned an independent audit that has identified a

range of minor matters as well as some of more pressing concern. The audit is the starting point for a process of on-going review. The provision for first aid is good and has appropriate record keeping. Elements of personal safety are covered during the personal, social and health education sessions and the pupils receive appropriate sex and drugs awareness education. There is a designated member of staff for child protection who has received a satisfactory level of training and is fully involved in multi-agency meetings. The school follows recognised guidelines and the staff are aware of their responsibilities in respect of this aspect of care. The quality of supervision and support during breaks is good. The midday supervisors have received training on supporting and encouraging play. As a result, the pupils are active at playtime and make good use of the equipment provided. The teachers know the parents and carers and take care to ensure that the younger pupils are handed to a recognised person at the end of the day.

33. The children in the Foundation Stage are very well cared for. There are good induction procedures for both children and parents and the children settle quickly and happily into the routines of the classroom. Their parents have a good opportunity in the mornings and at the beginning of sessions to speak informally to staff about any small matters of concern. The children quickly learn what is expected of them and the staff reinforce good work and behaviour with praise. There are good systems for assessing and monitoring the children's abilities and progress based on careful observation and discussion.
34. The school also has very good procedures for recording and monitoring any persistent instances of poor behaviour and, in such cases, parents are always involved at an early stage. The teachers and learning support assistants are generally very consistent in handling any instances of unacceptable behaviour in class. Because the pupils are involved in formulating the class and school rules, they understand them and most respect them. They are well motivated by the system of rewards and the majority try hard to live up to the school's expectations. There are very effective procedures to deal with bullying and harassment and both parents and pupils are fully involved in resolving persistent and serious disputes through mediation. The staff is proud of its success in dealing with challenging behaviour. They are especially vigilant to ensure that the pupils are neither intimidated nor bullied. This is an area of zero tolerance.
35. Educational support and guidance is very good in nearly every class because the teachers are very committed to their pupils, know them very well, respect them and are working on an agenda of academic and personal development. In Key Stage 1, targets are used very well to support the pupils in all these aspects. However, although group targets are well established in Key Stage 2, individual target setting is at an earlier stage of development. The school focuses very firmly on supporting pupils' personal development. During the inspection week, in a Year 2 class target was for calmness. This was particularly relevant in the excitement of planting seeds as part of a science experiment. There are very good planned opportunities for personal development during "Circle Time".
36. The pupils are very clear about how good their work is because the teachers mark regularly and write clear comments. This is particularly effective in Key Stage 1. In one class, for instance, the pupils were told to take time to read their comments before tackling the next piece of mathematics. This had a noticeable effect on their progress. The school has appropriate procedures for measuring attainment in literacy and numeracy through a series of annual standard tests in all classes. These results are used to identify pupils of similar needs and abilities, to sort them into ability groups and to

measure their progress. They also form the basis of the school's targets for attainment in English and mathematics in the national tasks and tests at the end of Year 6. In addition, there are regular reading, spelling and mathematics tests that are used in many other schools nationally. They help the teachers to measure their pupils' achievement against nationally accredited standards. Gender differences are also noted and the school analyses any differences between the results of pupils who have been in school from Year 1 and those who joined later. The school has begun a close analysis of test data to identify areas of weakness in the pupils' performance and to enable the teachers to focus on these. The same information is also being used to improve the planning of the teaching so that it can become more effective.

37. Although procedures for monitoring and supporting attendance are satisfactory, more needs to be done to address the significant minority of pupils with attendance below or well below 90%. **This is a key issue for action.** At present, the Education Welfare Office follows up only those children whose attendance falls below 85%. However, a significant number of pupils attend school between 85-90% of each term, which is still far too infrequent. The headteacher and his staff struggle conscientiously to improve these figures through their work with families and within the local community. They recognise that the cumulative effects of lateness and frequent absence are having a negative effect on the future life chances of a significant number of pupils. However, the transient nature of a significant proportion of the school roll makes it difficult to bring about a sustainable change in the culture of these families and places heavy demands upon the limited time and resources of a school of this size.
38. The pupils with special educational needs take part in all aspects of school life and receive a very good level of support, both personal and academic. There are very effective links with outside agencies. The statements of special educational needs are fully implemented and the equipment provided is appropriate.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

39. Although only a small proportion of parents returned the questionnaires or attended the pre – inspection meeting, the views expressed there and in conversations in the playground indicate that they are satisfied with the provision the school makes for their children. In particular, they appreciate the way that their children like school, the approachability of the staff, the way the school encourages their children to work hard and achieve of their best and the manner in which the school is led and managed. The only area where concern was expressed by a few parents related to the adequacy of homework being set.
40. The school works hard to involve the parents and carers with the work their children are doing and the life of the school generally. There are frequent opportunities, both formal and informal, for meetings with staff and a steady flow of clear, attractive and informative letters home. The school has arranged meetings to inform the parents about the numeracy and literacy strategies, and “Open Days” give families the chance to look at the children’s work. The recently introduced “SHARE” afternoons offer the parents of Year 1 children the chance to learn about specific ways in which they can support their child’s learning. This includes time for them to make number and word games to take home and play with their children, and provides an informal and sociable occasion for both parents and staff. Every effort is made to make parents and carers welcome within the school, but there are many who still feel reluctant to cross the threshold and attendance at most meetings is poor.
41. Although there are parents who are keen to support their children’s work and give them as much help and encouragement as they can, it is evident that for a significant proportion of the children in the school, parental support makes either little or no

contribution to the standards they achieve. Symptomatic of this is the lack of support for homework. It is regularly given, but rarely completed, or even attempted, within the time set. There was little evidence seen of pupils bringing materials from home to contribute to the lessons and few children have access to a home computer in order to practise the basic information technology skills. The poor attendance of a significant number of pupils is a further indication of a lack of importance given by some families to their children's education. Those parents who are governors contribute actively to the life of the school and there is a small group of parents who support the school's efforts to raise extra funds and organise social events.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

42. Since the last inspection, there has been a lengthy period of considerable uncertainty surrounding the leadership of the school. This was finally resolved at the end of the last school year when the previous headteacher retired due to ill health. Until this point, the deputy headteacher had been torn between his roles as class teacher and acting headteacher, unable to carry out either to his complete satisfaction because of the continuing difficulties in holding onto teachers working in Key Stage 2. However, since his appointment as the school's new headteacher from January of this year, the school has started to move forward again at a rapid rate.
43. The reason for this improvement is that the headteacher and the new senior management team have a clear and appropriate vision for the school and the community it serves. There is a strong commitment throughout the school to raising standards. This was already happening within the well-established Key Stage 1 team and the inspection findings indicate that since the new Key Stage 2 team started working together in September the pupils are making faster progress.
44. The headteacher has set out a challenging, but realistic programme of action in the school development plan that has the full support of the staff and governors. This document is further evidence of the accurate insights of the headteacher and senior management team based upon their shrewd analysis of a good range of evidence collected from around the school. For instance, close scrutiny of the national test results and teachers' assessments reveal that standards in science are lower than they should be. Consequently, a programme of appropriate activities for reviewing the curriculum and the teaching arrangements for this subject has been included within the latest development plan.
45. The headteacher's overview of the quality of education offered by the school is further informed by the regular visits he makes to classes to check the quality of the teaching. The teachers are used to being observed and to discussing their work with senior colleagues and this contributes strongly to the positive ethos within the staff team. As a result of the rapid changes amongst the staff, many of the subject co-ordinators are comparatively new to their posts, particularly in the non-core subjects of the National Curriculum. Nevertheless, their conversations with the inspectors show that they all have a very good understanding of their roles and responsibilities that have been further reinforced by the effective introduction of Performance Management targets within the school. However, although the co-ordinators are checking curriculum plans and providing advice for colleagues other important aspects of their roles have yet to be established. For example, the co-ordinators for the non-core subjects of the National Curriculum do not always have a secure view of the standards in their subject based upon a regular analysis of samples of the pupils' work from across the school.

46. The provision for the pupils with special educational needs is managed very efficiently by the special needs co-ordinator. Her organisation of the school's provision for children with special educational needs has been assisted by the very effective use of a program on the school's administrative computer. She maintains records assiduously to ensure that the progress of these pupils is regularly reviewed. She supports the class teachers in the drawing up individual education plans and helps to ensure that the pupil targets are reasonably precise and manageable.
47. The governors are strongly supportive of the headteacher and the staff team and share a common belief that "The children come first." Since the previous inspection, the governors have improved their oversight of the school's curriculum by arranging for a governor to be attached to each class in order to visit lessons and talk to the teachers. Furthermore, they now have a better understanding of the way that the school spends its money. This is because they are more involved in discussions about the school development plan and have to decide how much is to be spent on each priority. There is a good appreciation that "cheapest is not always best" when comparing the price of equipment and services. However, the school is only at an early stage in devising systems that will help them to establish whether or not any given expenditure actually improves the quality of education and raises standards.
48. Although there will be further changes next September, the turbulence in school staffing is starting to subside. There are now sufficient qualified and experienced teachers to meet the needs of the National Curriculum. A significant feature of the past twelve months has been the successful induction of two newly qualified teachers. These young teachers have received strong support from the headteacher and the two more experienced colleagues who act as their mentors. As a result, they have settled quickly into their chosen profession and are making a significant contribution in helping to take the school forward. A further strength of the school's provision lies in the good number of well-trained learning support assistants. These additional adults work closely with the teachers and play an important role in supporting group activities during literacy and numeracy and in providing additional literacy support. They also offer extremely effective support for the many pupils with special educational needs.
49. Taken overall, the school has an adequate supply of educational resources. Recent grants from national government have seen a big improvement in the quality of books and resources for teaching English as well as new computers and an Internet connection to support the pupils' work in information and communications technology. However, there are subjects that require further investment. For instance, more needs to be spent on tuned percussion instruments for music and on books and maps in geography.
50. Although the classrooms are small, the teachers work hard to create an attractive learning environment. The Foundation Stage pupils are housed in a demountable building with a secure outside play area that is used effectively to support and extend their learning. However, the indoor space for the Reception class is inadequate. The school grounds are spacious and offer a good mixture of hard and grassed areas. Although the school suffers from regular vandalism, the caretaker and his team of cleaners do a good job in keeping the school safe, secure and clean for the pupils.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

51. In order to improve still further the quality of education provided by the school the headteacher, staff and governors should now:-

1. Raise standards in science and music by improving the teachers' knowledge of these subjects. (Paragraphs 7, 8, 94, 118)
2. Review the current arrangements for teaching science, music and the other non-core subjects of the National Curriculum so that the school's curriculum guidance sets out more clearly what the pupils need to learn each year as they move through the school. (Paragraph 22, 97, 99, 106)
3. Improve attendance levels by monitoring more rigorously those pupils who attend school for less than 90% of each term. (Paragraph 37)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	48
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	24

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	19	42	33	4	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YRec – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	24	171
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	76

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YRec – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	8	59

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	26
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	32

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.93
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.11
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	16	17	33

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	10	12
	Girls	15	15	16
	Total	26	25	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	79 (67)	76 (75)	85 (79)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	9	9
	Girls	15	15	15
	Total	24	24	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	73 (75)	73 (83)	73 (79)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	13	13	26

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	5	5	5
	Girls	7	5	6
	Total	12	10	11
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	46 (60)	38 (48)	42 (80)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	5	7
	Girls	7	5	6
	Total	13	10	13
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	50 (52)	38 (52)	50 (56)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	154
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	1	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YRec – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21
Average class size	24

Education support staff: YRec – Y6

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	80

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	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	59

Number of pupils per FTE adult	6
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-01
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	£
Total income	406709
Total expenditure	405719
Expenditure per pupil	2070
Balance brought forward from previous year	10895
Balance carried forward to next year	11885

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	219
Number of questionnaires returned	18

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	83	17	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	72	22	0	6	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	56	6	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	50	17	28	0	6
The teaching is good.	61	33	6	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	72	17	6	6	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	89	6	6	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	83	17	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	72	22	6	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	83	17	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	72	22	0	6	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	78	17	6	0	0

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

52. Since the last inspection, the school has enhanced the quality of education it provides in both the nursery and the reception class. This good quality teaching is having a significant impact in helping to prepare the children for full time education.
53. Few children have had any experience of education before they start part-time attendance in the nursery. Consequently, the vast majority begins with levels of attainment that are well below average in all the areas of learning outlined in the Foundation Curriculum. The personal, social and emotional development and speaking and listening skills of many children are particularly poor. However, the skilful teaching helps them to settle quickly into the class routines and they make good progress. Even so, the early assessments of the children, carried out shortly after they start full time school, show that the attainment of the vast majority remains well below average.
54. The teaching in Reception is also good and by the end of the year the majority of the children are likely to reach the targets set out in the Foundation Stage Curriculum for their personal, social and emotional development as well as their physical development. Furthermore, the few higher-attaining pupils are likely to achieve the targets in their early literacy and numeracy skills and in most aspects of their creative development. However, for the vast majority, their communication, language and literacy skills, their mathematical development and their knowledge and understanding of the world lag considerably behind the targets set out in the Foundation Stage guidelines.

Personal, social and emotional development

55. The children are very happy, and love coming to school. This is because the staff work well together, show an excellent caring and sensitive approach to the children and sustain very good relationships. The consistent approach of the adults and the security of well-organised daily routines helps everyone to settle in quickly, particularly the significant number of vulnerable children.
56. The adults speak calmly and politely to everyone. They show an interest in the children's opinions and encourage them to share their point of view. As a result, the children are quickly developing an awareness of, and sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others. In the nursery, they are learning to establish relationships with adults outside their family, to listen to each other, to take turns and share fairly. A good example of this is when children are negotiating the use of materials and equipment. Although the help of an adult was sometimes required, the inspectors saw good discussions when the pupils were sharing out the play-dough with each other and when deciding whose turn it was to use the saw.
57. A strong feature of the teachers' approach to personal, social and emotional development is the consistent way in which they attempt to foster and encourage the children to be independent learners. For example, two children had to make a decision as to whether or not their planned activity with the wood- blocks would be done better indoors or outside. In the nursery, the children have regular opportunities to 'plan, do and review' their own work. This approach continues in the reception class where the children are given greater opportunities to plan some work independently within the structured activities provided. A good example occurred during a role-play activity where a child became the 'teacher' and very confidently led a group of children in reading from the whiteboard the days of the week using the pointer

stick accurately. She then proceeded spontaneously to sing and point to the letters of the alphabet. The group, which included an adult and a pupil with special educational needs, followed her directions seriously and enthusiastically.

58. The nursery children are allowed to decide when to have their 'snack'. This often occurs in little groups happily sitting around a small table drinking milk or eating a piece of fruit. The arrangement not only fosters their growing sense of independence, but also helps to develop spoken English as they meet and chat with a friend. Most children take the responsibility for 'tidy-up' time very seriously and are capable of doing this in a very short space of time. Boys as well as girls are proficient at this task.
59. The great majority of the children quickly learn the class rules and behave very well. For the few who find this difficult, the adults in the classroom provide firm, yet sensitive support. They work quietly and consistently to reinforce what is acceptable behaviour and take every opportunity to praise any child they observe behaving well.

Communication, language and literacy

60. At the start of the year, the children's spoken English and listening skills were well below average. As a result of good teaching, the children have made steady gains in their spoken English, but are not likely to reach the targets set out in the Foundation Stage curriculum by the time they start in Year 1. However, most children's listening skills have improved at a faster rate and are approaching the expected levels. This is because the adults place a strong emphasis on encouraging them to listen in a wide variety of setting. For example, they are attentive and responsive to direct instructions, they follow stories and songs with interest and listen carefully to each other during more formal activities, such as the literacy sessions.
61. All the adults working in the Foundation Stage place a strong and appropriate emphasis on talk. For example, they skilfully question the children about what has happened in a story, and ask them to predict what will happen next. They interact continuously in this way and encourage the children to talk about their work not only as it is happening during their role-play activities, but also at group time when sharing and reviewing the day's work. Nevertheless, the children's response is often very limited both in terms of vocabulary and the grammatical structures they employ. Many children cannot speak clearly, but they either have or are gaining the confidence to speak to each other individually, in small groups and to adults. The adults are good role models for the children to follow and consequently the discussions are enriching the children's spoken English. The children with special educational needs make good, steady progress in their learning because they are very well supported by adults. A good example of this was seen when the materials prepared for a group activity in the reception class were enlarged so that a child who is visually impaired could have the same access and opportunity to the curriculum.
62. It is evident that all children enjoy books and reading. They find stories a source of pleasure, and have a growing understanding of the written word. In the nursery, they have suitable opportunities to understand that marks, words and letters convey meaning. Their early attempts at writing are encouraged and a few pupils are beginning to write random letter shapes and their own names. The role-play activities provide very good opportunities for the children to write independently and for various useful purposes, such as shopping lists, telephone messages, doctor's prescriptions and appointments. At the planning stage, they record their intended activity on their own whiteboards before informing everyone else what they are about to do. They make good progress because the activities are specifically planned by the teachers to meet the children's individual needs.

63. As a result of the effective organisation of the early literacy lessons, some of the children in the reception class have begun to recognise occasional words on signs and notices and are also getting to know the sounds of letters. The teaching of phonics and the emphasis on correct grammatical structures are strong features of the literacy work. In the reception class, the adults make the work on letter sounds enjoyable by introducing this as a 'sorting' activity. For example, when the teacher had a collection of items in the bucket the children were eager to identify the objects beginning with the initial sound 'b' and to show that they have really understood what the teacher wanted them to learn. When writing, the few higher-attaining pupils know that their simple short sentence must begin with a capital letter and have a full stop at the end. They are beginning to form both upper and lower case letters correctly because the adult pays good attention to pencil grip, paper position, posture and correct formation of the letter as it is being written.

Mathematical development

64. From a very low starting point, most children are making steady gains in their mathematical learning. However, despite the good teaching, only a very small minority are likely to reach levels described in the Foundation Stage Curriculum by the end of the reception year.
65. In the nursery, the children are beginning to count numbers aloud in sequence to nine. They follow the number line carefully to practise recognising numerals, but as yet few can write them accurately. A strength of the teaching is the effective way that activities are linked to other areas of learning. The teachers provide considerable opportunity for mathematical concepts to be developed through practical experiences. They are very skilled at drawing out the children's curiosity and enquiry skills during the course of their play. For example, one adult stopped by the water tray, filled up two pots of water then quietly asked the children which container had 'more' and which had 'less'. After the children had thought for a moment they confidently gave the correct answer. The adult then extended their curiosity by asking which they thought was the heavier pot. They were then seen doing the same thing for themselves. These practical experiences and the children's positive response demonstrate how they are developing effectively an early understanding of mathematical concepts through first hand experience. This approach introduces them naturally to mathematical language both in specific tasks and everyday situations.
66. In the reception class, through imaginative role-play and more structured mathematical activities, the children have good opportunities to learn to match, sort and count in a wide variety of contexts. A significant minority of the children can confidently count in two's, recognise numbers and put them into their correct order, but they still find difficulty in counting backwards from nine. The higher-attaining children in the reception class can recognise and write numbers accurately to nine and are developing an understanding of numbers in sequence to ten and beyond. On occasions, however, the less able pupils are not able to distinguish between the numbers six and nine, despite the teacher's well-prepared lesson materials. A significant majority of the children have an appropriate knowledge of shapes such as, circle, rectangle, triangle and square. They can relate this to real objects such as a hoop or the piece of wood that is rectangular. The teachers' assessments of the children's individual needs are good, and the children are keen to succeed.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

67. When first starting school, the children's knowledge and understanding of the world are well below average. By the end of the reception year, most children are unlikely to reach the targets set in the Foundation Stage Curriculum despite appropriate curriculum provision and good teaching and the. This is because of limited spoken English that impinges on their ability to articulate their understanding. Nevertheless, their experiences are suitably laying secure foundations in various ways, for example, in science and information and communications technology. Here the adults in the nursery are effectively introducing the children's to computer keyboard skills. In the reception class, the teacher appropriately continues and extends the acquisition of basic skills, such as the use of the mouse to click on objects on the screen before dragging them to a new position. Many pupils took great delight in showing the inspector how they could use this technique to arrange Goldilocks and The Three Bears in the bear's kitchen by moving them around the screen. This lesson in the computer suite also extended the children's awareness of positional language as the teacher used words such as up, down, in front of, behind, left and right.
68. In other activities, the adults in both the nursery and the reception class use questioning very sensitively to promote enquiry and discovery in children's learning. For example, whilst the children were engaged in planting seedlings, the adult drew the children's attention to the material that the pot was made of. They willingly took turns to describe what it felt like, but none recognised that it was made of plastic. As the teacher moved the learning forward she carefully began to use more subject specific language such as, 'compost.' When the children completed the task, she drew their attention to the books readily at hand which demonstrated what would next happen to the seedling. They began to understand the sequence of growth when the seedling developed roots, leaves and finally the flower. This first hand experience was exciting, and stimulated the children's enthusiastic curiosity about everyday life around them.
69. The children use construction toys to a satisfactory standard in their play. They have regular access to materials such as play-dough, and ample opportunity to develop and improve their skills of cutting and joining, including sawing and hammering nails to hold pieces of wood together. The children decide when they wish to work out of doors, knowing that they can use the space in various ways, including simply sitting on a rug and playing quietly with the malleable materials or completing a jigsaw. The children have good opportunities to extend and acquire a greater understanding of the world around them by going out to study the local environment. For example, they were very excited about their forth-coming visit to the building site.

Physical development

70. The physical skills of the children in both the nursery and the reception class are being developed appropriately, and they are on course to achieve the learning outcomes described in the Foundation Curriculum. They are using a suitable range of apparatus and equipment. It is evident that the children can confidently handle tools, such as hammers, saws, and scissors, and manage both large and small construction equipment safely and with increasingly good control. From an early age, the children are being taught to hold a pencil correctly when writing. Most enjoy setting themselves challenges and show pleasure in their achievements, for example, when successfully negotiating balancing bars in the hall, or when using a pen to write early letter shapes. They co-operate very well during group activities and are willing to share equipment. Despite the recent fire that destroyed all the wheeled toys, the school has made alternative strategies to ensure that children get the opportunity to use larger movements by using the equipment available in the hall. Replacement items have been ordered. Nevertheless,

the school recognises the need to build even further on the existing outdoor equipment to enable the children to have full access to larger climbing apparatus. The staff and children work well together to promote effective learning in the development of both large and fine movement skills.

Creative development

71. Since the last inspection, the teachers' planning and provision for imaginative and structured play has improved considerably. Valuable role-play activities successfully involve the children and challenge them to higher levels of enquiry, exploration and discovery. This 'free-flow' play provision, in both the nursery and reception classes, strongly contributes to the acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding not only in spoken English, but also in scientific, physical and mathematical activities. However, a wider range of large construction equipment would enhance the imaginative play of the pupils in the reception class.
72. Throughout the Foundation Stage, the pupils are gaining in confidence in their creative use of tools and materials. For instance, a significant number of children are competent with scissors when cutting different thickness of card, paper and wool. Most children are confident when tackling new experiences because the adults are enabling them to master basic skills and techniques as fast as possible. For example, when painting patterns the children quickly learn to wash their brushes before mixing new colours. They also take responsibility for washing their own equipment when they have finished. All children enjoy and are confident at drawing. The higher attaining pupils are developing a good eye for detail. For example, when observing and drawing snails they include all the salient features, such as the foot, eye, shell and feeler. They are given good opportunities to use their own ideas and thoughts and to make decisions for themselves in order to develop individual designs and artefacts. They are encouraged to explore and use a wide range of materials and techniques.
73. No specific musical activities were observed during the inspection, but the teacher's provision of a music table and easy access to musical instruments for use either indoor or outdoors enables the children to have the opportunity for independent music making. Informal opportunities are also available for them to listen to music on a tape during the course of their free-flow activities. The staff recognises that the music curriculum is an area for further development. They need to widen the children's knowledge and understanding of music and to improve their basic musical skills in both the nursery and the reception classes.

ENGLISH

74. Standards in English are well below average when the children enter school, but they improve steadily in Key Stage 1. In the 2000 tests for seven-year-olds, standards in reading were above average but were only just average in writing. The proportion of pupils reaching above average levels was similar to the national average. Overall, standards were higher than those of pupils in similar schools.
75. In the 2000 tests for eleven-year-olds, standards in English were very low and also low compared with schools containing a similar range of pupils. However, the inspection evidence suggests that although standards at the end of Year 6 are still below average, the pupils are developing greater confidence as writers in comparison to where they stood at the beginning of the school year. Over the last three years, the boys have performed worse than the girls, but this imbalance is not so much in evidence in the more recent work seen during the inspection. Parents are pleased with the progress their

children are currently making in English. An appropriate strategy to raise the pupils' literacy skills has been put in place, and standards are beginning to improve as a direct consequence

76. By the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils' speaking skills are still below average, but are steadily improving because the teachers provide a variety of opportunities for speaking. During a history lesson, for instance, the pupils discussed the relative ages of a variety of teddy bears. The discussion was not wide ranging but the pupils were able to make suggestions and listen to each other's ideas. They concluded the discussion by agreeing to form a timeline of teddy bears from the youngest to the oldest. Most of the children develop appropriate listening skills by the time they are seven. For example, they listen well when the teachers are showing them how to improve the structure of their sentences or how to carry out a mathematical calculation in numeracy lessons. This results in their greater confidence in tackling their own group or individual tasks.
77. The oldest pupils enjoy opportunities to talk, but often lack the vocabulary of more assured speakers. Many find it difficult to express their thoughts and ideas with sufficient clarity and depth. This is very evident during lessons in history and religious education where they are required to support their views during class discussions. Nevertheless, after watching an interesting video recording about ancient Egypt many pupils in Year 5 were eager to show how much they had remembered about the objects that provide clues about Egypt's past. They listen carefully and some are beginning to pick up the technical vocabulary that the teachers use in relation to subjects such as geography or science.
78. The teaching of reading is given high priority each day. However, many pupils do not appear to read sufficiently regularly at home. They therefore miss opportunities to practise and extend their reading. Standards are slightly above average in Key Stage 1, but there is a significant minority of seven-year-olds who fall well below the expected standard. Of the younger pupils, a notable proportion makes good progress as the result of the regular effective teaching and skilful support of the classroom assistants. This is particularly the case for the pupils with special educational needs. In classrooms, there is a good range of reading material that invites the children to browse. Sounds and letters are practised regularly. The group reading sessions are successful in revealing the skills on which individual pupils need either consolidation or extension. A few of the oldest pupils read with the fluency and accuracy expected of eleven-year-olds. However, too many still read rather mechanically and are hesitant when reading complex words. The teachers are providing an appropriate range of printed material for the pupils to read. The pupils themselves show interest not only in narrative texts but also in a range of facsimiles and other factual material that is displayed in the classrooms. During lessons in history, many pupils responded positively to the range of information books made available for them to carry out their own research.
79. The pupils' attainment in writing, although still below the expected levels overall, is improving. This has been a major focus for the school, but the impact has not yet been fully felt in Key Stage 2 because of the frequent changes in staffing. Arrangements to ensure a balanced programme of reading and writing opportunities have been a factor in improving standards in Key Stage 1. The pupils are developing secure understanding of sentence structures and beginning to use full stops, capital letters and speech marks accurately. Some of the more confident writers are refining their work by reading through their first drafts and finding ways to make their writing more interesting. For example, while writing a story about a rainbow fish, one older pupil had inserted phrases such as "His scales shimmer and shine", showing an awareness of alliteration. The pupils in Key

Stage 2 are steadily developing their skills to increase the range of writing they can undertake. Many still find descriptive writing a challenge but are more successful at recording factual events such as an imagined newspaper report on "Firework factory explodes". There is strong evidence of the skilful way in which the teachers are encouraging the pupils to be more critical of their writing. Their recorded evaluations of the pupils' work give clear indication of the rigour with which they assess its quality. It is matched by the respect that the pupils pay to their teachers' opinions. One such evaluation led to some editing of a story, and finally produced a very amusing description of a grandmother in the following terms: "She tried laughing harshly..... . Her destiny is to be the oldest bat to reach the moon". Spelling remains a weakness at both key stages, but effective strategies are beginning to ensure that most of the common key words are correctly spelt. Older, weaker writers are making creditable attempts to spell some of the more interesting words they want to use in their stories. The pupils in Key Stage 1 are developing a neat cursive hand. Until this year, however, many of the oldest pupils have not experienced the consistent approach necessary to develop a clear style. A good effort is now being made to redress this shortcoming. The presentation of work is always neat.

80. The consistent and coherent approach to literacy now adopted throughout the school is the reason why standards are steadily improving. The teachers plan thoroughly to ensure that the pupils are developing a wide range of literacy skills that can be applied in all areas of the curriculum. They analyse the pupils' work carefully. They know their pupils very well and because relationships are good in the classrooms, the pupils are eager to please their teachers and heed their advice. The pupils who have a high level of literacy needs respond positively to the additional help they are given. This is an important factor in ensuring that they make progress in reading and writing.
81. The literacy co-ordinator, supported by the senior management team, has provided good leadership to establish a secure approach to the teaching of literacy. She is very clear about the priorities for the future and recognises especially that writing will remain an area of focus. Efforts will be made to maintain the improvement in reading, writing and speaking skills so that the pupils' become better readers and express themselves more clearly and effectively.

MATHEMATICS

82. The school is working hard to improve results from below average levels and is having some success. Good teaching and class management and a planned, logical progression of work are raising standards. The pupils are enjoying the subject and are very focussed on their learning.
83. At the age of seven, the pupils' results in the national tests are below the national average, but above those achieved by similar schools. The results of more able pupils are in line with those of similar school results. The school's results are improving and getting close to the national figure. The unconfirmed results for the current year show a steep rise in the number of pupils achieving the higher levels. However, the overall figure for pupils reaching the average level (c.75%) is slightly lower than last year. The standards of work seen in the Year 2 class support these figures. The pupils are making good progress in mathematics compared to levels when they started school. Those with special educational needs are supported well and make good progress.
84. The results of the national tests for eleven-year-olds in 2000 show that the proportion of pupils achieving the nationally expected level is very low compared to all schools and

well below those achieved by similar schools. Encouragingly, the number of pupils who achieve above average standards is in line with the national average and well above that of similar schools. Standards are improving and the percentage of pupils achieving the nationally expected level rose by 10% last year. Standards of work seen in Year 6 during the inspection showed that the majority of pupils are achieving average standards with a significant number reaching the higher levels. Able pupils are performing at an appropriately high level. The pupils with special educational needs are supported very well and make good progress.

85. Although the three-year averages at the end of both key stages indicate that the girls' results have tended to be better than those achieved by the boys,' this is not the case this year. The inspectors could find no evidence of bias in the teaching that might explain the previous imbalance in results.
86. By the age of seven, the pupils are able to recall basic number facts and are developing accurate, reliable mental methods calculating with two digit numbers. Most of them have appropriate knowledge of addition and subtraction facts and can count on in two's and tens from different starting points. They carry out routine tasks adequately; many have appropriate spatial and statistical knowledge. The skills they need to use and apply their mathematical knowledge are developing well. The younger pupils can count to ten and read and write the numbers involved; some can add and subtract numbers to ten and count on mentally. Most pupils have a sound grasp of mathematical language and satisfactory understanding of number operations; many are beginning to understand place value. Most pupils use standards units for measuring length and can tell the time. They can construct simple graphs and show a good knowledge of the names and properties of two-dimensional shapes.
87. The pupils increase their capabilities well in Key Stage 2 and by the age of eleven they have acquired accurate, reliable methods for adding and subtracting three digit numbers. They can multiply and divide whole numbers by ten and a hundred. The average pupils can multiply and divide by a reliable method and can use simple fractions and percentages. The higher attaining pupils multiply and divide large numbers and decimals. Most Year 6 pupils classify shapes and many can draw these shapes on grids. Some of the more able pupils measure and draw angles to the nearest degree. Their ability to do mental arithmetic is developing well, but the pupils in the middle ability groups are not as advanced as they should be and often their response is too slow.
88. The pupils' ability to use information technology to develop their mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding is developing well; for instance, in data handling they can select and draw appropriate graphs and charts. In Year 1 in particular the methodology and purpose of data collection was purposefully explored. However, in other areas of mathematics information technology is not adequately employed. Similarly, links between mathematics and other subjects of the curriculum, particularly science, are not well developed.
89. The teaching of mathematics is good overall. The lessons are very well planned and managed; the teachers' presentation of the work is lively and engages pupils well. In consequence, the pupils concentrate and learn well, including carefully selected vocabulary. For example, in a very good lesson in Year 2 the pupils used digit cards to partition and re-form numbers thereby gaining a very good understanding of place value. The abler pupils in this class tackled more challenging work. Their progress was good because they used helpful comments written in their books to improve their approach. In some classes, very good use was made of overhead projectors and well-made slides to

promote understanding. However, sometimes the teachers continue to use the same teaching approach for too long and pupils lose concentration. This is particularly the case during the oral and mental stage of the lesson when activities designed to improve established mathematics are not varied enough. Some common resources are not fully exploited. For instance, not enough use was made to the hundred number square so that pupils could begin to establish patterns arising from adding on ten or nine to a given number.

90. The teachers use informal observations and regular tests to assess the pupils' attainment. Their marking, of the pupils' work provides them with good information about progress and areas for improvement. The school makes effective use of a range of other tests and assessments and is beginning to establish procedures for tracking the progress of individual pupils and cohorts as they move through the school. The results are passed to the mathematics co-ordinator, who is beginning to analyse outcomes and identify areas of strength and weakness. This information is beginning to be used in the planning of subsequent work, but as yet this is not firmly established practice. In Key Stage 1, the plan to move to separate exercise books for literacy and numeracy work is sensible. This will make it easier for teachers and pupils to use past work as a benchmark for judging progress especially if each piece of work is dated.
91. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The management of the subject is very good, and the mathematics co-ordinator is working well to make further improvements. She is monitoring the quality of education effectively and thus has a secure grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching. She is aware that additional training to reinforce some of the principles of the national numeracy strategy, notably the use of the oral and mental starter and more efficient use of some of the simple resources would be beneficial.

SCIENCE

92. Standards in science have been low for several years, particularly at the end of Key Stage 2. The headteacher and senior management team have sensibly identified this subject in the school development plan as an area for urgent improvement. A good level of financial support has been appropriately allocated. The early effects of the planned improvement are encouraging.
93. In the year 2000, the teacher assessments in Key Stage 1 show that standards were well below the national average for all schools, and below average for schools with a similar intake. However, compared to these similar schools more pupils reach the higher levels. The girls did much better than the boys in last year's assessments, but the difference is not so marked this year. The inspection evidence indicates that standards are now broadly average with the majority of the oldest pupils reaching the level expected for their age in all areas of science.
94. In last year's national tests at the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils achieved results that were very low in comparison with both the national average and the results of pupils in similar schools. Although a few higher attaining pupils achieved the national expectations, the test results revealed general weaknesses in the knowledge and understanding of many pupils in those parts of the curriculum relating to materials and investigative science. The inspection findings indicate that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels is higher this year, but overall standards remain unsatisfactory. **This is a key issue for action.**
95. In Key Stage 1, the teaching is very good. As a result, the pupils learn well, cooperate purposefully during group work and record work with care. The two lessons seen in this key stage during the inspection were based on very well organised experiments that the pupils found exciting and fun. The teachers introduce and use the appropriate vocabulary for the subject. In the older class, very careful observation of seeds using a hand lens preceded a class discussion. As a result, all pupils were able to make an informed contribution to the discussion about the appearance of seeds. The pupils with special educational needs were given very good support by a learning support assistant in this lesson and achieved very well. In both lessons, the teachers had very good classroom management so the experiments that included the use of water, and even bad smells, were conducted sensibly and without mishap. The teachers mark and assess regularly and rigorously so that the pupils know what they do well and what needs improvement.
96. Only one lesson was seen in Key Stage 2. The teaching was good and clearly demonstrated the teacher's secure subject knowledge. The planning was detailed and the activities imaginative. A strong feature of the lesson was the very good use made of homework. The pupils were asked to compile an eating diary over the Whitsuntide break. About half complied. The teacher used one pupil's work well to lead a lesson on healthy eating. The pupils responded well and by the end of the lesson were beginning to understand some of the characteristics of the foods and to group successfully. The lesson was timetabled to last for the morning, which for this topic was too long. As a result, as the lesson progressed, the pupils energies flagged and their rate of learning slowed.
97. The school is in the early stages of a new approach to the teaching of science. In the last few months, the use of worksheets has been abandoned and more emphasis placed

on the pupils' recording their own findings. In Key Stage 2, where very few lessons were seen, the inspectors' conversations with pupils showed that the new approach is working. The pupils showed enthusiasm and greater depth of understanding of the topics explored as part of the new teaching approach. A new scheme of work linked closely to the national guidance is in the process of implementation. The school's new approach places a greater emphasis on investigative work. Their new curriculum guidance suggests a very good range of relevant and interesting activities. However, the next step is to make it clear to those teachers who are not subject experts how these tasks will fit into a coherent framework that builds steadily in demand as the pupils move through the school. **This is a key issue for action.** The assessment of science is still at a very early stage of development, but the examples seen during the inspection are encouraging. A practical simple approach linked to the scheme of work is under discussion. This will link well with the evaluative marking already in place.

98. The co-ordinator is experienced and well qualified. She is looking forward to the opportunity, provided by the improvement plan, to raise attainment. This will enable her to monitor the work in the classroom. The resources for the subject are satisfactory. As part of the action plan for science, the co-ordinator intends to make them more accessible by allocating them to the topics covered in the scheme of work. The timetable allocations result in many science lessons that are long. The school should re-examine this. The subject co-ordinator and at least one other new teacher are subject experts. Their capacity and will to improve this subject are good.

ART AND DESIGN AND DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

99. Few art lessons were scheduled during the inspection and there were no lessons in design and technology. However, the work on display, folders containing records of work over the year, photographic records and discussions with teachers and pupils provided abundant evidence of the range and quality of the work produced. Since the previous inspection, the quality of the work in art has remained above average. Standards in design and technology are improving and are now similar to those expected of pupils of primary age. This is because the planning of the work has been carefully reviewed. The pupils have opportunities to work in a variety of different media in art. For example, the older pupils are currently engaged in a challenging textile project linked to their study of ancient Egypt. They have also had experience of carrying out observational drawings using pencils and charcoal. The youngest pupils have used a variety of printing materials such as vegetables and sponges. They have produced work in the style of some of the French Impressionist painters. The range of activities is broad, but the teachers recognise that they now need to plan in a way that ensures that the pupils acquire their skills through a succession of activities that build steadily in demand and complexity. **This is a key issue for action.** For example, the pupils are taught at an early stage that colours can be mixed to produce other colours. This is a skill that needs to be carefully developed in order to improve further the painting techniques of the older pupils.
100. The enthusiasm of the pupils in Key Stage 1 for designing and making models from a variety of re-cycled materials is clearly reflected in the finished products. A long window ledge in one classroom is filled with exuberant owls, snakes, butterflies and robots. The pupils' simple accounts of the planning process suggest that they had thought carefully about the materials to use. They had also considered how to fix different components and attach a variety of features such as buttons, noses and "feather" effects. In science, work on "minibeasts" inspired the designing and making of habitats for a variety of creatures. This was preceded by a discussion of the suitability of the intended homes for

each creature and followed by an evaluation of the appropriateness of their designs. The preliminary preparation in the form of discussion and demonstration also plays a valuable part in developing the pupils' speaking and listening skills.

101. In art, the pupils in Key Stage 2 are acquiring good observational skills that they have applied to activities based on the appraisal of artefacts, textiles and prints from Benin. The resulting prints, using polystyrene tiles, and clay sculptures clearly show the pupils' appreciation of the key elements of the original objects. In Year 6, the teacher provided an excellent context for the pupils' study of the features of local buildings by projecting a range of slides she had taken around the area. However, the pace of learning dropped when the pupils began their own drawings because the task lacked a precise focus and the teacher was less secure in knowing which skills and techniques the pupils could usefully employ. In design and technology, a unit of work on food has involved the pupils in the design, production and evaluation of biscuits and bread. This enhanced their appreciation of the process and resulted in an appealing and marketable finished product. The pupils' attention has also usefully been drawn to the importance of food hygiene.
102. The teachers plan the work in pairs and are able to consult a knowledgeable co-ordinator for advice. This is why the tasks are generally imaginative and enjoyed by the pupils. This is particularly the case in relation to art where the teachers have a secure knowledge of how to raise the pupils' awareness of the styles of different painters. The teachers' confidence in developing activities to cover the full range of experiences in design and technology is developing. Consequently, the curriculum they provide is now much more satisfactory than it was at the previous inspection. A good feature of the teaching in art and design and technology is the way the teachers question the pupils to develop their design ideas and encourage them to evaluate and refine their work. Overall, the teaching of art is good. The teaching of design and technology is sound and continuing to improve.
103. The attention given to good display and the use of a corridor as a gallery for exhibiting work make a powerful statement about the way the pupils' work is celebrated. There are good quality resources, such as a variety of brushes and drawing pencils, different types of paper and equipment for printing. The pupils themselves willingly supply a range of materials for use in design and technology. During the inspection, a parent was providing valuable support for a textile project based on an Egyptian theme.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

104. The previous inspection found weaknesses in the school's provision for the teaching of geography in Key Stage 2, but the provision for history ensured that standards were similar to those expected nationally. The school leadership has begun to address the issues relating particularly to the planning of the geography curriculum. This is resulting in a more balanced programme of work and steadily improving standards. No lessons in geography were timetabled during the inspection, but records of work and displays from the previous half term's activities were scrutinised. Discussions were held with the oldest pupils.
105. In history, the younger pupils have an awareness of the passage of time. They can point to the differences between teddy bears of various ages and arrange them accurately in a time line. They confidently use the language of comparison, for example, "older than", "the youngest", "not as old as". A pupil in Year 1, while holding the teacher's teddy bear, was heard to observe, "My mummy's bear is not as old as yours because she's smaller

than you!” The headteacher’s bear with its worn leather pads was dubbed as positively ancient in comparison with a pupil’s very large, pristine, modern bear. An opportunity to view and sketch Victorian domestic equipment has enhanced the younger pupils understanding of some of the differences between the lifestyle of a Victorian household and their own. Walks around the immediate vicinity of the school have helped to develop the pupils’ positional language as they describe the location of bus stops in relation to buildings, bridges over rivers and roads. They have successfully produced simple sketch plans of the school and maps of their routes to school, later adding symbols to denote a bridge, hedges and traffic lights. Their knowledge is currently confined largely to aspects of their own locality. Nevertheless, it will provide a reasonably sound foundation for future global studies.

106. The pupils in Key Stage 2 show a good level of interest in the past. They are developing a secure knowledge of aspects of the civilisation of ancient Egypt, such as the place of the pharaohs. They can talk about items that have survived to provide clues about the past, for example, the Sphinx, pyramids and hieroglyphics. The younger pupils in Key Stage 2 have a sound understanding of how World War II affected the daily lives of people, for example, those children who were evacuated. The pupils in Year 6 show a good recall of some of their work on rivers and are able to apply this knowledge when considering the significance of the Nile to the ancient Egyptians. They recognise that water is essential for farming and that major rivers provide an important facility for travel. However, the connections between one topic and another are not always well developed. A start has been made in geography to extend the skills learned from one topic to successive topics, but it is not yet a sufficiently overt feature of the planning. **This is a key issue for action.** For example, there is scope for further development of fieldwork skills and for improving the pupils’ capability to pose geographical questions that will form the basis of their own investigations. Their skills in numeracy and information technology are used from time to time, for example, to compile data or to create a three-dimensional sketch of a town. The school now has the capacity, through its computer suite, to enliven the work in geography by selective use of computer programs.
107. The teaching of both subjects is of sound quality, and there are some strong features in the teaching of history. The pupils’ interest level and application are above average because the teachers select a variety of interesting resources that bring history alive. The resources for teaching geography are not yet sufficiently interesting and varied, and the range of reference books is inadequate.
108. History and geography are taught in half termly blocks. This arrangement ensures a reasonable balance of time for these subjects. However, the weekly time allocation is sometimes over long for some pupils and their concentration flags. This was the case in a very well taught history lesson in Key Stage 1 where the time allocated placed demands on the teacher’s considerable skills and on the pupils’ ability to sustain the same level of lively interest shown during the first hour. The teachers prepare the lessons carefully and make an effort to match the tasks to the needs and abilities of the pupils. For instance, reference books available during history lessons take account of the pupils’ very wide range of literacy skills. The planning reflects good use of recently produced national guidelines and ensures increasingly coherent programmes of work. At times, however, the written work relies too heavily on book resources in history and draws too little on some of the interesting artefacts on display, such as garments, papyrus and other museum acquisitions. There have been improvements in the curricula for these two subjects, and the teachers record perceptive comments about the pupils’ work. Nevertheless, some areas still require further development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

109. Since the last inspection, the school has improved greatly the pupils' access to the curriculum for information and communications technology. This is because the headteacher is successfully implementing a well-considered plan that sets out what needs to be done to enhance the quality and organisation of resources, the school's curriculum and staff training.
110. At the end of both key stages, standards remain broadly in line with the expected levels because the school has a much-improved range of good quality computers. These new machines are fast, generally reliable and sensibly organised within a small suite so that the teachers are able to teach most of the class at the same time. Since the arrival of the new computers, the school has also begun to take full advantage of the national funding to train teachers in their use. As a result, the teachers' knowledge and skills are improving steadily and enabling them to teach better. For instance, there is increasing evidence of the teachers making regular use of information and communications technology to support the pupils' learning across the full breadth of the National Curriculum.
111. In an effective Year 1 mathematics lesson held in the computer suite, the teacher used a suitable computer program to carry out the mental warm-up by getting the pupils to demonstrate their understanding of odd and even numbers and adding on ten. The pupils were swift to use the mouse to control the screen cursor and to click on the right numbers in answer to the teacher's questions. They showed appropriate knowledge and skills both in their number work and in their use of the computer. The main focus of the lesson was to help the pupils to learn how to collect and collate data using the computer to create a simple block graph. The teacher sensibly gained the interest and enthusiasm of the pupils by helping them to collect information about the eye colour of all those present. This worked well because when the pupils came to enter their data into the computers they could all explain what they had done, what to do next and why. By the end of the lesson, they all realised that the speed of the computer was a considerable advantage over having to draw a graph themselves.
112. In Year 3, the literacy skills of the lower attaining pupils were enhanced by the use of the 'Silly Stories' program. They had great fun rearranging a series of amusing statements on screen by clicking, dragging and re-positioning them into their preferred order. The benefits of the investment in regular training for the learning support assistants were also clearly apparent in this session. The assistant was confident in her use of the program and skilful in the way she helped the pupils to make sense of unfamiliar words.
113. The Year 6 pupils are currently taking their first steps in learning about the Internet. They know how to use a search engine, such as 'Yahoo', and recognise that their work can sometimes be made simpler by limiting their search to United Kingdom web sites. This was apparent, for instance, when they were trying to find sites that deal with the plays of William Shakespeare. Most eleven year olds know how to 'bookmark' a useful web site and save it as a 'favourite' in order to re-visit it in the future. As well as researching information about Shakespeare, the pupils are also locating sites that will support their history study of the lives of the Ancient Egyptians.
114. The co-ordinator is keenly aware that these types of activities are the first steps on the long road towards higher standards in this subject. The teachers are only just beginning to get to grips with ensuring that the pupils' learning becomes steadily more demanding as they move through the school. A new assessment booklet for each pupil is a useful

starting point for establishing exactly what the children know and can do. This will help the teachers to set more challenging work for the higher attaining pupils and to decide how to help the lower achievers. In the meantime, next year's school development plan sets out an ambitious and appropriate programme of further improvements for the subject including proposals for a new computer suite, more staff training and a further review of the curriculum organisation.

MUSIC

115. The school recognises that in recent years inadequate attention has been given to music because of the greater focus on the national initiatives for literacy and numeracy. Consequently, the issues raised in the previous report have not been addressed. By the end of Key Stage 1, the quality of the pupils' work in music is just satisfactory, but standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are below expectations in all aspects of the National Curriculum programmes of study.
116. In the one lesson observed at Key Stage 1, there was an appropriate emphasis on improving the children's rhythmic skills and their understanding of musical terms, such as crescendo, diminuendo, forte, and piano. They worked in the whole class session and the collaborative groups with a quiet rigour. When writing out their own scores, they worked very quickly so that they would have time to practice with the instruments and apply the terms learnt. They followed their scores fairly accurately and took great delight in performing their little compositions. It was a pity that time was not allowed for them to discuss, practice and improve on their initial performance. The pupils were very well behaved and were obviously interested, keen and enthusiastic about their work. For example, the following day at the 'Breakfast Club' a small group of pupils had remembered the terminology and insisted on expressing the meaning of words like crescendo very well. This was because the teaching was very good and well focussed on basic musical skills. The teacher was able to use her own musical knowledge and understanding very confidently and competently to stimulate such interest in the subject.
117. At Key Stage 2, singing is a regular collective activity and there is also some rhythm and sound exploration. During the singing sessions, a significant number of the children can recall the words of a song and the general contour of the melody. They keep a fairly accurate rhythm, but generally their sense of pitch falters. There was no emphasis on improving the basic skills, such as posture, breathing, tone, pitch and accuracy. Consequently minimal learning took place. There are missed opportunities for the pupils to listen to pieces of music, to learn who wrote it, and to reflect upon the mood or character and the instruments being played. In one lesson, the teacher worked hard, using well-planned lesson notes, to demonstrate rhythmic patterns and to help pupils to understand the musical element of 'texture'. However, her efforts went largely unrewarded because a small group of pupils continually disrupted the flow of the lesson. They were very poorly behaved and this impinged on the learning of others.
118. Music lessons are scheduled to take place regularly, but the school now needs to improve further the coherence of its planning and assessment procedures to ensure that the pupils' musical skills and knowledge build steadily as they gain in age and experience. **This is a key issue.** It applies to both the longer term planning and the improvement of skills during lessons. Guidelines would be a useful way forward to help and support the classroom teacher in their knowledge and understanding of how to develop and improve the children's musical skills.

119. The strong provision for individual instrumental teaching found at the time of the last inspection has diminished. However, the school has begun to re-establish the pupils' interest and enthusiasm by inviting a brass band to give a performance. The teachers have also made a positive start by introducing a recorder club at lunch times.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

120. On the basis of the two games lessons observed, it is clear that the quality of the pupils' work in this aspect of physical education is in line with the expected level by the time they leave school at age eleven.
121. In the Year 6 lesson, the pupils worked extremely hard and successfully in devising their own games of chase. They managed this because the teacher has sound subject knowledge and plans interesting lessons that build steadily in demand. For instance, she started this lesson by getting the pupils to play simple games of chase that they already knew such as "Cat and mouse" and "Stuck in the mud." The pupils enjoyed this and showed good awareness of space, speed and agility as they employed a variety of tactics either to avoid capture or to facilitate escape. The positive relationships within the class were clearly in evidence when the teacher joined in one game to the audible delight of the children. The reason she could do this was because she was appropriately dressed to teach the lesson and could make effective demonstration at key points.
122. The pupils knew that their next challenge was to devise their own rules for a game of chase because the teacher had carefully made clear the objectives at the start of the lesson. In their groups, the pupils' discussions revealed a keen understanding of the characteristics of successful game; 'No, no, it would be over too soon. You want to keep everyone moving, exercising...' Levels of co-operation were high as each group practised their game in their own space before a full-blown trial involving the whole class. By the end of the lesson, the pupils had made the most of the very good opportunities to exercise vigorously, practise and apply their knowledge and skills in games of chase and to evaluate the success of their new rules.
123. The lesson in Year 1 was not so successful. The teacher set out to accomplish too much with a class she did not know well. As a result, the behaviour of a minority of pupils deteriorated and made it impossible for the vast majority to work safely. The lesson was sensibly brought to a premature end.
124. The school recognises the crucial importance of teaching the pupils to swim. Every child in Key Stage 2 receives ten sessions of swimming instruction each year and this has resulted in a steady improvement in the number who can swim. Last year, for the first time, every pupil leaving school at age eleven could swim a minimum of ten metres, more than two thirds reached the nationally expected distance of twenty five metres and several could swim much further. In an area where very few pupils enjoy regular swimming beyond that provided by the school, these results represent a significant achievement.
125. The inspectors' observations of the children at lunchtimes and morning break show that most of them relish physical activity. The teachers have carefully organised opportunities for the pupils to play five-a-side football while others run and chase energetically on the school field. This provision is further enhanced by after school clubs for athletics, soccer and dance. However, the current organisation of the school's curriculum generally offers only one hour of physical education each week rather than the ninety minutes that, ideally, the school proposes the pupils should receive. As part of their review of the non-

core subjects of the National Curriculum, the school might usefully consider whether two shorter physical education lessons might offer greater opportunity for the pupils to receive more frequent physical exercise and ultimately help them to achieve higher standards in their work.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

126. From the two lessons observed in Key Stage 2, a scrutiny of the pupils' work and the teachers' planning, discussion with staff and pupils, it is clear that standards remain well in line with those required by the locally agreed syllabus. This is similar to the previous inspection. At both key stages, the pupils are gaining a sound knowledge of aspects of Christianity and of other major world faiths. A range of visitors, including the local vicar, a Sikh and a representative of the RSPCA, have served to emphasise the importance of religion to believers and the necessity for developing a personal moral code. For example, the older pupils now understand that the Sikh religion places great value on the need to share with others just as the RSPCA promotes sound moral principles in relation to the responsibility human beings bear in caring for animals.
127. In successive classes, the pupils develop a sound understanding of why some places, such as rooms in the homes of people and places of worship, are held to be special. By the end of Key Stage 1, the seven-year-old pupils have learned about the special books in Christianity and Islam. They begin to understand why each human being is special and they link this with the important recognition of significant people in their own lives. Older pupils enjoy hearing the stories told by Jesus and can discuss the meaning behind them. Through these stories they are developing an understanding of some of the rules associated with an honourable way of life – the care of neighbours, and the importance of being honest, trustworthy and willing to share with others. This was well reinforced when pupils in Key Stage 2 were made aware of the importance of the langar to Sikhs and of the overall significance of food celebrations. The pupils have a satisfactory grasp of the major Christian festivals and also of the events in the life of Christ. They understand that many of the stories in the New Testament represent Jesus' way of teaching his followers.
128. The teaching is generally satisfactory, and there are some good features. Among these is the variety of activities that the teachers plan to capture the pupils' interest. The recorded work in Year 4 provides sound evidence of this. The pupils have produced well-executed illustrations and then written captions to record the events surrounding Easter and Christmas. A good range of work is recorded in the pupils' books. It is clear that the teachers make considerable efforts to ensure appropriate coverage of the topics suggested in the locally agreed syllabus. They also draw upon the suggestions provided in national guidelines.
129. The subject is valued in the school as it is seen to make a worthwhile contribution to the pupils' overall personal development. Whenever possible, the teachers enliven the lessons by using artefacts, videos and illustrated material all of which are effective in stimulating discussion.