

INSPECTION REPORT

THORNS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Dudley

LEA area: Dudley Metropolitan Borough

Unique reference number: 103787

Headteacher: Mr David Howell

Reporting inspector: Mr Graham R Sims

28899

Dates of inspection: 24th – 27th September 2001

Inspection number: 193716

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown copyright 2001

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Thorns Primary School Thorns Road Quarry Bank Brierley Hill West Midlands
Postcode:	DY5 2JY
Telephone number:	01384 818285
Fax number:	01384 424768
Email address:	info@thorns-p.dudley.gov.uk
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Trevor Priest
Date of previous inspection:	21 st April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
28899	Mr G R Sims	Registered Inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well pupils are taught How well the school is led and managed
19664	Mr J Bayliss	Lay Inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well the school cares for its pupils How well the school works in partnership with parents
22841	Miss P Jackson	Team Inspector	Science Art and design Design and technology Religious education Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage	Special educational needs
22397	Mr S Fowler	Team Inspector	English Geography History Music English as an additional language	The quality of the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils Equal opportunities

The inspection contractor was:

*Criterion School Inspections
Juniper House
23 Abbots View
Abbotswood
CINDERFORD
Gloucestershire
GL14 3EG*

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
LONDON
WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6-10
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11-15
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	15-18
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	18-20
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	20-22
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	22
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	23-25
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	25-26
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	27-30
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	31-49

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Thorns Primary School is an urban school, situated between the communities of Lye and Quarry Bank in Dudley. At present, there are 195 boys and girls on roll between the ages of 4 and 11. It is similar in size to most primary schools, although the number of pupils on roll is falling, and the school has 80 fewer pupils now than at the time of the last inspection. Most pupils come from the surrounding residential areas, but the nature of the school's intake is changing, with the school now admitting a greater proportion of pupils of below average ability than before. The socio-economic circumstances from which many pupils now come are below average, although only 12 per cent of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. Around 5 per cent of pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds and half of these come from homes where English is an additional language. These figures are slightly higher than the national average. Just over a quarter of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, which is just above average. Two pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The school admits children to the Reception class in September and January, but offers parents the opportunity for their pre-school-age children to attend for mornings only prior to full-time schooling. The attainment of children when they start school varies widely, but is generally below average. The school is fully staffed, but the education of pupils in Year 1 was disrupted in the previous academic year because of the long-term absence of a teacher.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Thorns Primary School offers its pupils a sound standard of education and provides satisfactory value for money. Although standards are below average by the time pupils leave school, they are getting better, and pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning. The overall quality of the teaching is satisfactory, and there is a significant amount of good teaching. The school is improving under the calm influence of the headteacher and the drive of the deputy headteacher.

What the school does well

- The impetus for improvement, started by the headteacher after the school's last inspection, has increased through the input and expertise of the deputy headteacher, and the commitment of the staff.
- The school has maintained a good breadth and balance to its curriculum, and offers pupils a good range of learning experiences in science, art and design, and design and technology. The quality of pupils' work in art is good.
- The school has made significant improvements to its provision for information and communication technology, and pupils achieve well in this subject.
- The quality of the teaching in Key Stage 1¹ is good.
- The school has developed good procedures for monitoring pupils' academic and personal progress.

What could be improved

- Standards in English, particularly in speaking and writing.
- Aspects of the teaching.
- The consistency with which staff implement the school's new behaviour management policy and the support provided for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to all parents and carers of pupils in the school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Following the last inspection in April 1997, the school was deemed to have serious weaknesses. There has been a good degree of improvement since then, and the school has tackled its key issues, and those raised in subsequent monitoring visits, well. There have been significant improvements to the quality of teaching. There are now many more good or better lessons and far fewer unsatisfactory lessons. As a result, standards are improving throughout the school and, last year, the school received a school achievement award in recognition of the way standards had risen. Standards in, and the use of, information and communication technology have improved markedly. Most curriculum coordinators are carrying out their responsibilities more effectively. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are much improved. The school now monitors and evaluates the progress and effectiveness of its development plan. The provision for promoting pupils' spiritual development is improved. The school now provides a good range of information for parents. Pupils are given more opportunities for independent research, problem-solving and investigation, although further progress could still be made in this area.

¹ Key Stage 1 caters for pupils aged 5 to 7 and refers to pupils who are in Years 1 and 2.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			similar schools ²	Key
	all schools				
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
English	C	D	E	E	Very high A* Well above average A Above average B Average C Below average D Well below average E Very low E*
Mathematics	B	C	D	D	
Science	B	B	D	E	

The raw grades shown in this table do not give a true reflection of the way standards have improved in this school since the last inspection. Over the last five years, there have been fluctuations in the school's results, with 1999 being the school's most successful year, and the results in 2001 being affected by a larger proportion of pupils with special educational needs than in previous years. Whilst there has been little visible improvement in standards in English, there have been big improvements over the last five years in mathematics and science, and the improvement trend is better than in most schools. The changing nature of the school's intake is having an impact on standards in Key Stage 1, but here, too, the picture is one of improvement, particularly in reading and writing, where the school's results have improved at a much faster rate than the national trend.

The latest results and the findings of the inspection indicate that standards overall are still below average throughout the school, although pupils of all abilities are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils with special educational needs and the small number of pupils with English as an additional language are well integrated and make similar progress to their classmates. Pupils of above-average ability achieve satisfactorily in most classes. The skills shown by children when they join the Reception class are below average, and there is an increasing proportion of entrants with well below average ability. Despite making satisfactory progress, few reach the expected level of competence in each area of learning by the time they start Year 1. By the end of Year 2, standards in reading are very close to the national average. Standards in writing are not as high, but are improving. Progress is slower in mathematics, and the results in 2001 were well below the national average. By the end of Year 6, the main improvements are seen in mathematics and science. Results in 2001 were below average, but inspection evidence shows that pupils have a better understanding of science than they are able to communicate on paper.

Despite some good initiatives to improve pupils' competence in English, writing continues to be the weakest aspect of pupils' work at Key Stage 2³. Pupils achieve good standards in art and design and some aspects of their work in design and technology. There has been a significant improvement in the standards achieved in information and communication technology. Pupils use computers confidently and their skills in this area are beginning to have a positive impact on their work in other subjects. Pupils achieve satisfactory standards in all other subjects, apart from physical education at Key Stage 2 where pupils fail to build on their earlier achievements in aspects such as gymnastics. The school sets itself realistic targets and reviews these regularly.

² 'Similar schools' are defined by the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals; this measure has been found to be significantly related to the levels of attainment normally found in schools nationally.

³ Key Stage 2 caters for pupils aged 7 to 11 and refers to pupils who are in Years 3 to 6.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Overall, pupils' attitudes are satisfactory, but there are significant variations between classes. Most pupils enjoy school, show an interest in what the school has to offer and try their best. However, a small minority of pupils show an unacceptable lack of respect for their teachers.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	There is an orderly and constructive atmosphere in and around the school for much of the time, and most pupils are well behaved. However, there are too many instances of inappropriate behaviour from a small minority of pupils who have yet to understand the impact of their actions on others and to realise that their inappropriate responses have a negative impact on the learning of the majority of the pupils.
Personal development and relationships	The pupils respond appropriately to the opportunities provided for them to show initiative and take responsibility. Relationships are satisfactory amongst pupils and between pupils and adults. There is social inclusion, with pupils of all ages and backgrounds mixing well together.
Attendance	Attendance levels are unsatisfactory. They have fallen in recent years and are below the national average. The attendance rate is adversely affected by a few pupils who are frequently absent.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 and 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Good	Satisfactory

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

The overall quality of the teaching is satisfactory, and there is a significant amount of good and some very good teaching. There are far fewer unsatisfactory lessons now than there were at the time of the last inspection. The overall quality of the teaching in Key Stage 1 is good. Here, there is greater rigour in the teaching, and work is clearly differentiated to cater for faster and slower learners. The teachers set very clear expectations as to how pupils should behave and respond in lessons, and they ensure that these expectations are met. The same rigour is not always evident in Key Stage 2 and, in some lessons, not enough challenge is given to the more able pupils or enough support to those who struggle. Whilst most pupils respond well to their teachers and the work they are given, the occasional unsatisfactory behaviour of a small minority of pupils adversely affects the learning of others. Some lessons, which promise very well, cannot be fulfilled as effectively as planned because time has to be spent in dealing with problems rather than helping pupils to learn. The teaching of English and mathematics has improved and is satisfactory overall. Good initiatives have been introduced to help pupils develop their writing, but more needs to be done throughout the school to help pupils to improve the quality of their writing and their speaking skills. In mathematics, teachers have become much more effective at teaching the basics skills of numeracy, but more needs to be done to help pupils apply these skills in practical contexts. Science, art, design and technology, and information and communication technology are taught well, and teachers make good use of computers to help pupils' learning in other subjects. The teaching in all other subjects and for the youngest children is satisfactory. When additional support is provided for pupils with special educational needs, it is usually effective and helps those pupils to make progress in their learning. The few pupils who have English as an additional language receive good support, which enables them to progress as well as their classmates.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum. Planning and provision in all subjects are at least satisfactory, and the opportunities provided in English, science, art, design and technology, information and communication technology, and religious education, are good. The school offers a good range of extra-curricular activities and enriches pupils' learning experiences through educational visits and visitors.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for these pupils is satisfactory overall. Good support is provided for pupils who have additional needs in English, and this enables them to make good progress. The needs of pupils who have emotional and behavioural needs are not identified as effectively and they make unsatisfactory progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Appropriate support is provided for the small number of pupils with English as an additional language, and they make satisfactory progress in all subjects. Bilingual support teachers from the local education authority help to ensure that newly arrived pupils have full access to the curriculum.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Teachers provide good role models, but there is inconsistency in the way in which the school's new positive behaviour management policy has been implemented, and not enough is done to stop instances of unsatisfactory behaviour.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school's provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils is good. The school has a caring ethos and provides a learning environment in which the pupils feel happy and secure. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress have improved since the last inspection.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school enjoys a positive partnership with parents who are provided with very good quality information about school activities and the part they can play in its work.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The overall quality of the leadership is satisfactory. The headteacher provides calm leadership and has instigated many improvements since the last inspection. The deputy headteacher fulfils her role particularly well, providing considerable impetus and expertise. Subject coordinators are becoming more effective in fulfilling their responsibilities.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities satisfactorily. Governors take an active interest in the work of the school and help to shape its direction in a quiet, supportive way. Governors are playing an increasingly effective role as a critical friend.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school's procedures for monitoring and evaluating what it does are satisfactory. The school is looking much more critically at all aspects of school life and has identified the most important areas for development.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes appropriate use of the resources available to it. Administration arrangements are good. The principles of best value are properly implemented. The governing body understands the strengths and weaknesses of the school and has a good awareness of the need for spending to be targeted to achieve the school's aim to raise standards.
Adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources	The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good. The level of resources has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory as is the quality of the school's accommodation.

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 are happy at school and are making good progress. • It is a caring school. The teachers are helpful and supportive and know the children well. • Parents are kept well informed about what is happening in school. • Teachers are very approachable and parents appreciate the opportunity to meet the headteacher informally in the playground. • The school is a lot better now than it was. • Overall, parents are very happy with the school and the education provided for their children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is not enough challenge for the more able. • The behaviour of some pupils who occasionally disrupt lessons. • The consistency with which homework is set and the way it is marked. • The range of extra-curricular activities.
<p>[The views of parents are based on those expressed by the 9 parents who attended the parents' meeting and the 34 parents (17%) who returned the parents' questionnaire]</p>	

The inspection findings largely corroborate parents' positive views of the school. Inspectors agree that there is not enough challenge for the more able pupils in a few classes, although most teachers cater well for the differing needs of pupils. The behaviour of some pupils is unacceptable and this has an adverse effect on the learning of others. The school has a good new behaviour management policy, but it has not yet been fully understood or properly implemented by all staff. Inspectors do not agree with parents' concerns over the range of extra-curricular activities provided. Parents have conflicting views on homework. Some would like no homework to be set. Inspectors observed appropriate uses of homework during the inspection, but the school has noted parents concerns about the consistency with which homework is set and the way it is marked.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. In the National Curriculum assessment tests at the end of Key Stage 1 for the year 2001, the school's results were close to the national average in reading, below average in writing and well below average in mathematics. When compared to the results of schools in similar contexts, they were below average in reading and writing and well below average in mathematics. The results show a wide range of attainment, although around one in six pupils did not reach the national expectation of Level 2 in writing and one in eight in reading. However, one in five pupils exceeded the national expectation by achieving the higher Level 3 in reading. In mathematics, most pupils achieved the expected level, but very few pupils achieved Level 3 or within the upper ranges of Level 2. Although results have fluctuated, standards in reading and writing over the last five years have improved at a faster rate than the national trend and are better now than they were at the time of the last inspection. Standards in mathematics have shown the greatest variation, and the 2001 results were only marginally better than those achieved at the time of the last inspection in 1997.
2. At Key Stage 2, the National Curriculum assessment test results in 2001 were below the national average in mathematics and science and well below average in English. When compared to the results of schools in similar contexts, they were well below average in English and science and below average in mathematics. However, comparisons with the prior attainment of these pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 show that, overall, they made satisfactory progress through Key Stage 2. A quarter of the pupils exceeded national expectations by achieving Level 5 in mathematics and science, but few pupils achieved this level in English. However, just over a third of pupils failed to reach the nationally expected level in English and mathematics, reflecting the larger percentage of pupils with special educational needs than in previous years. By far the weakest results were obtained in writing, where only two pupils out of five achieved the expected level. The latest results, however, do not reflect the significant improvements in mathematics and science which have been made since the last inspection. In these subjects, results have improved at a much faster rate than the national trend and standards are now much higher than they were. Standards in English, however, are similar to those pertaining at the time of the last inspection. The improvements in the school's overall results were recognised last year by the presentation of a School Achievement Award.
3. Since the last inspection, the school has worked hard to improve the quality of education provided for the pupils and the standards achieved. The school sets itself challenging, but realistically achievable targets and, for the most part, has been successful in meeting them. The most recent results in English at Key Stage 2 fell short of the school's target and were a disappointment to the school, particularly in view of new initiatives they had introduced to help boost pupils' performance in the subject. Overall, however, standards within the school are improving, although the picture is somewhat obscured by the rapidly changing nature of the school's intake. The number of pupils on roll has fallen considerably since the last inspection, and the school now has a higher proportion of pupils who find learning difficult or who have special educational needs. The assessments made when children join the Reception class show that the overall level of attainment on entry is declining.
4. The skills shown by most children when they start school in the Reception class are below average for their age. Speaking and listening skills are particularly poor, although their physical development is broadly as expected. Children make satisfactory progress in the Reception class but, because of their below average start, most children do not achieve all of the expected Early Learning Goals⁴ before they start Year 1. Despite the satisfactory progress made during the Reception year, some children are still fairly immature for their age in their personal, social and emotional development. Standards in speaking and listening and some aspects of their

⁴ The Early Learning Goals set out what children should achieve by the time they reach the end of the reception year in primary school.

mathematical development continue to be below those expected. The falling numbers have enabled the school to admit younger children on a part-time basis a term before the school's normal admission age. This is having a positive impact on children's learning.

5. The inspection findings show that standards in English are below average at the end of both key stages. Overall, however, pupils are making satisfactory progress, which is an improvement since the last inspection, brought about by better planning, more thorough assessment and improved teaching. Standards in reading are sound throughout the school. The more able pupils read fluently and with enjoyment, achieving good standards by the end of Year 6. Even though they find it hard to read, the least able pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 because of the additional help which is provided for them. Good support is now provided at Key Stage 2, but this has not always been the case, and some pupils are still struggling to achieve an appropriate standard by the end of Year 6. Although many pupils in Key Stage 1 speak in clear sentences and listen attentively to the teacher's instructions, a significant number possess a very limited vocabulary, which prevents them from articulating their ideas effectively. These pupils often find it hard to listen to what is being said, answer questions with one-word answers and have difficulty in finding the vocabulary that they need to describe or explain. Speaking skills continue to be a weakness through Key Stage 2, and many pupils reach the end of the key stage without the range of language skills and vocabulary that is to be expected for their age. More planned opportunities are needed to develop pupils' speaking skills through, for example, the medium of debate, drama, formal presentations and other devices to encourage discussion in small and larger groups.
6. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards in writing are below average and, at present, few pupils produce good-quality writing of any significant length. Pupils show good motivation to write and are being taught well, but few possess a sufficiently wide vocabulary to enable them to produce imaginative writing. Long-term staff absence has also adversely affected standards attained by the pupils who are currently in Year 2. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards of writing remain below the level of national expectation and for a significant minority of pupils they are well below expected levels. Some of the more able pupils can produce good-quality writing, in well-formulated sentences, using a good range of vocabulary and reasonably accurate punctuation and spelling. However, lower-attaining pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 struggle to produce fluent writing, as they have a very limited range of vocabulary, very little concept of grammar, and experience problems in spelling words correctly. Some stimulating teaching is provided within English lessons, but greater attention needs to be given to developing pupils' writing on a broader front, particularly through the written work they produce for other subjects.
7. Standards in mathematics are below average at the end of both key stages, but are improving. The range of attainment at the end of both key stages, but particularly at Key Stage 1, is very wide, with some pupils achieving above average standards, but a larger proportion of pupils who are well below the expected level. By the end of Year 2, most pupils have a sound understanding of number, shape, space and measure, although the least able pupils still find it very hard to grasp mathematical concepts. Pupils of all ability levels, however, make good progress in their learning because teachers provide work which is appropriate to their individual needs. By the end of Year 6, two-thirds of the pupils have developed their understanding of number to an appropriate level, demonstrating the ability to add, subtract, multiply and divide using a variety of different methods both on paper and in their heads. The more able pupils demonstrate much greater confidence in their handling of numbers, but a third of the pupils are still struggling to develop their ability to handle numbers with confidence and ease because they have not received the same grounding in mental work which is now available for the younger pupils. The weakest aspect of pupils' work throughout the school is their ability to apply their numeracy skills to solving problems which are expressed in words or in practical contexts.
8. Standards in science at the end of both key stages are broadly in line with those expected nationally. Pupils make consistently good progress at Key Stage 1, because teachers are now placing a greater emphasis on investigative work, which increases the pupils' interest and motivation and leads to improvement in their skills of enquiry as well as their knowledge and understanding. The good progress is maintained in Key Stage 2 because of the well-structured planning and the generally good teaching. Pupils with special educational needs make equally good progress because of the practical nature of much of the work, and the more able pupils are suitably challenged through focused questions and individual research. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have built up a good basis of scientific knowledge and understanding. They continue to

show enthusiasm for the subject and respond well to the lively teaching they receive, trying hard to give well-reasoned explanations for why things happen as they do.

9. There have been significant improvements in the standards achieved in art since the last inspection. Standards by the end of Year 2 are well above the expected level and pupils are making very good progress. Standards are above expectations by the end of Year 6. A totally revised approach to the teaching of art, together with improvements in teachers' knowledge and confidence, has played a major part in these improvements. There have also been improvements in design and technology. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards are good and, at the end of Key Stage 2, they are broadly as expected. The wide range of products made by pupils shows that they have acquired good skills in joining and assembling materials, and sound skills in designing and evaluating their products. Some pupils could improve the way they present their written work.
10. Pupils make satisfactory progress in geography and history, and their attainment is in line with expectations for both subjects at the end of both key stages. Although pupils in Year 6 have an awareness of environmental issues, such as conservation and pollution, they are not yet able to clearly express their own views about environmental change. The historical knowledge and understanding of most pupils is typical for their age, and older pupils are able to link different periods of history. The progress of some pupils in both geography and history is restricted by their limited language skills.
11. The installation of a new computer suite has had a major impact on the way information and communication technology is taught and has led to a significant rise in the standards achieved by pupils and the use of new technology as a tool for learning in other subjects. Pupils of all abilities have made good progress in their learning, improving from the poor standards noted previously to standards, which are now very close to expectations at the end of both key stages. Pupils master the basic skills of using a computer at an early age and apply their skills well in a wide range of different contexts. By the end of Year 6, pupils show sound achievement in all aspects of the subject's curriculum, and are confident users of new technology.
12. Standards in music are in line with expectations at the end of both key stages, and pupils make satisfactory progress. The curriculum in music is enriched and standards are enhanced by the presence of peripatetic musicians who provide pupils with the opportunity to play a range of instruments, including cello, flute and clarinet, whilst members of staff have organised recorder clubs and a choir.
13. There have been some improvements in the school's provision for physical education since the last inspection, but standards achieved by the oldest pupils in gymnastics are not as good as they were. The pupils are taught well at Key Stage 1 and make good progress in harnessing their enthusiasm for physical activity and acquiring new skills. The picture here is better than that portrayed at the time of the last inspection. The standards achieved at Key Stage 2 vary considerably. In the only lesson observed in Year 6, pupils' work in gymnastics was below the expected level, whereas pupils in Year 4 demonstrated good standards in their gymnastics lesson. Nearly all pupils achieve the national expectation for swimming by the end of Year 4, and then make further progress during the summer terms in Years 5 and 6.
14. At the end of each key stage, pupils' knowledge and understanding in religious education is in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils systematically acquire a satisfactory basic knowledge and understanding of the Christian, Jewish and Islamic faiths as they progress through the school. By Year 6, most pupils are able to compare and contrast beliefs and customs, such as naming ceremonies, views on creation, places of worship and how people pray.
15. In the past, there have been significant variations in the progress made and standards achieved by different groups of pupils. This is highlighted particularly by the significant differences in the results of boys and girls at Key Stage 2 in the three years from 1998 to 2000, when the girls' results were above the national average in English, mathematics and science, whilst the boys' results were below. The differences have been far less marked at Key Stage 1. As the school has sought to improve the quality of its teaching, and introduced initiatives, such as the 'Lads and Dads Club', the differences in attainment are becoming less obvious. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is inconsistent. Some groups of pupils make good progress, whilst the progress of others is unsatisfactory. At present, the pupils identified as having moderate learning difficulties in English make good progress towards the targets set for them but, as yet, very few of the pupils

with emotional and behavioural needs have individual targets to work towards. Most of these pupils are boys, and this factor could well account for the differences in results in previous years between boys and girls. The behaviour and lack of concentration of those who do not have appropriate targets and support prevent them from making satisfactory progress. The progress of the few pupils with English as an additional language is at least in line with that of their classmates. Pupils with specific language difficulties receive good support from outside agencies, such as the bilingual learners support service. The school is becoming much more aware of the need to monitor the progress of different groups of pupils and carries out detailed analysis of a wide range of information, including baseline assessments and the performance of pupils in the National Curriculum assessment tests. Where specific needs are identified, extra support is provided.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. The positive situation with regard to pupils' attitudes, personal development, behaviour and attendance reported at the time of the 1997 inspection has not been maintained. In particular, the behaviour of a small number of pupils, and the response to this by others, has a negative effect on the rate of learning that takes place across the school. Attendance has slipped to below the national average.
17. Overall, the pupils' attitudes to learning are satisfactory. However, there are inconsistencies. Many pupils display enthusiasm in lessons, showing particular interest when working with computers and when involved in science lessons. Too frequently, however, a small but significant number of pupils display negative attitudes, by failing to concentrate on their work, or by responding inappropriately to incidents taking place elsewhere in the classroom. At Key Stage 2, in particular, there is sometimes a lack of respect for the class teacher from a small minority of pupils, which even at this early time in the school year, is unacceptable. However, most pupils do not follow the poor example of the few and continue to involve themselves in the lesson, listening carefully to the teacher and trying to do their best. In the best lessons, the pupils enjoy taking part in question and answer sessions, during which they are happy to take turns without inappropriate shouting out. They show an interest in what they are doing and readily involve themselves in whatever activity is presented to them. They enjoy conversations with each other and adults and listen with interest to what is being said, for example when reading to inspectors, or when pupils discussed with inspectors their views of the school and the part they play in its activities.
18. Behaviour throughout the school is very mixed but, overall, it is unsatisfactory, as there are too many occasions when inappropriate behaviour disrupts lessons and results in the rate of learning being less than it should be for many pupils. The concerns of a number of parents about the level of unsatisfactory behaviour within the school are, therefore, supported. For much of the time, there is an orderly and constructive atmosphere within the school, as was found at the time of the last inspection. This is particularly true for pupils in the Key Stage 1 classes. It had not been necessary to exclude any pupil, either for a fixed term or permanently, in the year prior to the inspection, but during the inspection two boys were sent home for fighting. Several instances of inappropriate behaviour in lessons were observed during the inspection, not only by pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and a few teachers have yet to develop fully effective strategies to deal with them so that disruption to the learning of others is minimised. As a result of the unsatisfactory behaviour of a small minority of pupils, always boys, the learning of the majority is disrupted. The result is that the pupils make less progress than would otherwise be the case.
19. There is social inclusion within the school, and harmonious relationships exist throughout the school community. The six pupils who have English as an additional language are fully included in all activities and are totally integrated into the school community. As found at the time of the last inspection, pupils show tolerance and respect for other people's feelings. Boys and girls generally get on well with each other, although instances were observed during the inspection when boys grouped together responded less positively to their lessons, as for example in some physical education lessons, and wanted to have little to do with girls. Except for one incident of fighting, nothing was seen to suggest that when misbehaviour occurs it is oppressive, and there is no evidence of vindictive bullying or sexism within the school. Outside the classroom environment, during break and lunchtimes, the pupils behave well. There is some boisterous behaviour, but no more than that to be expected when pupils are given the opportunity to let off steam away from the constraints of the classroom.

20. The pupils respond well to the school's provision for their personal development. They have opportunities to assume responsibility, which steadily increase through their school life. Older pupils are conscientious in fulfilling their classroom and school responsibilities. They enjoy being prefects and house captains and being part of the School Council, taking their responsibilities seriously. They readily involve themselves in charitable activities, showing recognition of the need to help those less fortunate than themselves. Overall, relationships are satisfactory, both among pupils and between pupils and adults. Many pupils relate well to each other and to their teachers, but a small minority do not show a sufficient level of awareness of how their actions affect others. Most pupils respect the values and beliefs of others, and this is apparent in the way the majority relate to each other both in lessons and elsewhere. Pupils of all ages and backgrounds mix well together at playtimes and lunchtimes.
21. Until recently, levels of attendance have been close to the national average, but in the last year they have slipped below, and this downward trend is continuing, meaning that attendance levels are now unsatisfactory. However, truancy is not a problem. The pupils are happy at school and attend when they can. Absence levels have been affected by changes in the school's admission profile, with the school having to admit some pupils who have a history of poor attendance and whose parents display a relaxed attitude to the importance of school attendance and the need to comply with school procedures. Punctuality in the morning is generally good. When instances of lateness occur, they are mostly of a minor nature and are not disruptive to lessons.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

22. The quality of the teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection. The percentage of unsatisfactory lessons is now significantly less and there are more good and very good lessons. Overall, the quality of the teaching is satisfactory. It is good at Key Stage 1. At Key Stage 2, over a third of the lessons are good and there is also some very good teaching, but there continues to be a small element of unsatisfactory teaching. Parents feel that their children are being taught well, and the inspection evidence largely endorses this perception. The school has worked hard to improve teachers' skills. It has taken advice from educational advisers, and lessons have been monitored in order to identify strengths and weaknesses. As a result, pupils are making better progress in their learning than they were at the time of the last inspection.
23. During the last inspection, the teaching of mathematics and art was judged to be unsatisfactory and teachers had insufficient knowledge of science at Key Stage 2. This is now no longer the case. There have been big improvements in all three subjects. Mathematics is being taught well at Key Stage 1 and satisfactorily at Key Stage 2. The enthusiastic and helpful leadership of the art coordinator has enabled staff to improve their own expertise in teaching art and design, and the subject is taught well throughout the school, with pupils making particularly good progress in Key Stage 1 and also in Year 4. Science is taught well throughout the school, and a particular strength is the attention given to investigative work, which motivates the pupils and helps them to learn well. Some aspects of physical education are not taught as well as they were, but the reasons for this are linked closely to the weaknesses in managing pupils' behaviour in a few classes, rather than the teachers' subject-specific skills. There are no subjects in which the teaching is unsatisfactory, and the teaching of information and communication technology, and design and technology, is good throughout the school.
24. The teaching of both English and mathematics is good at Key Stage 1 and satisfactory at Key Stage 2. The school has responded receptively to the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, which have helped teachers to become more secure and confident in their teaching methodology. This has had a positive impact on the pupils' learning, although other factors, such as the diminishing levels of attainment demonstrated by children when they enter the school, some disruption to pupils' education in Key Stage 1 through long-term staff absence, and the accumulative effect of some unsatisfactory teaching in the past, mean that the improvements in teaching have not been fully reflected in the school's overall results. Teaching during the dedicated literacy hour is generally at least sound and frequently good, but teachers do not yet make the most of opportunities to develop pupils' speaking and writing skills in other subjects. In mathematics, good attention is given to the development of pupils' ability to handle numbers, but not enough attention is given to helping them apply their mental skills in practical and problem-solving contexts. In contrast, basic skills in information and communication technology are not only taught well, but pupils are given plenty of opportunities to apply these skills in ways which benefit their learning in other subjects. In history and geography, for example, pupils access relevant

information from the Internet or CD-ROMs to help them with their projects, and pupils add the use of graphics programs on the computer to their repertoire of skills in art and design.

25. The teaching of children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. When they start school, whether in the Reception class or in the Early Birds group, the children's overall level of attainment is below that expected for their age. The quality of teaching enables the children to make satisfactory progress, but their attainment is still below the expected level by the time they start Year 1. The youngest children in the Reception class benefit from the opportunity of having a term of mornings in school provided by the Early Birds group. These children are frequently taught separately from the older Reception children by an experienced and competent nursery nurse, who provides some good opportunities for much needed interactive speaking and listening, as well as exploratory and creative development. The adults working in the Reception class have sound knowledge and understanding of the needs of children in this age group, and activities are carefully planned to ensure coverage of the six areas of learning. However, in view of such low numbers, the weekly and daily planning takes insufficient account of children's individual abilities and is not specifically related to criteria outlined in national guidance for the Foundation Stage leading to the expected Early Learning Goals. In most areas of learning, the lessons lack focus and excitement, and the adults fail to build on some good ideas. There is good emphasis, however, on helping children develop basic skills in literacy and numeracy, but the methods used to teach these are often too formal for the children's levels of achievement.
26. Teachers at Key Stage 1 and in Year 6 are generally much better than others in planning differentiated work for pupils of differing abilities. Whilst covering similar types of work, they alter the level of difficulty so that it is well matched to pupils' prior attainment, provides them with sufficient challenge and enables them to move forward in their learning. In a good mathematics lesson in Year 2, for example, pupils who had been struggling earlier in the week to understand concepts of money were given tasks which consolidated their previous learning, whilst the more able pupils extended the principles they had learnt with 1p, 2p and 5p coins, to include the full range of coinage in making up totals to £10. In this way, all pupils in the class were able to make progress at their own level, and the time was used profitably by all. In Years 3, 4 and 5, there is a tendency for all pupils to be required to carry out the same work. The least able pupils generally cope with this because they receive additional attention from the teacher, but there are times when the more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Some of the teachers' planning appears to provide work, which is differentiated according to pupils' abilities, but the planning differs only in the teachers' expectations of the quantity of work to be covered or the support to be provided, rather than the level of difficulty at which pupils are expected to work. In some classes, the teachers circulate around the class whilst pupils are working on their own, rather than using the time on the focused teaching of specific groups of pupils. This generally results in the teacher spending most of the time with the least able pupils, and those of average or above average ability do not receive the same amount of attention.
27. Pupils who are given additional support for their various needs make good, and occasionally very good, progress, due to the good teaching by support staff. Where pupils are withdrawn to work in small groups led by support staff, the lively interaction between teachers and pupils and skilful questioning techniques successfully challenge pupils to work hard and meet their targets. The staff maintain an atmosphere of enthusiasm. Those who support teachers within the classroom are also successful in ensuring that the pupils cope with the tasks given to them and are constantly motivated, thus enabling them to make good progress. In some lessons, where a few pupils who have emotional and behavioural needs are unsupported, teachers struggle, and do not always succeed, to prevent these pupils from disrupting the learning of the majority of pupils. The teachers are fully aware of the pupils within their class who may need additional support because English is not their first language, and their planning reflects the individual needs of these pupils. Appropriate, individual education plans for this relatively small group of pupils contain targets that are specific and measurable. A small number of pupils benefit from the support of outside agencies, and this support helps them to make satisfactory progress.
28. As for teaching, the quality of learning is satisfactory, but at Key Stage 1 and in a good proportion of lessons at Key Stage 2 it is good. Most pupils have positive attitudes to work, particularly in subjects, which involve practical activity, such as information and communication technology, science, art and design, music, and design and technology. Pupils are motivated in these subjects and learn well. In some classes, pupils' learning is adversely affected by the poor behaviour of a small minority of pupils, but this does not apply in every lesson, and pupils can be learning well

during one lesson and then have their learning disrupted in another. Some lessons, which promise very well, cannot be fulfilled as effectively as planned because time has to be spent on dealing with problems rather than helping pupils to learn. Most pupils apply themselves well to their tasks and maintain good levels of concentration, which helps them to benefit from the teaching, which is normally carefully planned and prepared. In most lessons, the teachers ensure that pupils are aware of the objectives of the lesson, which helps pupils to understand what they are doing and why. However, the wording of the lesson objectives is sometimes couched in terms which are difficult for pupils to understand. Pupils' effort and productivity are linked closely to their teachers' expectations and, where these are high, the pupils' productivity is also good and they make good progress in their learning. In Key Stage 1, and in some lessons in Key Stage 2, there is greater rigour in the teaching, and work is clearly differentiated to cater for faster and slower learners. The teachers set very clear expectations as to how pupils should behave and respond in lessons, and they ensure that these expectations are met. The same rigour is not always evident in Key Stage 2 and, in some lessons, not enough challenge is given to the more able pupils or enough support to those who struggle.

29. Most teachers use an appropriate variety of teaching methods. Good examples were observed during the inspection of teachers using information and communication technology to help motivate pupils to learn. In Year 3, some imaginative starting points for a lesson, such as a carefully prepared religious education lesson in which the classroom was set out for pupils to experience a Jewish meal, succeed in capturing pupils' interest, but weak classroom management does not always allow the full potential to be reflected in pupils' learning. In the better lessons, teachers make skilful use of questioning to help pupils to think about what they are doing. In a good mathematics lesson in Year 5, for example, the teacher asked various pupils to explain how they arrived at their answers, which not only consolidated the understanding of these pupils, but also helped others to discover new ways of approaching a problem. Some teachers are good at analysing what pupils do well and then sharing this analysis in ways which help others to learn. In a good physical education lesson in Year 2, for example, the teacher pointed out good features of pupils' performances, explaining why they were good. In so doing, she made her expectations very clear to others, so that they knew how they could improve their own performance. Occasionally, pupils were asked to produce their own analysis, which helped them to reflect on their learning. Pupils' work is frequently marked with great care and attention. In the best examples, the teachers comment positively on pupils' work, but also give them points for improvement. The marking of work in Year 6 is particularly thorough. A general weakness throughout the school, however, is the attention given to marking the quality of pupils' writing in subjects other than English. As a result, pupils perpetuate careless mistakes and many opportunities are missed to help them improve the standard of their writing.
30. The weakest aspect of the teaching in some classes is the way teachers manage pupils' behaviour, particularly when the class contains a small number of pupils whose behaviour is potentially disruptive. Some teachers implement the school's new behaviour policy very well. In Year 2, for example, the teacher is very good at accentuating positive aspects of the pupils' work, yet, at the same time, is very firm when pupils overstep the mark. In this way, pupils receive plenty of encouragement, but also know exactly what is expected of them. In a few classes, the teachers endeavour to adopt a positive approach, but end up praising pupils for work, which is mediocre in quality or where little effort has been expended. In their efforts to avoid negative comments, pupils rarely receive constructive criticism of what they have done, and poor behaviour and attitudes pass without comment. As a result, pupils receive confusing messages and the impression that, no matter what they do, they will obtain the teacher's approval. In these classes, pupils' learning is at times disrupted by poor behaviour which is not dealt with firmly enough. Allied to the management of pupils is the use of time. The best lessons are characterised by a brisk pace and pupils are expected to make good use of the time available. In a good mathematics lesson in Year 5, for example, pupils were given very clear indication of how long they had in which to complete their task and how much they were expected to achieve. This helped them to maintain their concentration. In a few lessons, however, pupils are allowed to work at their own pace and are rarely challenged, even if they produce very little work. Such lessons are also frequently characterised by too much noise, which distracts pupils from working as well as they could.
31. As at the time of the last inspection, some parents continue to be concerned about the provision of homework. The school has revised its policy on homework and parents have been given specific guidance on how they can support their children's learning at home. This is an improvement, in direct response to previous criticisms. However, parents comment that there is inconsistency in the

way the policy is implemented, that some teachers encourage homework more than others and that homework is frequently not marked. Some parents do not wish their children to receive any homework. Although examples were observed during the inspection of purposeful and appropriate use of homework, the school is clearly not yet united in its response to this issue, and the potential benefit of work given to pupils to complete at home is not yet being fully realised.

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

32. The overall quality of the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils is satisfactory. The school's curriculum is sufficiently broad and balanced, and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. The provision for religious education meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus, and there is a daily act of collective worship for all pupils other than those withdrawn by their parents. There are comprehensive and well-developed policies for personal, social and health education, including citizenship, sex education and drugs awareness.
33. At the time of the last inspection, the breadth and balance of the curriculum were satisfactory, but schemes and policies were not linked to National Curriculum attainment targets and there was no clear overview of the curriculum. Appropriate steps have been taken to remedy these weaknesses and the school now provides a carefully considered framework of policies and schemes of work for all areas of the curriculum. Planning and provision in all subjects are at least satisfactory, and are good in English, science, art and design, design and technology, information and communication technology, and religious education. Curricular provision is now good, and this major improvement has been coordinated very successfully by the deputy headteacher who, in her role as curriculum manager, has developed a long-term overview of curriculum policy. The school has refined and developed its long, medium and short-term planning, and all policies and schemes of work have been updated to meet the requirements of Curriculum 2000. Curriculum coordinators provide good leadership in science, art, music, religious education, and design and technology, and very good leadership in English and information and communication technology. A recent audit carried out by the curriculum manager, with support from the local authority, confirmed that each subject is given an appropriate time allocation.
34. The school has recognised the importance of pupils' personal, social and health education by appointing an enthusiastic coordinator for this area of learning. Although only recently appointed, she has already developed a comprehensive scheme of work that can be taught either as a discrete subject or as part of the normal curriculum. It deals with a whole range of issues such as bullying, growing and changing, and the importance of caring for both themselves and for others. The coordinator has also implemented policies and schemes of work for citizenship, sex and relationships and drugs awareness as part of the overall provision for personal, social and health education. Regular circle-time⁵ sessions contribute to this area of learning and are beginning to make a significant contribution to the development of the right sort of attitudes and relationships within school.
35. The good implementation and high priority given to the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has begun to make a positive impact on pupils' learning, and standards of attainment in Key Stage 1 have risen steadily since the last inspection. Skills are reinforced on a regular basis and are taught in a well-planned and structured way. Teachers feel confident with the structure of the frameworks, which help them to develop a consistent approach to teaching the curriculum. The thorough approach to monitoring ensures that teaching and learning are effective and are appropriate to the needs of the pupils.
36. Overall, the school is effective in providing a fully inclusive curriculum, and all pupils are given equal access to the statutory curriculum and all other activities provided. The school has a policy for equal opportunities, and each curriculum policy has within it a reference to equality opportunity. Although the school does not have a comprehensive written policy for supporting pupils with English as an additional language, it does include within its stated aims the desire to eradicate discrimination of any form and to create a community in which all of its members are valued as individuals. The school closely monitors these pupils' progress, which is judged to be at least

⁵ Circle time is an activity where pupils are able to discuss certain matters as a class, following strict rules about listening to others and taking turns to speak.

satisfactory. Bilingual staff from the local education authority support the school when dealing with newly arrived pupils with English as an additional language.

37. Overall, the school makes satisfactory provision for pupils who have special educational needs. The provision is good for those who have moderate and specific learning difficulties related to literacy skills and for those with speech and language needs, including pupils with specific statements of need. For all these pupils, the school uses detailed assessments to plan individual education programmes with specific, relevant targets against which good progress is made. The formal identification of pupils with emotional and behavioural needs has been much less rigorous, and the provision for their needs is not satisfactorily addressed. Most of these pupils do not yet have individual plans or targets and, consequently, their progress in many subjects is unsatisfactory.
38. The school has recently produced a very comprehensive guide for staff who teach children in the Foundation Stage. This enables yearly and termly planning for specific topics that include a good balance of activities in all the six areas of learning. Formal assessment procedures are good. On entry to the Early Birds group, the school uses its own system for assessment and shortly after they begin full-time in Reception, children are assessed against the local authority's baseline assessment scheme. As yet, on-going progress is not regularly recorded and neither the detailed and accurate formal assessments, nor the on-going assessments are sufficiently reflected in lesson planning to ensure activities are well matched to challenge the children and maximise their learning.
39. The school has maintained the positive situation with regard to extra-curricular activities found at the time of the last inspection. It provides a good range of activities that are enjoyed by the pupils. There is something for everyone, including a variety of sporting activities, music tuition and performance opportunities, computer activities and residential visits. Visitors, such as artists, theatre groups, the local vicar, animal service and a representative from the Kenyan Mission, have been welcomed into the school. These, together with the school's particularly good links with the local secondary school that involve a variety of exchange visits and cross-phase links that cement relationships, and its links with local colleges and with the local community, enrich the curriculum and make a good contribution to the pupils' personal development, as well as to their learning in subjects.
40. The school's provision for the pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Provision for their moral development is less secure. Provision for pupils' spiritual development, including the quality of collective worship, is satisfactory. It has improved since the last inspection when it was judged that there was a need to ensure that pupils' spiritual development was fostered effectively in lessons and assemblies. Statutory requirements for a daily act of worship are met, and spiritual development is promoted effectively by opportunities for reflection on assembly themes, for example by using a lit candle as a focus, and by fostering an awareness of the beliefs and views of others. There are links with the local parish church, with the vicar visiting the school regularly to lead the act of collective worship. Teachers implement the school's policy for spiritual development in lessons. In the best lessons, the pupils are given time to reflect and consider what they have learnt and how it impacts on their daily life. Pupils gain knowledge and understanding of their own and other people's beliefs and feelings through religious education. Overall, the school is working effectively to promote spiritual awareness, with a consequent positive impact on the development of the pupils.
41. The school's new positive behaviour policy aims to develop attitudes of self-respect, trust, honesty and self-discipline. Teaching, support and ancillary staff provide good role models for pupils. The school has a clear moral code that encourages pupils to behave responsibly and most pupils distinguish clearly between right and wrong. They learn about being honest and they show respect for property and the things around them. Unfortunately, despite this, too many pupils have yet to understand the need to fully respect each other's feelings and talents, and to recognise the impact of their actions on others. A small number of the pupils, but too many, take advantage of some insecure or inappropriate management strategies by some teachers and disrupt lessons to the detriment of the majority.
42. Pupils' social development is encouraged in a number of ways. School assemblies provide opportunities to show consideration for others, to empathise, listen to others and learn to respect their views. The pupils are frequently given the opportunity to work together in pairs and in larger

groups, in team games and sports coaching, and most do so in a satisfactory way. Relationships between adults and pupils are secure and underpin much of the work of the school. The pupils are polite to visitors and to other members of the school community, showing an awareness of the needs of those less fortunate than themselves, when, for example they involve themselves in charitable activities. They are encouraged to care for their environment and do so in a sensible and mature way. The pupils undertake a wide range of responsibilities and duties that promote their social development, such as when pupils from Year 6 work independently of teachers to organise a computer club for pupils in Year 1, or when going away on residential field trips.

43. Provision for the pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. The range of extra-curricular activities for pupils is good, and the school makes provision for pupils to receive instrumental tuition, although there is a charge for this. Pupils in Year 6 enjoy visits to the theatre in support of the curriculum. The school is raising pupils' awareness of cultural traditions through a good variety of displays around the school and through the curriculum, for example, by teaching about notable artists in art and design lessons, and by telling traditional stories and poems in English. There are also satisfactory opportunities for pupils to appreciate cultures other than their own, such as learning about Judaism and Sikhism in religious education. There are occasions when visitors come to school to share their first-hand experiences of other traditions and cultures. However, although pupils receive valuable knowledge of their own and others' beliefs through religious education, the celebration of festivals and from geography topics, the pupils rarely visit places of cultural interest in the region.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. The school has improved its provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils since the last inspection. At that time, most aspects of the school's provision were judged to be satisfactory. They are now good. The weakness in providing more opportunities for independent research, problem solving and investigation has been overcome, particularly in science. Inspection evidence supports the views of parents that the school is a caring one that provides a safe and supportive environment.
45. School staff and governors, who undertake regular risk assessments, have proper regard for the health and safety of the school community. Effective supervision ensures that the physical well being of all is protected. First-aid arrangements and the school's procedures for dealing with the very occasional accident are secure, and appropriate records are maintained. There are good procedures for liaison with parents when necessary. Fire safety arrangements are satisfactory, and no health and safety hazards were observed during the inspection.
46. At this early stage in the school year, the staff are starting to get to know their pupils. This, together with shared information from previous teachers' experiences, is enabling them to begin to respond sensitively and positively to individual needs. All pupils, whatever their circumstances, are provided with support that recognises their individual learning needs. There is a supportive atmosphere within the school, especially for the youngest children, which aids learning. Lunchtime supervisory staff, who relate well to the pupils, provide effective support during lunchtimes that has a positive effect on behaviour and safety. The pupils are happy at school and confidently turn to adults when they need help or advice.
47. Child protection arrangements are good. They meet statutory requirements. All members of staff understand their duty to be aware of the need to be attentive, and they undertake this responsibility conscientiously and well.
48. In response to a recognised deterioration in attendance levels, the school has recently strengthened its procedures for monitoring and improving attendance. They have improved since the time of the last inspection and are now good. The school tries hard to improve its attendance rate. There is close monitoring of individual attendance, undertaken by the deputy headteacher, and it is not for want of trying that the school has been unable to raise overall attendance levels further than has been the case so far. Records of attendance are properly maintained and comply with statutory requirements. Procedures for recording lateness are rigorous. There is good liaison with the school's educational social worker, and there are good procedures for contacting parents in the case of unexpected absence.

49. The measures that are in place for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour have some good features. The school's policies have recently been completely rewritten. They are well focused on the need to promote good behaviour, and there is good definition of rewards and sanctions. These are well understood and accepted by the great majority of the pupils. However, there is inconsistency in the implementation of the written procedures. Some teachers have a very clear understanding of the new procedures, which are proving very effective in establishing positive relationships and good behaviour within the classroom. Some teachers, however, do not have secure classroom management strategies or fail to establish a positive relationship with the pupils within their classes. In these cases, the new procedures have not been fully understood. On occasions, some teachers fail to deal properly with inappropriate behaviour as it starts. They then have to halt the lesson to restore order, which is unfair to the majority of pupils who behave well and are anxious to learn. In some classes, there is too frequent use of praise when not deserved, which does little to impose a sense of order or reinforce positive values. As a result of these inconsistencies, which include some weaknesses in the proper recording of unsatisfactory behaviour, there are behaviour problems in a number of classes that reduce the quality of the learning environment.
50. The school's arrangements for the monitoring of pupils' personal development are satisfactory overall. Formal arrangements, including teachers' records and summaries in the pupils' annual reports, are satisfactory. Pupils' individual personal files and achievement folders provide useful supporting evidence. Informal arrangements for supporting pupils' personal development, which benefit from teachers' knowledge of pupils as individuals, are good.
51. The support provided for pupils with special educational needs is inconsistent. Good, and some very good, support is given to pupils whose needs have been identified and targets set, but there are a significant number of pupils who do not receive adequate support. Procedures for the identification and monitoring of pupils with special needs are good and these are well implemented for pupils with moderate learning and specific speech or language needs. However, they have not been so rigorously implemented for pupils with emotional and behavioural needs. Teachers and support staff are well aware of pupils' specific targets and regularly take part in the review process, ensuring good progress is made. Pupils who do not have individual targets do not benefit from a similar support system and, therefore, their progress, or lack of it, is not monitored as regularly as it should be. Pupils who work with support staff are generally aware of their targets, and the school is currently discussing how to help pupils with emotional and behavioural need to become involved in setting realistic targets to modify their behaviour.
52. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good, and this is a significant improvement since the last inspection, which highlighted the urgent need for formalised assessments to meet the needs of individual pupils. The school has produced comprehensive guidelines for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and all teachers follow these consistently. There are very effective procedures for assessment in the core subjects⁶, particularly in English, where regular monitoring, sampling and levelling of work takes place. Teachers make good use of pupils' tracking sheets, and all pupils are aware of, and encouraged to reflect upon, their individual targets in reading, writing and mathematics. Assessment folders for each pupil, containing examples of their work in English, mathematics and science, give an accurate guide to their progress. All subject coordinators have developed, or are developing, assessment procedures within their curriculum areas. Where these are in place, they are used to guide future planning and to set individual targets for pupils. Assessment information, including detailed analysis of National Curriculum test results, is reported to governors on a regular basis to help them in monitoring school effectiveness and improvement.
53. During the last two years, the assessment coordinator has worked hard to raise the profile of assessment within the school. She has introduced a range of assessment procedures, which include the use of baseline assessments for children on entry to Reception, and the results of the National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science for most other classes. Detailed analysis of this assessment information has been shared with all members of staff and governors and now forms the basis for setting targets for individual pupils and classes. Staff are now much more aware of the ability and potential of their pupils in relation to national standards, can identify

⁶ The core subjects are English, mathematics and science.

areas of weakness within the school and plan collectively for improvement. This is good use of analysis for raising standards of attainment within school.

54. Pupils, parents and governors have the opportunity to participate in the assessment process. All pupils are aware of their individual targets in English and mathematics and this is soon to be extended to include targets for science. These targets are set at the beginning of each academic year and are reviewed by parents and pupils at the February parents' meeting. Governors are regularly provided with information based on data analysis and are, therefore, able to share in school improvement.
55. The assessment and monitoring of pupils with special educational needs in language and literacy, and of those with English as an additional language is good. The quality of record keeping is thorough and these pupils receive good support from teaching assistants and from outside agencies such as the bilingual learners support service where appropriate.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

56. The small number of parents who responded to the parents' questionnaire, the nine parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting, and those who met with inspectors during the inspection, have very positive views about the school, which they think is a very good one. Parents now have a much higher opinion of the school than was indicated in their responses to the questionnaire when the school was inspected in 1997. A very high level of satisfaction was expressed about almost all aspects of the school's provision for their children. Parents are comfortable approaching the school when they need information or when they have concerns. They are unanimous in their views that their children are expected to work hard and, as a consequence, make good progress, that teaching is good, that the school is well led and managed and that their children are helped to become mature individuals. A small number of parents have concerns about the school's homework policy, the provision of extra-curricular activities, and the behaviour of a small number of the pupils. Inspection evidence supports many of the views expressed by parents, particularly the negative impact of the unsatisfactory behaviour of a small, but significant, number of pupils. There is no evidence that homework is inappropriate, and there is no weakness in the provision of extra-curricular activities, which is judged to be good.
57. The school's liaison with parents is good. The links between home and school are supported by a home-school agreement that provides for a commitment by all to the improvement of standards. The school encourages parents and other helpers to participate in its work. Parents support fund-raising events, and a number of parents help directly in school. Parental support for school assemblies and attendance at parents' evenings to discuss their children's attainment and progress are good. Initiatives, such as the 'Lads and Dads Club' for reading support, computer courses for parents and the parent-run Toddler Group, cement relationships, encourage involvement and promote learning both for parents and children alike.
58. The quality of information provided formally by the school is very good. It has improved considerably since the last inspection when a key issue was the need to make sure that parents play a full role in the education of their children by improving communications so that they know what work their children are covering and what homework is required. Newsletters, the curriculum information supplied, and a variety of liaison activities held throughout the year keep parents very well informed about school activities. There are regular opportunities, both formal and informal, for parents to meet with teachers to discuss their children's progress. The headteacher makes himself available at any time to meet with parents, and teachers are happy to meet with parents informally before or after school, or by appointment to ensure availability due to teaching commitments. The school prospectus is a well-organised, very comprehensive, user-friendly document that gives parents all the information to which they are entitled. The governors' annual report to parents provides them with much to interest them. However, it is weak on providing information about the facilities for disabled pupils, and the information about the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs is brief.
59. Parents are provided with regular opportunities to be informed of their children's progress throughout the year and annually through a written report. Whilst there is some variation from teacher to teacher, the quality of reports is good overall, with some very good practice displayed at the top of the school. Statutory reporting requirements are met. Though produced from a computerised databank, teachers try hard to make them individual, and many reflect much thought

by teachers. They provide parents with information on what their child has done and can do and, for English, mathematics and science, how this compares with that expected for their age. Elsewhere in the report, there is less information about how attainment compares with that expected elsewhere. A general comments section is used well by teachers, and the pupils themselves comment on their progress, often quite perceptively, showing a good understanding of the learning targets set for them.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

60. The overall quality of the leadership is satisfactory, and there are some significant strengths. Following an evaluation of the report from the school's last inspection, the school was declared to have serious weaknesses. Since that time, under the calm leadership of the headteacher, the school has carefully and methodically set about improving the quality of education provided. Good progress was made between the last inspection and the school's first review visit, eighteen months later. The pace of change has increased since the appointment of the current deputy headteacher, who has provided considerable impetus and expertise and has fulfilled her delegated roles extremely effectively.
61. Overall, the improvement since the last inspection has been good. The school tackled its key issues, and those raised in subsequent monitoring visits, well. The most notable improvements have been in the quality of teaching. There are now many more good or better lessons and far fewer unsatisfactory lessons. As a result, standards are improving throughout the school and, last year, the school received a school achievement award in recognition of the way standards had risen. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are much improved. The headteacher and senior staff are more active in monitoring what is happening, and they now evaluate the progress and effectiveness of school development plan. The provision for promoting pupils' spiritual development is improved. The school now provides a good range of information for parents. Pupils are given more opportunities for independent research, problem solving and investigation, although further progress could still be made in this area. Improvements have come, despite the increasing amount of paper work, which the headteacher has to deal with in addition to the complexities of running the school.
62. Subject coordinators are starting to fulfil their responsibilities much more effectively than in the past. Some subjects, such as English and information and communication technology, are led particularly well. Although standards in English still need to be improved, various initiatives have been implemented and staff are more consistent in their approach to teaching the subject. Standards in, and the use of, information and communication technology were identified as areas of considerable concern during the school's first review visit, but the current coordinator has worked very hard to bring about significant improvements, helped considerably by the installation of a new computer suite. Not all coordinators are as effective in the leadership they give to other staff, and there is still room for further improvement in the way coordinators monitor standards of teaching and learning within their subject areas.
63. Staff receive much clearer guidance through the school's policies than was the case before. The school shows its commitment to equality of opportunity through a well-formulated policy, and additional support is provided for pupils who require it. The leadership provided by the special educational needs coordinator is satisfactory. There are good procedures, records and organisation for pupils with communication and language needs, but the needs of some pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are not dealt with as effectively as they should be.
64. As at the time of the last inspection, the school has a very supportive governing body. It is proud of the school, and its members show an active interest in all aspects of its work. They liaise closely with the school, offer support and monitor developments in provision and standards. Governors are properly involved in the work of the school both as members of various committees, such as those for finance, curriculum development and personnel, and as individuals, properly undertaking their responsibilities for literacy, numeracy and special needs as well as link activities. They are provided with very comprehensive reports from the headteacher that inform them very well about the school's activities and the opportunities open to it. As a result, they are in a good position to judge the strengths and weaknesses of the school, though there is rather more attention paid to its strengths than weaknesses. Governors fulfil their statutory duties fully, helping to shape the direction of the school in a quiet, supportive way. The lack of clear criteria for judging whether major decisions on resource use are cost effective, identified by the last inspection, has been

addressed positively, and governors are now much more aware of their responsibilities in this direction.

65. The school's procedures for monitoring and evaluating what it does have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory, with some strong features and some weaknesses which still remain. The headteacher monitors teaching regularly, keeping careful note of observations and providing useful feedback to teachers. Although some weaknesses in teaching have been identified, appropriate action has not always been taken to rectify them. Nevertheless, improvements to the quality of teaching are noticeable and staff are willing to reflect on their own practice. The deputy headteacher also plays a crucial role in monitoring the quality of teaching and providing guidance for staff. Some coordinators have had the opportunity to monitor teaching within their subject area and have found this helpful in raising their awareness of what is happening through the school. It is part of the school's planned development to enable all coordinators to have the opportunity to monitor teaching within their subject areas. The school's procedures for performance management are sound.
66. As a result of its monitoring program, the school is looking much more critically at all aspects of school life and has identified the most important areas for development. The school uses a good system for drawing up the school development plan, in which aspects are identified for maintenance, improvement or change, and which helps the school to identify its main priorities. The action taken over the last few years to develop the school has been good. With the positive approach shown by the staff, the school has good capacity for further improvement.
67. The school has satisfactory procedures for ensuring that the financial resources available to it, which are higher than the national average for primary schools, properly support the educational needs of its pupils. There is a clear cycle of financial planning, linked to the school's improvement plan, and the monitoring of expenditure is secure. Overall, the picture is much the same as when inspected previously, when financial planning and control were said to be sound.
68. Planned financial reserve levels are low but the governors, well advised by the headteacher, have proper regard for the use of reserves. They are aware of the implications of falling number of pupils on roll, and their decisions are taken against this background. They are taking a variety of actions, such as the introduction of the 'Thorns Fun Club', which provides child-care facilities before and after school, and the admittance of 'Early Birds' to offer pre-school experience in place of a nursery, to promote the number of pupils on roll. These actions, and the prudent contingency planning that is in place, aim to make sure that, as far as possible, the school's finances will be sufficient to ensure the continuation of its present strategies. Expenditure has been targeted to benefit pupils' attainment and progress directly by maintaining staffing levels, providing additional learning resources and creating an improved working environment.
69. Governors, especially those directly involved in financial matters, feel ownership of the budget. There is a satisfactory identification of priorities related to improving the quality of education and raising standards. Though dependent upon the headteacher's provision of information about how his budget proposals have been arrived at and the strategies behind them, governors' involvement in the school's annual strategic planning day enables them to be fully involved and to make a positive contribution.
70. The use of the specific funds element of the school's finances, and other additional funding, including a grant from the New Opportunities Fund, is well focused. It makes a positive impact on the quality of learning provision for the pupils who are supported, such as those who receive extra support to address special educational or language needs.
71. The school's overall administration arrangements, and the day-to-day control of its finances, are good. It was a strength of the school when previously inspected and it remains so. The school office is well equipped and makes very effective use of new technology to support its work. Effective use is made of the information available from the school's computerised management system for monitoring and there are good financial and administrative procedures in place that allow the very committed school secretary to make a significant contribution to the effective running of the school. There were only minor recommendations made as a result of the school's most recent audit, none of which remain a matter of concern. The positive picture at the time of the last inspection has been maintained. Elsewhere, there is a strong commitment to the use of new technology. In addition to the support of administrative activities, the school has moved to fully

embrace the benefits of information and communication technology across all aspects of school life.

72. Within the governing body, effectively supported by the headteacher, the principles of best value are applied in a satisfactory way. The proper implementation of these procedures means that the school's spending is evaluated and targeted to ensure that the quality of education provided for the pupils is consistent with the school's development planning. Governors have made good progress in their understanding of the principles of best value since the last inspection reported that they were not always sure that major decisions were cost-effective. They are now playing an increasingly effective role as a 'critical friend'. Governors question the school's performance using a variety of information to inform them about how the school's performance compares with what is expected and what is achieved elsewhere. They are aware of the need to obtain best value in purchasing services and resources and have good procedures for ensuring that value is obtained. Although a weaker element, governors are aware of the need to challenge what is going on and they are beginning to do so with increasing rigour. There is a need for governors to ensure that they are taking a broad enough view of the most effective way of improving standards by, for example, being aware of the behaviour control problems being faced by some teachers and the implications of these on the standards achieved.
73. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum has improved since the last inspection and is now good. The school places a high priority on the provision of teaching and support staff. The teachers are appropriately qualified with a suitable range of teaching experience, to properly support the needs of all pupils in the school, especially those with special educational and language needs. Staff are deployed well, and the school is fortunate in being able to allow its very capable deputy headteacher to provide focused support wherever needed rather than having a class of her own. This is very effective use of a deputy who can lead by example, demonstrating best practice to the whole of the school community. Pupils with special educational needs or others with identified needs are well supported in class by suitably experienced staff. All members of staff are committed to the well-being and support of the pupils. They work well as a team and, in their various ways, make a contribution to the effective running of the school that enhances the quality of education it provides. Although the school is fully staffed at present, pupils in Year 1 last year experienced considerable disruption to their education through the long-term absence of their class teacher.
74. The accommodation is satisfactory and adequate for the delivery of the National Curriculum. The school presents a welcoming and generally stimulating environment that facilitates learning. Provision for the disabled is satisfactory. There are some external maintenance problems, but internally the building is well maintained by the school caretaker who, together with the cleaning staff, works hard to provide a clean, tidy and attractive environment in which learning can take place. The Reception class provides a high quality setting for children, helping them to settle happily into their school life. Elsewhere, classrooms are of reasonable size, generally bright and airy, and provide adequate facilities for the effective delivery of the curriculum. Displays brighten the school and, in some classes, there are very stimulating displays that promote learning well. Specialist teaching areas, such as the newly installed computer suite and the school hall, complement the classroom provision and support learning effectively. Good use is made of a number of temporary buildings, although their quality is not as good as in the main school building. The location of the library in one of these buildings is inconvenient and reduces its effectiveness.
75. There is sufficient playground space, divided into lower and upper school areas, for the size of the school. It is of good quality, with provision for pupils to sit and talk quietly. Children in the Foundation Stage have satisfactory access to outdoor play facilities. Well-maintained grounds and a small wildlife area enhance the appearance of the school and its educational provision.
76. Recent expenditure on learning resources has been well directed. Overall provision remains satisfactory as previously. The deficiencies in art resources that were identified previously have been overcome and there have been a number of improvements in other subjects as a result of well-directed financial investment. No subject is under-resourced, and there is very good provision for science, art and design, and information and communication technology, with good provision for design and technology, and for children in the Foundation Stage.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

77. In order to improve the quality of education provided and the standards pupils achieve, the governors, headteacher and staff should work together to:

- θ Improve standards in English*, particularly in speaking and writing, by:
 - providing more planned opportunities to develop pupils' speaking skills through the medium of drama, debate, formal presentations and other devices to encourage discussion in small and larger groups;
 - ensuring that opportunities are taken in subjects, such as history or geography, for pupils to take up, enact and sustain different roles;
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills within the context of other subjects;
 - ensuring that pupils learn from their mistakes whenever and in whatever context they produce writing.

[Paragraphs: Writing: 1, 2, 6, 24, 29, 97-108, 123, 135, 136, 139, 140, 141, 144, 146, 147; Speaking: 4, 5, 24, 80, 82, 83, 90, 97-108, 171]

- θ Bring further improvements to the quality of the teaching, so that all classes receive consistently good quality lessons. In particular, attention should be given to improving the following aspects in some classes:

- raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are able to achieve;
- ensuring that planning takes into account the differing needs of pupils, so that all pupils are sufficiently challenged;
- making the best use of time by maintaining a brisk pace to lessons and ensuring that pupils are fully occupied with worthwhile tasks;
- ensuring that the marking of pupils work helps them to identify what they need to do to improve and that they learn from their mistakes.

[Paragraphs: 21-31, 62, 65, 79, 81, 83, 87, 89, 91-95, 106, 116-119, 139-141, 152-153, 167-169, 173]

- θ Ensure that all staff implement the school's new behaviour management policy consistently and that more effective support is provided for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, by ensuring that:

- all staff have a clear understanding of the school's new policy and how to implement it;
- clear boundaries are set for pupils and ensuring that these are enforced;
- praise is only given when it is really merited;
- the needs of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are identified and that such pupils are provided with appropriate support;
- the learning of the majority is not adversely affected by the poor behaviour of the minority.

[Paragraphs: 15-19, 23, 27, 28, 30, 37, 41, 49, 51, 56, 63, 72, 107, 116, 119, 129, 131, 140, 146, 159, 162, 166-168]

* These issues have already been identified as priorities in the school's development plan.

78. Other issues which should be considered by the school for inclusion in the action plan:

- helping pupils to apply their numeracy skills to problem-solving [*paragraphs 7, 115, 116, 122, 125, 136*];
- making better use of the school library [*paragraphs: 74, 103*];
- improving the level of attendance [*paragraphs 16, 21, 48*].

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	63
Number of formal discussion with staff, governors, other adults and pupils [In addition to this figure, there were many informal discussions with staff, other adults and pupils]	27

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	5	28	25	5	0	0
Percentage	0	8	44	40	8	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	–	195
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	–	22

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	–	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	–	65

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	5.9	School data	0.1
National comparative data	5.6	National comparative data	0.4

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	14	16	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	12	13
	Girls	13	13	15
	Total	26	25	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	86 (79)	83 (79)	94 (83)
	National	84 (82)	86 (83)	91 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	13	13
	Girls	13	15	15
	Total	26	28	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	87 (79)	94 (83)	93 (88)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	22	15	37

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	12	18
	Girls	9	11	12
	Total	24	23	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	65 (71)	62 (66)	81 (83)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	12	14
	Girls	11	11	11
	Total	25	23	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	67 (74)	62 (82)	68 (90)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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	1
Indian	1
Pakistani	5
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	188
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.3
Average class size	27.85

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	136

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	–
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	–

Total number of education support staff	–
Total aggregate hours worked per week	–

Number of pupils per FTE adult	–
--------------------------------	---

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
	£
Total income	487,889
Total expenditure	489,315
Expenditure per pupil	2224.16
Balance brought forward from previous year	36,692
Balance carried forward to next year	35,266

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2.0
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.5
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	195
Number of questionnaires returned	34
Percentage of questionnaires returned	17.4%

Percentage of responses in each category⁷

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school	71	29	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school	65	35	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good	47	50	3	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home	36	30	18	6	9
The teaching is good	68	32	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on	65	29	3	0	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem	74	24	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best	65	35	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents	50	38	6	0	6
The school is well led and managed	50	50	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible	41	59	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons	38	21	32	3	6

⁷ Because of rounding, percentages may not add up to 100.

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

79. The school is steadily improving the provision for children in the Foundation Stage, and satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. Although there has been no significant change in the quality of teaching, which remains as satisfactory, the school has worked hard to implement the new national programme for children in nurseries and Reception classes, and now provides a well-balanced programme of activities. However, staff are not, as yet, making full use of their good assessments of children's abilities to match these activities carefully to the needs of individual children.
80. Most children start school with many areas of their development below what is expected for their age. Their speaking and listening skills are particularly poor, although physical development is broadly as expected. This is confirmed by the initial assessments carried out with these young children and shows a change since the last inspection, when attainment on entry to Reception was judged as average. Since the last inspection, the numbers of children joining the Reception class have fallen considerably, and the school is now able to admit children, on a part-time basis, a term early. This has a positive impact on children's learning. The quality of the teaching in each area of learning is satisfactory and most children make satisfactory progress in the Reception class. However, because of their below average start, most children do not achieve all of the expected Early Learning Goals before they start Year 1.

Personal, social and emotional development

81. Nearly all the children enter the school with immature skills in personal and social development. By the time they start Year 1, they have achieved the Early Learning Goals in some areas, but in others most children are still working towards them. For example, although all the children are capable of getting changed independently, as seen in a physical education lesson, a few children in a small class of 16 are reluctant to leave carers in the mornings, do not join in group activities and spend a great deal of time sitting watching. This was seen in several different sessions. The adults encourage children to take turns and to become aware of being part of a group, for example, lining up when leaving the classroom and putting their hand up to answer questions, and most children follow instructions well. However, there is a tendency for the adults to be over-directive and deny the children opportunities for independence. Although the children continue to mix well with the older children at playtimes, they are more immature in many aspects of their personal, social and emotional development than reported at the last inspection. This is reflective of their overall lower attainment when starting school.

Communication, language and literacy

82. The adults appropriately recognise the need to emphasise the importance of communication, language and literacy in their planning. Many children have poor communication skills when they start school and find it difficult to sit and listen for more than a few minutes. They do enjoy listening to short stories, joining in with rhymes and songs, and are aware that written words convey meaning. Adults plan good sessions to use these activities to develop children's speaking and listening skills, but then, frequently, do too much talking and give insufficient opportunity for the children to develop their language and communication skills.
83. The oldest children have already been introduced to some elements of the literacy hour, through the teacher sharing and developing a story from a large picture book. This encourages the children to listen carefully, but opportunities are frequently missed to develop the children's thinking and to extend their speaking skills. The children's answers and ideas are not used sufficiently to add further challenge and interest. During the inspection, the formal follow-up writing activity, again based on the structure of the National Literacy Strategy, and leading on from the story, encouraged the children to have a go at writing, but was inappropriate for many of the children at their stage of learning. Several of them were expected to stay at this activity for too long, which resulted in a loss of concentration. Although the teacher chatted pleasantly with children about their work, again opportunities were missed to really extend the children's thinking and speaking.

84. At least half of the oldest group can copy their name with well-formed letters, which is as a direct result of the teaching in the Early Birds group, and the children are gradually being introduced to initial letter sounds. About a third of the children confidently know and can already recognise quite a few of these. The reinforcement of two or three sounds during stories, formal activities and in a number of incidental ways, is sometimes confusing to the majority of children, and those who know quite a few letters are not sufficiently challenged. All the children are expected to take books home for sharing with adults on a regular basis and this encourages their enjoyment of books, widens their vocabulary and extends their understanding of English.
85. Despite the satisfactory teaching they receive, by the time the children leave Reception many of them have still not reached the expected Early Learning Goals. Again, this reflects lower attainment than at the last inspection, but is due to the overall low ability on entry.

Mathematical development

86. The satisfactory teaching in this area of learning enables the children to make steady progress towards the Early Learning Goals, and about half of the children achieve them by the time they move into Year 1. Most of the children can count to ten, and a few can count well beyond this. Well over half of the children in the Reception class confidently select and talk about different-sized circles, triangles, squares and rectangles. Much of this learning is a result of good experiences in the Early Birds Group.
87. Elements of the numeracy strategy are used to good effect so that the children are encouraged to develop oral skills, use correct mathematical words and learn to enjoy mathematics. In one lesson, the children really enjoyed counting with a puppet and identifying when he went wrong, thus reinforcing their ability to count to ten, but opportunities were missed to challenge and extend those who could count well beyond this. Follow-up group and individual activities excited and stimulated the children and reinforced their knowledge and understanding of shapes. In particular, the children really enjoyed finding and sorting shapes hidden in the sand. However, the adult's interaction with the children printing with shapes was unchallenging and did little to reinforce or extend their learning.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

88. The children in the Reception class do not have the breadth of general knowledge expected for their age when they start Reception. The knowledge they do have is built on satisfactorily by the staff and helps the children know about and understand better the people they meet and the places they live in and visit. By the time they join Year 1, about half will have reached the expected Early Learning Goals, but the rest will still be working towards them. There was no indication of standards in this area of learning in the last inspection report.
89. Children are given good opportunities to learn about and use computers, which they do confidently when supported by an adult. In the Early Birds group, all the children, in only their second visit to the computer suite, were able to operate the mouse to select and change colour as well as draw lines and shapes. Many also selected from other menus and a few understood how to clear the screen to start again. Confident and knowledgeable adults ensure the children work safely and carefully, with appropriate reinforcement of correct computer language, but as in other areas of learning, opportunities are missed to use skilled questioning to extend children's learning.
90. Activities are well planned, usually around themes, which often link learning about the world with other areas of learning. For example, in preparation for creating food from play dough the children suggested types of food they would have at a party and explained how they might make an invitation card. Discussions with individual children during activities are limited, and they do not learn as much as they could. Good use is made of the facilities around school where children learn to appreciate the wonder and beauty of the natural world. From looking at flowers around school in the springtime, children in the Reception class become aware that flowers have different colours, shapes and sizes, that they start small, grow for a while, and then die. Feeling the textures of and smelling real flowers, then creating their own flowers on the computer extended and reinforced most of the children's knowledge and understanding. Some of the children were also able to copy labels and identify petals, leaves, stem and roots.

91. In some activities, the children are made aware of what they are going to learn, and this arouses their interest and curiosity. This involvement was well maintained as children in the Early Birds group were encouraged to describe their experiences whilst making play dough and learning vocabulary such as 'mixing', 'kneading' and 'sticky'. Good teaching, with questions such as 'What does it feel like in your fingers?' and 'What's happening to the colour?' encouraged the children to voice opinions and reinforced their learning. Comments made by the other adults, such as 'It's getting hard to stir', though very relevant, were not nearly so effective in evoking a response from the children.

Creative development

92. Although children make satisfactory progress, only about half of them will reach the Early Learning Goals at the end of the Reception year, as this is another area of learning where children enter the school with standards below those expected for their age. Although standards are below those found at the last inspection, due to the lower ability of the children when they start, the satisfactory progress and quality of teaching reflect the findings of the last inspection.
93. Through the year, a wide range of creative opportunities is planned. These include art, music and imaginative play. Good resources are available, but, sometimes, the specific activities and methods of teaching limit the children's creative abilities and inhibit their imagination and enthusiasm.
94. Opportunities are frequently provided for the children to sing, which they do enthusiastically and tunefully. However, their repertoire is limited, consisting mostly of a few very simple, traditional nursery rhymes such as 'Baa, Baa, Black Sheep' and 'Humpty Dumpty'. The children are also keen to try clapping simple rhythms, but quickly lose interest when the pace of the activity is slow and does not keep them all actively involved. A few children are able to cut and roll play dough to represent food items such as sausage rolls, but there is insufficient interaction with adults to extend the children's imagination and skill when using paints.

Physical development

95. As was found during the last inspection, children's physical development is broadly similar to that expected for their age. Children make satisfactory progress during their time in the Foundation Stage, and most children should reach the expected goals by the end of the Reception year. The school has recently created a small, safe outdoor play area for the children in the Reception class, which enables them to use large equipment for pedalling, pushing and construction. In addition, good use is made of the school hall where they can run, jump and develop an awareness of themselves and others in space. Teaching reinforces appropriate vocabulary and encourages actions to rhymes. This helps children's coordination and sense of rhythm, but lacks excitement, challenge and a sense of adventure.
96. In classroom activities, children are provided with appropriate activities to develop fine skills such as pencil control, the safe use of scissors, and rolling and cutting modelling materials. The standard children achieve in these skills, is also broadly in line with what is expected for their ages. Both the quality of teaching and the children's achievements are similar to those reported at the last inspection.

ENGLISH

97. Although standards are below average in English by the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, children's attainment on entry to the school is below average and their speaking and listening skills are well below. Since the last inspection, standards in reading and writing at the end of Key Stage 1 have risen more sharply than the national trend and the progress of pupils, which was judged to be less than satisfactory, has now improved to a satisfactory level. Standards in English at the end of Key Stage 2 are only slightly above those achieved at the time of the last inspection and are lower than those achieved in mathematics and science. However, given their low starting point, pupils make satisfactory progress. Some weaknesses noted during the last inspection, such as the lack of clear planning and regular assessment opportunities, have been rectified, whilst some of the strengths, notably the excellent behaviour and attitudes of all pupils, no longer remain.
98. The results in the National Curriculum tests for reading and writing, in 2001, continued the improvements which have been made each year since the last inspection. The results in reading

were very close to the national average, and in writing they were below average. Although more pupils in Year 2 than ever before achieved the minimum standard expected in their writing, no pupils achieved the higher level. The school is aware of this problem and has developed and implemented strategies for improvement. When these results are compared to children's attainment on entry, they are judged to be consistent with satisfactory progress across the key stage.

99. The National Curriculum test results at the end of Key Stage 2 were well below the national average. Although four out of five pupils reached the national expectation of Level 4 in reading, only two out of five achieved this level in writing, which remains the weakest aspect of pupils work in English. Standards have risen slightly since the last inspection, but not as sharply as in science and mathematics. The results in 2001 were not as good as in the previous two years, but this particular group of pupils contained a significant proportion of pupils with special educational needs. The school has already implemented a series of measures in order to secure improvement for the pupils currently in Year 6. These include the provision of support from an additional teacher for the significant number of pupils in Year 6 who have learning and behavioural difficulties, the provision of additional resources, and a significant increase in the monitoring of pupils' performance.
100. Initial assessments show that children's attainment in communication, language and literacy is below average and, in some aspects, well below average when they enter the Reception class. Despite the good work done through the Early Birds induction programme, a significant number of pupils have speaking and listening skills that are well below average. Whilst many pupils in Key Stage 1 speak in clear sentences and listen attentively to teachers' instructions, several have a very limited vocabulary which prevents them from articulating their ideas effectively. These pupils often find it difficult to listen to what is being said, answer questions with one-word answers and have difficulty in finding the vocabulary that they need to describe or explain. The teachers in Key Stage 1 are very good at planning opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their speaking and listening skills, such as when pupils in Year 2 were asked to describe the way that robots move, and the majority of lessons in most subjects conclude with an opportunity for pupils to share their work with their classmates. In one drama lesson in Year 2, imaginative role-play enabled pupils to enrich their language skills through communicating with partners, groups and the whole class. Teachers work hard to develop standards of spoken English in Year 1 and Year 2, and most pupils do make progress, with some achieving good levels of attainment. However, the overall standard of attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 remains below average.
101. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are also below average in Key Stage 2, although teachers encourage pupils to share their work with others and to participate in drama activities. Pupils in Year 6, for instance, acted out the story of 'The Little Red Hen' in one assembly, and this was received enthusiastically by all pupils, particularly those in Key Stage 1. In some respects, however, pupils' oral abilities are not developed as effectively as they could be. There is very little evidence in teachers' planning files of planned opportunities to extend speaking skills through, for example, the medium of debate, drama, formal presentations and other devices to encourage discussion in small and larger groups. There is also little evidence to indicate that such activities take place in subjects such as history or geography, where there are rich opportunities for pupils to take up, enact and sustain different roles. Many pupils reach the end of Key Stage 2 without the range of language skills and vocabulary that is to be expected for their age.
102. Standards in reading are close to the national average at the end Key Stage 1 and have been rising consistently. The higher-attaining pupils demonstrate an enjoyment of reading and respond well to humour or interesting content. They read fluently and expressively and talk about the aspects that they particularly like. One pupil in Year 2, for example, talked of her preference for fairy stories whilst another thought reference books were far more interesting. Pupils of average ability are more hesitant in reading but are able to use a range of reading strategies such as their knowledge of letter sounds, informed guesses, picture cues and whole-word recognition. Almost all pupils know the meaning of 'title', 'author' and 'illustrator' and welcome the opportunity to take books home from the class libraries. Below-average readers have a basic sight vocabulary and can recognise a few words but find difficulty in using their knowledge of phonics to tackle unfamiliar words. Although parents are encouraged through the home-reading record diaries to participate in helping their children to make progress, a surprisingly small number take the opportunity to add their comments in the appropriate section. In the previous report, it was noted that poorer readers were not given very much extra support. This weakness no longer remains, as all pupils,

particularly those with special educational needs, and English as an additional language, receive good support.

103. At Key Stage 2, there is, currently, great variation in pupils' reading abilities, although standards are average overall by the end of the key stage. The highest-attaining pupils read very well indeed. They convey meaning when reading aloud, pronounce unfamiliar words with ease, and work out their meaning from the context. A few pupils, however, still struggle with reading, and even the average-attaining readers show some insecurity in their ability to apply their knowledge of sound patterns when faced with unfamiliar text. During the last inspection, it was noted that there was not enough encouragement for the majority of pupils to acquire an enthusiasm for reading, and this weakness still remains to a certain extent. Most pupils profess to enjoy reading, although few of those interviewed belong to a library or read widely for their own interest. Literacy lessons are generally well resourced and pupils are introduced to a good range of texts. However, although pupils were able to use the school library during the inspection, it is currently housed in a mobile classroom, which makes it difficult to access, particularly for individual pupils. This limits opportunities for pupils to develop their research or more advanced reading skills. The previous report recommended an overhaul of the school library and whilst resources are now adequate, it does not give the impression that it is a vibrant centre of learning. Although overall standards of reading are average at the end of Key Stage 2 and most pupils read at an appropriate level, there is a minority of pupils whose reading ability is considerably below that expected of pupils in Year 6. These pupils are now receiving additional support, but more should have been done at an earlier stage to support their obvious needs.
104. By the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils achieve below the average standard expected in writing and, at present, few pupils produce good-quality writing of any significant length. The rate of progress pupils make through the key stage varies considerably. The written work produced by pupils in Year 1 is very basic and, although many show a genuine desire to write, they do not have a sufficiently wide vocabulary to enable them to produce imaginative writing and they struggle to spell words correctly. The most able pupils display a better grasp of spelling conventions and are able to use basic punctuation, such as capital letters and full stops. The stimulation that is provided by the newly appointed teacher during the literacy hour is motivating these pupils to succeed. The front cover of their writing books, for instance, contains not only their name but also a computer-generated photograph, and this encourages pupils to take a pride in their work. Similar motivation is evident in Year 2, where the written output of many pupils is poor due, to some extent, to the disruption caused by the long-term absence of a teacher in the previous academic year. Some written tasks produced by pupils of below-average attainment, for example, consist of one or two basic sentences only, and the more able pupils rarely produce extended pieces of writing which are consistent with their ability. The pupils currently in Year 2 will need continued good support if they are to achieve the expected level of attainment by the end of Key Stage 1. There is also a need to ensure that more opportunity is provided for pupils to develop their writing skills within the context of other subjects.
105. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards of pupils' writing remain below the level expected and for a significant minority of pupils, they are well below this. Some pupils of above-average attainment can produce good-quality writing, which is just above the level expected for eleven-year-olds. They write in well-formulated sentences, using a good range of vocabulary and reasonably accurate punctuation and spelling. Some tasks capture their imagination well, such as the shared-writing exercise that was displayed in the Year 6 classroom and the many examples of poetry writing, including that based on 'The Highwayman' by pupils in Year 5. During the literacy hour and time provided for extended writing, pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 make good progress in learning to write for different purposes. During the inspection, pupils in Year 4 were attempting to write character sketches, whilst those in Year 5 tried to develop a list of precise instructions for successfully constructing a paper hat. An awareness of the importance of planning before writing and the opportunity to work together in pairs, during the drafting and re-drafting stage, helps pupils to improve their work. In one very good lesson in Year 6, pupils were able to work together in planning, discussing, improving and writing poetry based on a personification of 'Night'. These able and more able pupils were confident in their use and understanding of terms such as 'alliteration', 'metaphor' and 'personification' and produced work of a high standard. However, lower-attaining pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 struggle to produce fluent writing, as they do not have the range of vocabulary necessary to enable them to cope with the demands of the National Curriculum. They have particular problems in spelling words correctly, have very little concept of grammar, and

their written work is well below the standard expected. There is an urgent need to improve the standard of writing for many pupils.

106. Teachers work hard to raise levels of attainment in literacy, and most have a good understanding of the National Literacy Strategy, which is beginning to raise standards. Generally, teachers take good account of pupils' needs and ensure that work is sufficiently differentiated to meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language now receive good support and they make appropriate progress. During the inspection, no unsatisfactory teaching was seen and this is an improvement since the last inspection. In Key Stage 1, three out of four lessons observed were judged to be good, and five out of nine lessons in Key Stage 2 were good, with another lesson containing very good teaching. The good elements of teaching occur when teachers plan effectively, explain the lesson objectives and give clear instructions, as a result of which pupils make good progress. In the very good lesson observed, the teacher in Year 6 had very high expectations, challenged the pupils effectively and they responded accordingly. Most teachers make good use of information and communication technology to support literacy, and there are very good examples of word-processing in displays around the school. Pupils in Year 4 use a page-layout program and incorporate graphics to produce their final drafts of poems, and pupils in Year 5 use the computer to produce a range of questionnaires. There are some excellent examples of the use of a desktop publishing program in Year 6 to produce their books of playground poems and book reviews. The partnership between pupils in Year 6 and those from Year 9 at Thorns Community College has also led to writing and word processing of a high standard. Teachers' expectations and use of marking varies considerably. In some classes, particularly in Year 6, the teachers demand high standards, ensuring that pupils set out their work carefully and use their time productively. Their written work is then marked effectively and pupils are given suggestions and targets for improvement. However, in some classes, the presentation of work is of a much lower standard and marking is brief and unhelpful.
107. The last inspection report highlighted the fact that girls tended to perform better than boys in the national tests for English. Over the past three years, there has been a significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls, which has been much more pronounced than the national trend. The school has recognised this problem and developed a number of strategies to improve the performance of the boys. These have included providing additional literacy support in certain year groups and establishing a 'Lads and Dads Club'. These measures are clearly having some success as this year, for the first time, boys out-performed the girls in the English tests at the end of Key Stage 2. However, the behaviour of some boys within the school does have a negative impact on learning. Most pupils respond positively to English lessons and are eager to learn, but a small minority of boys in some classes are disruptive and their behaviour has a negative effect on their learning and on the capacity of others to learn. This is a particular problem in those classes where teachers do not possess an adequate range of behavioural strategies to be able to deal with them. This is a problem that needs to be dealt with, as it adversely affects standards of attainment and is a decline in standards from the time of the last inspection.
108. The English coordinator leads the subject very well. Since her appointment two years ago, she has implemented a series of improvements, which are having a positive effect on the quality of teaching in English. One of the most important developments is the introduction of a very detailed system of assessment and data analysis, which allows teachers to cater for the individual needs of all pupils. A careful analysis of pupils' results in national tests is shared with all staff and governors and enables support to be targeted appropriately and teachers to become more aware of the appropriateness of standards of work. The coordinator has also implemented target-setting procedures, and all pupils now have individual targets for all aspects of their work in English. These targets are reviewed by pupils, parents and teachers during the course of the year. The coordinator has improved resources for the literacy hour, led in-service training and monitored the teaching of English throughout the school. She has developed a list of future priorities for raising attainment in English and has identified the improvement of writing standards throughout the school as her immediate priority.

MATHEMATICS

109. The standards achieved by pupils in mathematics have risen significantly since the last inspection, and many aspects of the way the subject is taught have improved. Although results at the end of Key Stage 2, in 2001, were below the national average and not as good as in the previous two years, the overall trend since the last inspection has been one of improvement at a faster rate than

is happening nationally and more pupils are achieving the higher Level 5 than before. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, make at least satisfactory progress through the school. During the last inspection, pupils' progress in mathematics was considered to be unsatisfactory. Teaching methods have improved, and there is no longer a total reliance on work-cards, workbooks and worksheets. Assessment procedures are very much better, and enable the school to see how well individual pupils are progressing. The quality of the teaching has improved from unsatisfactory to at least satisfactory, and half of the lessons observed during the inspection were good.

110. The inspection findings are that the overall standard in mathematics, currently being achieved by the oldest pupils in Key Stage 1, is below average, although the range of attainment ranges from a significant minority of pupils whose standard is well below average to a small number achieving above average standards. The results of the 2001 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 1 were well below both the national average and the average for similar schools. Although almost all pupils achieved the nationally expected standard of Level 2, very few pupils achieved within the upper range of Level 2, or above. However, results over the last five years at Key Stage 1 mask the recent improvements in teaching which are now securely in place and are having a good impact on pupils' progress. In the recent past, some long-term staff absence disrupted the continuity of pupils' education and caused fluctuations in the school's results. The quality of teaching provided by the two new teachers in Key Stage 1, one who started this term, and one who started a year ago, is good, and pupils are learning well. Good, lively lessons, and work which is clearly targeted to the needs of individual pupils, are the main factors accounting for the difference between the inspection findings and the previous year's results.
111. By the end of Year 2, most pupils have a sound understanding of number. They add and subtract numbers up to 100, using various methods with reasonable confidence. They know how to count in multiples of 2, 5 and 10. They use their numeracy skills to solve money problems, for example, by working out which coins they would need to purchase an article and how much change they would receive from £1. They have a sound understanding of shape, space and measure. They describe the properties of simple two-dimensional shapes and name various three-dimensional shapes. They are learning to measure using standard and non-standard units. When working with weights, they understand concepts such as 'heavier than' and estimate weights in kilos. Pupils know how to collate data and produce simple tally charts and bar graphs. They tell the time to the nearest five minutes.
112. Because the teachers have a good awareness of pupils' differing abilities and provide work which is targeted to the needs of individuals, all pupils make good progress in their learning. The more able pupils display much greater confidence than other pupils in their handling of numbers, performing more complex calculations using larger numbers. A significant minority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, have difficulty in developing their understanding of number to the expected level which accounts for the below average standards overall achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 1. The steps made by these pupils are frequently very small because they have very poor ability to retain what they have learnt. In one lesson in Year 1, for example, pupils had forgotten the difference between 1p and 2p coins, even though they had spent two previous lessons dealing with this concept. The fact that these pupils do make progress is due largely to the patience and perseverance of teachers and support staff.
113. The overall standard at the end of Key Stage 2 is below average. Although some pupils achieve above the expected level, a significantly large number of pupils are still below this by the time they leave school. The results of the most recent National Curriculum tests were below the national average and were not as high as those achieved in the previous two years. They do, however, represent a significant improvement on the results achieved at the time of the last inspection. One in five pupils achieved the higher Level 5, but two out of five were below the expected standard of Level 4. Over the last few years, girls have performed significantly better than boys, a difference not reflected in the results at Key Stage 1, nor, indeed, in the current Year 6, where most of the higher-attaining pupils are boys.
114. By the end of Year 6, two-thirds of the pupils have a sound understanding of number, demonstrating the ability to add, subtract, multiply and divide using a variety of different methods both on paper and in their heads. They work confidently with fractions and decimals and have a sound understanding of the language of probability. In their work on shape, space and measure, they calculate the area and perimeter of regular shapes, such as rectangles and triangles, and

know how to use the radius to work out the diameter and circumference of a circle. They correctly identify acute, obtuse and reflex angles. Work on data-handling is of an appropriate standard. The more able pupils demonstrate much greater confidence in their handling of numbers and show greater skill in applying different methods to carry out their calculations in the most effective way. A third of the pupils, including those with special educational needs, are still struggling to develop their ability to handle numbers with confidence and ease because they have not received the same grounding in mental work, which is now being taught much more successfully than it was to pupils lower down the school.

115. The weakest aspect of pupils' work throughout the school is their ability to apply their skills to problem-solving, or in practical contexts. Although many pupils perform calculations quite quickly and accurately in their heads, most pupils find it very hard to work out problems which are expressed in words or which require them to work out which operations they should use. Although some subjects, such as science and design and technology, require pupils to use their mathematical skills, not enough is done to help pupils develop their mathematical skills within other contexts. In Year 6, some effective use is made of integrated learning software to help pupils develop their mathematical skills but, apart from the use of data-handling software, not a great deal of use is made of information and communication technology as a tool for learning in mathematics.
116. The development of mathematics has received a high priority since the last inspection, and the impact of the initiatives undertaken by the school has been positive. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has been particularly beneficial in providing a clear curricular structure for teachers and in helping them to develop more effective teaching methods. Greater attention has been given to monitoring the way the subject is taught and the standards pupils achieve, and this has helped the school to gain a clearer understanding of its own strengths and weaknesses. Help and advice from the local authority has enabled the subject coordinator to improve her own expertise and play a more effective role in coordinating the subject. Procedures for assessment have improved, and test results are analysed carefully to identify any areas of weakness. The school's analysis has also highlighted the need to spend more time on helping pupils to apply their numeracy skills to real-life problems. At the time of the last inspection, the quality of the teaching was unsatisfactory at Key Stage 2 and there was also some unsatisfactory teaching at Key Stage 1. There has been substantial improvement since then. Overall, the quality of the teaching is now satisfactory, although there are still some weaknesses, particularly with regard to teachers' expectations and the way they manage pupils' behaviour in some classes. The quality of the teaching is good at Key Stage 1 and there are also instances of good teaching in Key Stage 2. As a result of the school's initiatives to improve the teaching of mathematics, teachers' confidence and expertise in teaching the subject has improved significantly.
117. In the most successful lessons, the teachers help pupils to think about what they are doing and to develop the ability to work things out for themselves. Such lessons are invariably well structured, providing pupils with a range of activities which are matched well to their individual needs. In a good lesson in Year 2, for example, some of the more able pupils had clearly made good progress earlier in the week in acquiring an understanding of money and were given suitably challenging tasks to complete, whilst others consolidated their previous learning. This approach was particularly beneficial to a group of pupils with special educational needs, who also received additional help from the teaching assistant, and to the more able pupils who were able to feel a sense of achievement as they tackled much more difficult calculations. In some classes, however, there is very little differentiation in the work provided for the pupils. In a lesson in Year 4, for example, all pupils were taught to use a particular method to help them add two-digit numbers to another number. Whilst the method helped most pupils to understand the concept, the more able pupils were already able to manage the calculations in their head and for them there was little new learning in the lesson.
118. Most teachers use time effectively. In a good lesson in Year 5, for example, the teacher gave pupils a clear indication as to how long they had in which to complete each part of their work. Timely reminders helped to focus pupils' attention, with the result that all pupils made good progress during the lesson. In contrast, some lessons lack a sense of urgency and the teachers allow pupils to work at their own leisurely pace. In an unsatisfactory lesson in Year 3, for example, some pupils completed their tasks quickly, while others had a very lackadaisical approach and completed far less than they could have achieved in the time given.

119. The behaviour of a small minority of pupils, and weaknesses in the way teachers handle such situations, have an adverse impact on learning in a few classes. For example, a lesson in Year 6, which had been very well planned, contained a good variety of interesting activities, and promised to be very good, did not realise its potential because the poor behaviour of a small number of pupils adversely affected the ability of others to concentrate on what they were doing. Some teachers apply the school's new behaviour management policy well, and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning. In a good lesson in Year 2, for example, the teacher made her expectations very clear to the pupils, both by praising those who tried hard and applied themselves well to their work, and yet making very clear her disapproval on the few occasions on which pupils misbehaved. There was a positive learning atmosphere within the classroom and the teacher was able to use her time profitably in teaching small groups of pupils. In some classes, teachers are indiscriminating in their use of praise, even to the extent of praising poor work, or inappropriate behaviour, which sends confusing messages to the pupils and entails much time lost in trying to maintain an appropriate level of discipline.

SCIENCE

120. Over the past few years, there has been a steady decline in what pupils can do when they first come into the school, but the school has consistently improved the standards in science at both key stages. The results in 2001 showed a marked increase over the previous year and teachers' assessments judged standards at the end of Year 2 to be similar to those of other schools nationally. This indicates that pupils are making good progress through Key Stage 1.
121. Standards have improved significantly at Key Stage 2 and are much higher now than at the time of the last inspection. Although the results in 2001 were lower than in the previous year, and were below the national average, several pupils in this group had special educational needs. Given the standards achieved by these pupils at the end of Key Stage 1, their progress through Key Stage 2 was good. This year's results also showed that the school has successfully addressed the imbalance between the attainment of boys and girls, particularly at Key Stage 2. The improvements are mainly due to good teaching, careful assessments, and effective planning.
122. The work seen during the inspection indicates that standards at the end of both key stages are broadly in line with those expected nationally. Pupils make consistently good progress through Years 1 and 2, where good attention is paid to developing their literacy skills, as well as their knowledge and understanding of science. In their work on forces, pupils in Year 2 write clear explanations about how to make objects move, and they show, by well-labelled diagrams, whether it is a pushing or a pulling force. Teachers are now placing a greater emphasis on investigative work. This increases the pupils' interest and motivation and is improving their skills of enquiry as well as extending their knowledge and understanding. For example, during a topic on materials, pupils in Year 1 tested different papers to see how good they were for wrapping up parcels and which materials were best for wearing in the dark. They learnt the word 'reflective'. Teachers ensure correct scientific vocabulary is used, spellings, and simple punctuation are appropriately corrected, and a wide variety of writing styles are used for recording experiments, such as lists, labels, charts, and descriptive sentences. Pupils' numeracy skills are not developed so consistently, although recordings are, occasionally, put onto simple graphs and numbers and measurements used in charts. Science is supported well through the use of information and communication technology. Pupils in Year 2, for example, produced graphs of their experimental findings. Good planning ensures that work from Year 1 to Year 2 is carefully structured to enable pupils to make good progress in building up their scientific skills, such as classification. Pupils in Year 1 simply classify whether things are living or not living. In Year 2, this is extended, and they learn to classify into several categories. Living creatures are classified as having no legs, two, four, more than four legs, and those that live in water against those that live on the land.
123. The good work seen in Key Stage 1 is maintained in Key Stage 2 because of the well-structured planning and the generally good teaching. Pupils with special educational needs are mostly unsupported in science lessons, but make equally good progress because of the practical nature of much of the work. The more able pupils are suitably challenged through focused questions and individual research. In Year 3, pupils are helped to extend their knowledge and understanding of materials by considering the suitability of different materials for clothing or for house construction, explaining reasons for their ideas. They are consistently well challenged through interesting activities, such as working with spherical magnets, and discovering how the opposite forces can be used to create circles and straight lines of iron filings. Attention to pupils' literacy skills could be

improved in Key Stage 2. Although correct scientific terminology is introduced and spellings are frequently corrected, punctuation is not. The development of literacy skills for pupils in Year 4 could also be improved by attention to spellings and punctuation. However, the pupils do benefit from some valuable comments written on their work, which identify areas for improvement, such as presentation.

124. By the time they reach Year 5, pupils have built up a good basis of scientific knowledge and understanding, which they readily use in response to the continued challenging teaching. In a very good lesson about identifying the parts of a plant, the teacher reinforced what the pupils already knew from previous lessons, strongly emphasised the new, correct terminology and ensured that they were aware of what this would lead onto in the following lesson. She successfully made what could have been quite a dull subject into one of exciting discovery as the pupils, having drawn and labelled a flower, had a real one to dissect and identify the different parts. Working in pairs, and using large magnifying glasses, accelerated pupils' learning. In Year 6, pupils continue to show enthusiasm for science and respond well to the lively teaching they receive. They are excited by scientific experiments and try hard to give good, reasoned explanations for why things happen as they do. For example, pupils thought that the weight of a candle on a dish would remain unchanged after burning, explaining that this was a 'reversible change' because the wax had gone back to being solid and a new candle could be made from it. Whilst watching experiments of how different objects burn, and being helped by the teacher to analyse what was happening in scientific terms, the candle was left to burn on a very highly calibrated weighing scale and it was observed that the weight was very slightly, but steadily dropping. Many of the pupils were then able to explain this loss as an 'irreversible change', using good scientific language and understanding that chemical changes had taken place to remove the burning wick.
125. Overall the teaching of science is good, with a number of strengths that account for pupils' generally good progress. The teachers have good subject knowledge and are confident in what they teach. This enables them to set challenging tasks and ask probing questions to make pupils think and use what they know and understand. Lessons are planned well and build on what pupils have learnt previously. Teachers share with the pupils what they are going to learn in each lesson, then usually check at the end to see if they have. The teachers use a wide range of resources and include a lot of practical investigation. This captures and holds the pupils' interest and results in them having good attitudes towards science and ensures mostly good behaviour. The high proportion of practical work also helps pupils with special educational needs to learn well. The teachers are increasingly paying attention to developing literacy skills, but more attention to numeracy is necessary. Information and communication technology forms an integral part of work in science and is also used well to support the high standards which most pupils achieve in the presentation of their work.
126. Assessments of pupils' work are good throughout the school and careful analysis of test results highlights weaknesses such as the difference in attainment between boys and girls. The action taken has successfully addressed this weakness. Currently, there are no specific areas of weakness, but the general low attainment in English affects the pupils' reading and understanding of questions in the tests taken at the end of Key Stage 2 and, therefore, could be one reason why standards were lower than those found during the inspection. As yet, no individual targets are set. The hard work and expertise of the coordinator are reflected in the quality of teaching and overall enthusiasm for science throughout the school. This is enriched by the high quality and quantity of the learning resources.

ART AND DESIGN

127. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 is well above that expected for their age and, at the end of Year 6, it is above expectations. This shows very significant improvement since the last inspection, when attainment was judged to be below expectations at the end of both key stages. When compared to the creative ability of children in the Reception class, which is below average, this shows extremely good progress made by pupils in Years 1 and 2. A totally revised approach to the teaching of art, together with improvements in teachers' knowledge and confidence, has played a major part in these improvements. The subject coordinator has been largely responsible for these changes, and her enthusiasm and example are infectious. The whole school environment is greatly enhanced by the high standard of displays, which reflect many aspects of the pupils' work, and include detailed technical drawings for science, aspects of art and design from different cultures and work influenced by a range of artists. The school has benefited from a number of visitors,

including ladies from a local sewing guild, a sculptor, and artefacts brought by Kenyan dancers. Pupils' art has also been enriched by participation in several local events, such as tree decorating, Dudley Showcase, and a 'Tudor Experience'.

128. From an early age, pupils are given the opportunity to use and experiment with a wide range of media. In Year 1, for example, pupils were set the task of creating a patchwork collage of colour in the style of 'Elmer the elephant', choosing from, but not mixing, fabrics, coloured paper, paint and pastels. Pupils in Year 2 excelled in their study of the life and work of Vincent van Gogh. They used good literacy and informational technology skills to produce individual booklets about his life, enhanced with selected computer printouts of a chosen painting. The pupils' paintings of 'Sunflowers' are stunning, showing mature work with textured paint and highly developed observational skills. This work clearly reflects very good subject knowledge by the teachers.
129. The same group of children, now in Year 3, show a good understanding of shading and sketching, and are able to offer sensible comments about how their own and others' work can be improved. The standard of work they produced in a lesson was, however, only satisfactory, due mainly to a lack of concentration and silly behaviour. Pupils in Year 4 produce a wealth of exciting work, ranging from detailed designs in sepia and white based on Kenyan 'poker-work' to surrealist work in the style of 'La Grande Famille' by Magritte. Pottery jewellery, as in Anglo-Saxon times, pattern design, using computer graphics, and the painting of contrasting landscapes reinforce the pupils' work in other subjects. This rich tapestry of experiences and learning are the direct result of very good teaching which challenges, excites and motivates the pupils.
130. This challenge and motivation is maintained in Years 5 and 6 and the pupils talked enthusiastically about their work. As well as recalling the challenge of trying to reproduce Picasso's 'Snail', using 'Colour Magic' on the computer, they talked interestingly about his style of painting and other pieces of work. Good opportunities are provided for the pupils to work together, as well as individually, and they spoke proudly of the large fabric collage, based on their designs and ideas from the literacy hour poem 'The Highwayman', which ladies from the local church's embroiderers' guild helped them produce. They are taught the skills of shading, experience using different pencils, paints and brushes, and learn about tone and model in a range of materials. Teachers encourage the use of sketchbooks and help pupils evaluate their work. Pupils with special educational needs and the more able pupils make equally good progress as the rest of the pupils.
131. The overall quality of the teaching is good, with outstanding expertise shown in some classes. Occasionally, the unsatisfactory management of pupils prevents a number of them from making satisfactory progress. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject is now good and their level of confidence has improved. Resources are good, but the pupils rarely get the opportunity to visit exhibitions unless linked to other subjects, such as the one on Ancient Egyptian history.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

132. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards are good and, at the end of Key Stage 2, they are broadly in line with expectations. This shows an improvement in both key stages since the last inspection when standards were average at the end of Key Stage 1, and below average at the end of Key Stage 2. Considering that children now start in Reception with below average ability, the school has done well to achieve these standards.
133. In order that pupils can complete the whole process of design and technology, that is considering a product's use, its design, how it will be made, and evaluating the finished article, work is concentrated for a few days towards the end of a term. It is usually linked to work in other subjects such as literacy, science or history. This is very effective, but meant that no lessons were seen during the inspection. Judgements have been made on the pupils' written reports of the process and the quality of the finished products. The quality of the teachers' planning and the work produced by the pupils indicate that the quality of the teaching is good.
134. Teachers clearly understand and are knowledgeable about all aspects of the subject, and this ensures that the pupils consider the practical uses of an object before beginning the design process. For example, pupils in Year 4 decided that a good purse must be strong to hold the weight of the money and needs to fasten to stop the money falling out. Several designs are drawn or sketched before pupils select one to make. This reinforces their understanding of purpose and

for whom it will be attractive. As the pupils move through the school, and the projects become increasingly more complex, pupils discuss their ideas with one or two others, learning to negotiate and adapt their ideas. Right from Year 1, the pupils are taught to list what they will need, and in Year 2 some of the pupils are beginning to distinguish between materials and equipment, having been clearly taught the difference.

135. At least two projects are carried out each year, and these include a good variety of challenges. Pupils design models of objects with which they are already familiar, such as lunch-boxes, Christmas stockings, playground equipment, narrow boats, and fairground rides, which reinforce their knowledge and understanding. In Year 2, they are challenged to be inventive by designing imaginary objects, such as an 'Incy Wincy wind-up toy', and 'a vehicle to carry an egg'. Photographs indicate that the pupils were extremely well motivated when the time came to test their vehicles on a specially constructed ramp in the school playground! The wide range of products shows that pupils have acquired good skills in joining and assembling materials and in applying scientific knowledge, as in the Year 2 wind-up spiders and the Year 6 fair-ground rides operated with 'Meccano' motors. Art skills are also used well to add good finishes to the work, and end products are remarkably close to the pupils' designs. For instance, Christmas stockings were beautifully decorated with sequins and appliquéd material, and narrow boats were carefully painted with delightful detail. All teachers ensure pupils evaluate their work by referring back to its original purpose, and this is a very valuable aspect of their learning. The way written work is presented by some pupils could be improved. Pupils with special educational needs progress particularly well with the practical aspects of their work.
136. The application of literacy skills could be improved in the written work, and more emphasis could be placed on pupils' numeracy skills in the designing and making stages. However, in one or two classes, good attention is paid to spelling and punctuation, with most classes using a variety of styles of writing. Information and communication technology has yet to have impact on designing; it is generally limited to the word processing of labels.
137. The school has developed very good guidelines, which provide teachers with an effective framework for their planning. This has been instrumental in ensuring that all areas of designing and making are consistently and continuously developed and the pupils make good progress. As they work on their projects, each pupil completes a progressively more detailed booklet which, when bound together at the end of the project, forms a good record on which the teachers base their assessments of progress. This system is used well by most of the teachers.

GEOGRAPHY

138. As it was only possible to observe two lessons during the course of the inspection, judgements are based predominantly on discussions with pupils, looking at their work and the displays that can be seen around the school. It was not possible to make a judgement on standards of attainment in Key Stage 1 at the time of the last inspection, but the report indicated that the standard of pupils' attainment was above expectations at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils' attainment is now judged to be in line with expectations at the end of both key stages and their progress is satisfactory. The apparent decline in standards at the end of Key Stage 2 can be attributed to the increasing emphasis given to the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, which has decreased the teaching time available for other subjects.
139. Teaching is satisfactory at both key stages. Teachers benefit from a comprehensive policy and scheme of work for geography, which is based on a national programme of work and contains a clear structure for developing knowledge, skills and understanding. In Key Stage 1, for example, pupils study their immediate environment by following a picture trail around the locality, and many can contrast their locality to other parts of the world. In one lesson in Year 2, pupils were developing their knowledge of places when discussing the differences between hot and cold climates, and most were able to identify and suggest appropriate clothing for different parts of the world. However, the progress of some pupils was restricted by their limited language skills. This lesson developed with good pace and pupils worked enthusiastically when asked to design and dress their teddy bear in suitable clothing for a journey. It was well planned, contained good opportunities for pupils' speech and language development, had strong cross-curricular links to art and design, and made use of information and communication technology. Pupils received good support from the class teacher, a learning support assistant, and work experience student, which enabled one group of pupils to develop their research skills in the school library whilst another

group had access to a computer program linked to the lesson objective. The very attractive classroom display on which pupils log the world-wide travels of Barnaby Bear makes a significant contribution to both geographical awareness and pupils' cultural development. These pupils also study topics on homes and the seaside. However, the scrutiny of pupils' books reveals that much of their work in geography is based on worksheets that do not take account of the different levels of attainment within each class. Writing is at a fairly simple level and does not make a significant contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills.

140. At the time of the last inspection, teaching standards in Key Stage 2 were good and pupils were set enriching tasks that brought the best out of them. Teachers do provide opportunities for curriculum enrichment such as through their good use of visits and visiting speakers. For example, pupils in Year 5 visit a water treatment plant as part of their water topic, whilst the Year 4 topic on Kenya has been enriched by visits from both a minister and a runner from that country. The curriculum also affords the opportunity for pupils to develop their skills of enquiry, through information and communication technology, by visiting a range of useful web sites and by e-mailing schools in other areas of the country. However, some areas of the geography curriculum remain under-developed. Although pupils in Year 6 have an awareness of environmental issues, such as conservation and pollution, they are not yet able to clearly express their own views about environmental change and there is little evidence of information being used effectively to inform discussion on local issues or of pupils engaging in debate. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress, although there needs to be a greater differentiation in the provision of worksheets to cater for a range of abilities. Whilst some pupils in Year 6 have produced individual research projects of a high standard, the progress of many pupils is limited by their poor literacy skills and written work is generally below the standard that would be expected. At the time of the last inspection, pupils' attitudes to geography were described as consistently good and they were said to have a consistently mature attitude to learning. Although this remains true for the majority of pupils, the inappropriate behaviour of a small minority of boys in some classes does have a disruptive influence and adversely affects the quality of learning, particularly when teachers find difficulty in maintaining firm control.
141. The management of the subject is satisfactory, although the current co-ordinator is new to the school and has only been appointed very recently to the post. She is aware of the need to ensure that work is sufficiently differentiated for all groups of pupils and that the subject makes a greater contribution to pupils' overall literacy skills.

HISTORY

142. As it was only possible to observe three lessons during the course of the inspection, judgements are based predominantly on discussions with pupils, looking at their work and the displays that can be seen around the school. The last inspection report indicated that pupils' attainment was in line with expectations at the end of Key Stage 1 and above expectations at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils' attainment is now judged to be in line with expectations at the end of both key stages and their progress is satisfactory. The apparent decline in standards at the end of Key Stage 2 can be explained by an increasing emphasis given to the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.
143. The historical knowledge and understanding of most pupils is typical for their age. Pupils are able to link different periods of history. They know of the lifestyles of people of ancient Egyptian and ancient Greek civilisations and how life in Britain has changed since the Second World War. They are aware that aspects of the past can be studied through the use of archaeological evidence, such as pictures, written accounts and photographs, and pupils in Year 6 can distinguish between primary and secondary evidence.
144. Pupils in Key Stage 1 begin to develop a sense of history by studying how modern toys are different to those from the past, and there was a very interesting and attractive display in Year 1 depicting this theme. Pupils had developed a timeline using a range of toys from the past and present and in handling and discussing these toys, they were being encouraged to develop their speaking and listening skills. Good use of historical artefacts is a strong feature of the history curriculum and contributes to language development and literacy skills. In Year 2, pupils develop their knowledge of important events and people from the past. Their books contain evidence of studies of the lives of Guy Fawkes, Samuel Pepys, and Florence Nightingale. Although writing is at

a fairly simple level and often worksheet based, it is making a contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills. However, the low level of language and writing skills of some pupils limits their ability to write either creatively or at length.

145. Pupils in Key Stage 2 study a range of historical topics and further develop their awareness of the passage of time. Pupils in Year 3 study invaders and settlers, and their curriculum is enriched by a visit from a Viking theatre group. In Year 4, pupils make good use of information and communication technology to support their historical studies when using the computer suite to carry out independent research for their project on ancient Greece. In Year 5, the teacher had provided a range of interesting artefacts to support the study of Victorian Britain, and pupils in Year 6 had produced a very attractive display based on Ancient Egypt, which contained strong cross-curricular links to English, art, and information and communication technology.
146. Teachers have secure knowledge of the subject and are assisted by a comprehensive policy and scheme of work. Teachers make good use of visits and visiting speakers to enrich the history curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 2 visit Coventry Transport Museum as part of their topic on transport, whilst pupils in Year 6 were introduced to their work on Ancient Egypt by a visit to an Egyptian exhibition at the Birmingham Art Gallery at the beginning of this term. They make good use of information and communication technology by visiting a range of useful websites, and this makes a positive contribution to pupils' historical awareness. Three lessons were observed in Key Stage 2, and teaching was judged to be satisfactory in two of those lessons and good in one. The best lesson was seen in Year 6 and was the result of good planning and the provision of a range of appropriate, quality resources. Pupils were presented with a parcel containing a mystery package, which they had to open and discuss with a partner. They were then asked to use their skills of enquiry to explain what the object was and how it had a relevance to ancient Egypt. This was a challenging task, but most pupils rose to that challenge and enhanced their historical knowledge and understanding. However, a significant minority of pupils did not have the range of language and literacy skills to fully cope with the task. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, have a positive attitude to the subject and make satisfactory progress. Many older pupils have used their research skills to produce independent projects in their own time, and homework is used well to support the curriculum. Some pupils are sufficiently interested in their studies to bring items from home to school, such as the range of old newspapers that were being used for research purposes by pupils in Year 5. However, the inappropriate behaviour of a small minority of boys in some classes does have a disruptive influence and adversely affects the quality of their learning and the opportunity for others to learn.
147. The management of the subject is satisfactory, and there is a comprehensive policy and structured scheme of work for history that provides a good framework for teachers to follow. Although the current coordinator has only very recently been appointed to her post, she is already aware of the need to ensure that work is sufficiently differentiated for all groups of pupils and that the subject makes a greater contribution to pupils' overall literacy skills.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

148. Following the last inspection, a review visit conducted by Her Majesty's Inspector in 1998 highlighted significant weaknesses in the school's provision for information and communication technology and made the subject a key issue for improvement. Since that time, very good leadership from the subject coordinator, together with the support of the headteacher and governors, and the commitment of the staff, has resulted in very good improvement to all aspects of the subject. The installation of a new computer suite has had a major impact on the way the subject is taught and has led to a significant rise in the standards achieved by pupils and the use of new technology as a tool for teaching other subjects. Pupils of all abilities have made good progress in their learning, improving from the poor standards noted at the last review visit to standards which are now very close to level expected at the end of both key stages in all aspects of the subject's curriculum.
149. By the end of Year 2, pupils are able to type simple texts using a word processor. They are developing the ability to edit their text by deleting unnecessary words and making other corrections. They know how to select different tools, change colours and create images using a graphics program. They collect data and know how to enter this into a data-handling program in order to produce a chart. They have learnt how to take a picture of themselves using the school's digital camera and to enter commands into a programmable robot.

150. Pupils master the basic skills of using a computer at an early age. Throughout the school, pupils know how to log on to the school's network, locate and open programs, and save and print their work. Pupils in Key Stage 2 know how to retrieve work, which they have previously saved, in order to edit it. As they move through the school, pupils start to transfer skills which they have already learnt from one program to another and all pupils make good progress in acquiring new skills. Images produced by pupils in Year 2 show considerable improvement over those produced by pupils in Year 1, as their pictures become more complex and they use a wider range of tools. In Year 1, pupils learn to type single words or short phrases, but by the end of Year 2 they produce longer pieces of text which they are starting to format in different ways. By Year 3, pupils learn how to combine text and graphics to communicate information, and also use music software to develop and refine musical compositions. The information collected by pupils in Year 4 is used to create more advanced types of charts than those produced in Key Stage 1, whilst pupils in Year 5 show a much greater awareness of audience as they produce longer pieces of writing which are presented well by combining graphics and careful formatting of the text.
151. By the end of Year 6, pupils show sound achievement in all aspects of the curriculum. They have learnt how to write instructions in a logo program to create shapes on the screen and are starting to perform more complex searches using a database. They know how to operate an object-based drawing program to produce a graphical model, as they create, combine and manipulate objects to explore different possible layouts for their classroom. They change data in a spreadsheet to answer 'what if....' questions, producing a spreadsheet for a family holiday. They are beginning to understand how computers are used for measurement and control. For example, they designed a simple investigation to find out what happens to the temperature of a glass of ice and water, using sensors to take and record data and they have written procedures to control model pelican crossing lights. Some pupils demonstrate good skills in organising, refining and presenting their ideas through a multimedia presentation of linked pages incorporating images, sound and text.
152. The quality of the teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now good. As a result, pupils are learning well. The teachers' confidence and expertise has improved considerably as a result of in-service training. Although most would admit the need to deepen their knowledge further, all staff are competent in using the computer suite effectively and giving pupils clear instructions. A few teachers possess good skills. In a very good lesson in Year 6, for example, the teacher moved effortlessly from oral explanations at the start of the lesson, to use of the video projector and interactive whiteboard, to using a flip chart with a paper presentation, then connecting to the Internet to give pupils a further illustration, before setting them to work on improving their multimedia presentation. As a result of her expertise, pupils were given a clear insight into how effective multimedia presentations can be and were keen to discuss the merits of their own presentations. Lessons are generally well planned, although some of the learning purposes, which are shared with pupils at the beginning of the lesson, are expressed in somewhat confusing language for the pupils. In most lessons, time is used productively but, in some lessons, the teacher allows pupils too long in which to accomplish a task and unnecessary amounts of time are spent experimenting with unnecessary details, such as the choice of a font. Clearer time targets would help to solve the problem.
153. In most lessons, pupils of all abilities are given appropriate opportunities to make progress. Occasionally, the teacher's instructions are too prescriptive, which can hold back the progress of those who learn or work more quickly than others. For much of the time, pupils work productively with a partner in the computer suite. Pupils not only learn to cooperate with each other, but also help to spur each other on as they contribute and discuss their own ideas. In many classes, working with a partner is particularly beneficial for lower ability pupils and those with special educational needs, and enables these pupils to make good progress along with their classmates. In some lessons, however, the activities are not conducive to shared activity and the partner not working on the computer spends part of the lesson unproductively. When available, the presence of teaching assistants is particularly beneficial to the learning of pupils with special educational needs. In a lesson for pupils in Year 4, for example, the assistant gave patient encouragement to two pupils who were finding the task very difficult but, by the end of the lesson, they had grown in confidence and produced work which was of equal quality to the other pupils'.
154. Regular access to computers and the pupils' own enthusiasm for using computers are key factors contributing to the good progress made by pupils throughout the school. Occasionally, however, the pupils' enthusiasm to get down to work acts as a hindrance as they do not always pay as much attention to the teacher's initial instructions as they should. In most lessons, teachers not only help

pupils to improve their information technology skills, but do so within meaningful contexts, which help pupils to make progress in other subjects. In art, for example, pupils in Year 4 learn how computers can speed up and simplify the process of creating repeated patterns which can be used, for example, in the production of fabrics and furnishings. In Year 2, pupils are beginning to appreciate that tools such as a spellchecker can help them with their writing, although one pupil prefers more conventional means - when asked how to check spelling on the computer, the answer was given, 'put your hand up and ask the teacher!' Pupils in Year 3 use new technology very effectively in history to record information about their Viking day. They prepare questions for interviews, and then write accounts of the day. They use a template to set out a newspaper style report about the Vikings, take photographs to illustrate it and send emails with their news. Good use is made of pupils' word-processing skills in Year 6, as pupils produce tastefully and carefully presented poems, book reviews and other pieces of writing.

155. Much of the success in information and communication technology is due to the extremely hard-working and meticulously organised subject coordinator who provides very good leadership. Staff have been given clear guidance on planning, which, along with the outcome of pupils' work is monitored regularly and carefully by the coordinator. As a result, the coordinator has a very clear idea of what is being taught throughout the school and the standards pupils are achieving. The coordinator has detailed portfolios of pupils' work which is assessed and levelled. Procedures for staff to carry out their own assessments, which could then be used to refine their own planning, are not as well developed, although the coordinator is working in conjunction with the local authority to devise new assessment models.
156. The use of new technology permeates many areas of the school and makes a positive contribution to the personal and social development of pupils. Some of the older pupils learn how to handle responsibility as they are given the task of setting up facilities within the computer suite. Others develop their own inter-personal skills and as they run a lunchtime computer club for pupils in Year 1. An after-school session is organised for parents and information about the school is available to the wider community through an informative and well-constructed web site which has been constructed by the coordinator. A very successful partnership has developed with a local teacher training college whereby students are allocated to each class for a week, with the specific brief to use information and communication technology and help pupils develop their skills within meaningful contexts. Both staff and pupils have gained much from the experience, as have the students.

MUSIC

157. At the time of the last inspection, standards of attainment at the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 were judged to be in line with expectations. These standards have been maintained, and pupils make satisfactory progress.
158. The school has adopted a new scheme of work, which has been revised in line with national recommendations and guidelines from the local authority. This provides teachers with a good structure for their lessons and ensures coverage of all aspects of the music curriculum. The teachers have the necessary skills to enable them to use these plans effectively to provide worthwhile lessons for their pupils. Only one lesson was observed in Key Stage 1 during the inspection and the teaching was judged to be good. The lesson was well planned, organised and resourced. Some pupils are beginning to use musical terms, such as 'pitch', and to respond to different musical moods. They listen attentively and are eager to perform. In the lesson observed, for example, they performed movements to represent the animals in the extracts they had listened to from 'Carnival of the Animals'. They cooperate well with partners and are appreciative when watching others perform.
159. In the two lessons observed in Key Stage 2, teaching was good in one lesson and unsatisfactory in the other. Pupils in Year 5 sing enthusiastically and are capable of improvising repeating patterns and combining layers of sound. They use musical terminology, such as 'stave', 'treble clef' and 'dynamics' confidently. In the lesson observed, which was linked to their Victorian project and included an opportunity to view the street sellers scene from 'Oliver', the pupils built successfully on their previous knowledge. In the unsatisfactory lesson, progress was limited by the poor behaviour of a small number of pupils.

160. The curriculum in music is enriched by the presence of peripatetic musicians who provide pupils with the opportunity to play a range of instruments, including cello, flute and clarinet, whilst members of staff have organised recorder clubs and a choir. The school provides pupils with a range of opportunities for performance, and pupils participate in events such as the Dudley Schools' Christmas Concert and the local schools' annual festival of music.
161. Teachers encourage pupils to listen to and appreciate music. They have an opportunity to listen to music at the beginning and end of each assembly, and a number of teachers use background music within lessons to maintain a calming influence within the classroom. In one lesson in Year 5, the teacher used the theme to 'Mission Impossible' to set a time limit for work to be completed. Although it was not possible to see pupils using a wide range of instruments during the inspection, the school does possess a satisfactory range, although there is a need to purchase more instruments that reflect a multi-cultural society. All pupils are encouraged to use tape recorders, CDs and computer programs as part of the music curriculum. In Year 1, for instance, a range of CDs support a topic on 'Information Around Us', whilst pupils in Year 3 use a computer program to compose music. Pupils from Year 4 access the Internet as part of their research into famous composers, and the local authority's music website proves a rich source of information, enabling Year 6 pupils to add sound files to their multimedia presentations.
162. Pupils generally respond enthusiastically in music lessons. They enjoy the subject and most behave well, listen attentively, and enjoy demonstrating the skills that they have acquired. They sing with enthusiasm in lessons and school assemblies, and most pupils are appreciative and encouraging towards each other when performing in class. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress throughout the school. However, a small number of disruptive boys in some classes limit the progress that they and others could make.
163. The subject is led well by the enthusiastic music coordinator. She has implemented a scheme of work that helps staff to feel confident in teaching music and has purchased, within the constraints of the budget, sufficient resources to support its delivery. She has developed links with local secondary schools and colleges to such an extent that music students from King Edward's College, Stourbridge, visit the school on a weekly basis to provide recorder lessons for pupils within school. She has identified clear aims for future development, which include the purchase of an extended range of instruments and regular monitoring of lessons to increase teachers' confidence in teaching the new scheme of work.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

164. During the inspection, it was possible to observe only a small number of physical education lessons; a dance and a gymnastics lesson in Key Stage 1, and two gymnastics and a small element of a games lesson in Key Stage 2. As a result, the range of judgements and comparisons to the last inspection are limited in scope. There have been some improvements in the school's provision for physical education since the last inspection, but the standards achieved in gymnastics by the oldest pupils are not as good as they were.
165. The pupils are taught well at Key Stage 1 and make good progress in harnessing their enthusiasm for physical activity and acquiring new skills. The picture here is better than that portrayed at the time of the last inspection. The youngest pupils in Key Stage 1 show a good awareness of space and already demonstrate good control of their movements in gymnastics. In a good lesson in Year 1, pupils were keen to emulate the arabesque demonstrated by their teacher, and many produced imaginative balances, showing good poise for their age as they held a variety of different positions. Pupils in Year 2 achieve appropriate standards in dance, and some show creativity and imagination in their movements. In a very good lesson in Year 2, one pupil gave a very imaginative and powerful impression of how he thought a robot would move. Although not reaching such a good standard, the rest of the class tried hard, either to emulate what they had observed or to produce their own movements, which most pupils synchronised well to some appropriate music.
166. The standards achieved at Key Stage 2 vary considerably. In the only lesson observed in Year 6, pupils' work in gymnastics was below the expected level, which marks a decline in standards since the last inspection. Indeed, some of the balances and performances produced by many of the pupils were inferior to those produced by pupils in Year 4. Although the lesson was well planned, few pupils showed precision, control and fluency in their movements, and their poor attention and

noisy behaviour resulted in very little new learning. In contrast, pupils in Year 4 demonstrated good standards in their gymnastics lesson. Pupils worked together well with their partners, showing a good awareness of the need to control their movements, and to hold their balance and produce smooth landings. They concentrated well when others were demonstrating and, in listening carefully to the evaluations of their teacher and other pupils, made good progress in their learning. In the short excerpt of a games lesson observed in Year 5, pupils showed widely differing levels of ability in their understanding of tactics and their skill in passing and catching a ball in a small-sided game. The more able pupils showed great enthusiasm, which at times overruled their tactical sense, but the least able were somewhat bemused and had little tactical understanding. Although not observed, the school's records indicate that pupils achieve good standards in swimming. Nearly all pupils achieve the national expectation for swimming by the end of Year 4, and then make further progress during the summer terms in Years 5 and 6.

167. Overall, the quality of the teaching is satisfactory, although the lessons observed during the inspection ranged from very good to unsatisfactory. Lessons are well planned and well structured. The teachers set the right tone for lessons by changing into appropriate clothing and through their preparedness to demonstrate. A good feature of some lessons is the way teachers seek to develop pupils' understanding of language. In Year 1, for example, the teacher reinforced pupils' understanding of words, such as 'opposite', 'contrast', 'stretched', 'curled up'. In the Year 2 lesson, the dance was linked very effectively to poems studied in English. The teachers give appropriate attention to health and safety aspects, such as warming up at the start of a lesson. Some classes have very good warm-up routines. Pupils in Year 1, for example, showed great enthusiasm and careful attention as they followed the teacher's instructions during their warm-up, and pupils in Year 2 knew exactly what to do as they warmed up each part of their body in time to some catchy ragtime music. In most classes, pupils show good awareness of how to move mats and put apparatus away safely. Some of the older pupils, however, are very careless in the way they move apparatus. Some of the teachers' procedures do not encourage the full involvement of all pupils. In one lesson, the teacher grouped boys and girls into mixed pairs. This worked well; the pupils had sensible attitudes, cooperated with each other and made good progress. In other lessons, in which pupils were able to choose their own partner, boys almost exclusively chose to work with other boys, or when choosing who should line up, chose all of the boys before a single girl. These procedures do not contribute to the smooth running of the lesson, especially as all of the instances of misbehaviour involved boys, and the worst examples were from pairs of boys. Most teachers, however, involve pupils who are unable to participate actively, by asking them to watch for particular features during the lesson and evaluate what they see. Teaching assistants undertake their roles effectively, helping pupils to join in and, in one instance, giving particularly good encouragement to a pupil with special educational needs, which helped him to focus on what was required. The greatest variation in the quality of the teaching is the rigour with which the teachers enforce their expectations. This is seen particularly clearly in the way teachers manage their classes and the attention given to analysing what pupils do well and what could be improved.
168. The key feature distinguishing the good lessons from those in which pupils make little progress is the teacher's ability to manage pupils' behaviour and response effectively. Pupils in Year 6, for example, moved into the hall noisily at the start of the lesson, even though they had been told to find a space quietly. Noise continued when others were demonstrating, and the attention given by many pupils to what the teacher or other pupils said was poor, which meant that little new understanding was acquired during the lesson. Some boys showed no inclination to practise what was required and disrupted the learning and good attempts of others. In contrast, pupils in Year 4 responded well to their teacher, listened attentively and made good progress as a result. The very good classroom control in Year 2 had a major impact on the lesson. The teacher was firm in her control, warm in her praise for good performance, and unequivocal in telling a pupil why she was displeased with what he had done. As a result, pupils had a very clear understanding of what was expected, responded appropriately and made good progress during the lesson.
169. All teachers are aware of the need to evaluate pupils' performance in order to analyse what is done well and what could be improved. They manage this with varying degrees of success. In Year 4, for example, the pupils were given many opportunities to comment on what made a performance good, and the teacher picked out some very clear examples of what she expected to see when producing a balance. But the effectiveness of these good aspects was somewhat diminished when some very mediocre performances were praised as being excellent. In Year 6, the excessive use of praise was counter-productive and pupils gained no idea of what constituted a good standard or which aspects were worth emulating. In some lessons, although pupils were asked to demonstrate,

there was little point to them doing so because the teacher drew no learning points from the demonstration. In contrast, in Year 2, the teacher made very clear to the pupils what she was looking for, picked out certain pupils to demonstrate particularly good features and then pointed out why the performance was particularly good.

170. The management of the subject is satisfactory. There are still no formal procedures for assessing pupils' skills, and, as yet, the coordinator has still not monitored the quality of teaching. These weaknesses were pointed out in the last inspection. However, the local adviser has been in to monitor lessons and offer advice. A new policy has been produced and all staff now have much clearer guidance with regard to the curriculum. The physical education programme is enriched by various additional activities. Clubs for football and tennis are run after school, and teams participate in a local football league, swimming galas, inter-school sports and cross-country running. The school also participates in Dudley Sports Link Coaching Scheme for football, tennis, netball, basketball and multi-sports. Pupils in Year 6 have the opportunity to participate in various adventurous activities during their residential week. With its hard-surfaced areas, a grass playing field, and the main hall, the school has adequate facilities for physical education.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

171. At the end of each key stage, pupils' knowledge and understanding in religious education is in line with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Although pupils' achievements exceeded expectations at the end of Year 6 during the last inspection, pupils are now joining the school with poorer levels of general knowledge and speaking and listening skills. These are vital parts of work in religious education and the standards reached in this subject are influenced to a large extent by standards in English. Satisfactory standards have therefore been maintained.
172. Pupils systematically acquire a satisfactory basic knowledge and understanding of the Christian, Jewish and Islamic faiths as they progress through the school. By Year 6, most pupils are able to compare and contrast beliefs and customs, such as naming ceremonies, views on creation, places of worship and how people pray. Much of the work is factual and, in the lessons seen, only occasionally was enough time spent on reflection and in-depth discussions exploring pupils' own beliefs and customs. In some lessons, there was a tendency to assume that, apart from recognising the one or two Muslims and Jehovah's Witnesses, everyone else was Christian.
173. The teaching is satisfactory overall, but ranges from good to unsatisfactory. Although teachers are clear about what they want the pupils to learn in their lessons, and confidently share this with them at the start of the lesson, frequently the teachers then lack the confidence or questioning skills to extend the pupils' thinking and open up discussions. This lack of probing causes some pupils to lose interest and become very passive. An atmosphere of trust and openness was delightfully created in one lesson, when the teacher sensitively shared with the pupils her own thankfulness evoked by the wonders of creation, before providing an opportunity for them to share and record, in small groups, what they had to be thankful for. The pupils were motivated to think deeply and share feelings, which they did in a very positive manner. At times, teachers attempt to simulate events to give pupils practical experiences of ceremonies and events, for example a Christian baptism or a Jewish Sabbath meal. Whilst these are very enjoyable and reinforce many aspects of the faith, teachers need to be very vigilant and certain in their own knowledge so that pupils do not get false impressions. Written work is generally well presented, showing pupils take pride in what they produce, and most teachers encourage independent writing, correct spellings and punctuation.
174. The new subject coordinator is enthusiastic and knowledgeable, having already reviewed and revised the school's overall planning to correspond with the recently produced locally agreed syllabus. As yet, there is no monitoring of pupils' progress, or of teaching, but these are planned and should contribute towards the raising of standards. Information and communication technology is used effectively to support religious education, as are visits to the local church.