

INSPECTION REPORT

ST SIDWELL'S CE COMBINED SCHOOL

Exeter

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113442

Headteacher: Mrs S Walker

Reporting inspector: Dr C Lee
21854

Dates of inspection: 8 – 11 October 2001

Inspection number: 193868

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: First and middle school

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 3 to 12 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: York Road
Exeter

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr M Lane

Date of previous inspection: 21 April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21854	Dr C Lee	Registered inspector	Science Music Physical education	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9999	Ms R Orme	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
7269	Mr P Kemble	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Geography History Information and communication technology	
23412	Mr A Jeffs	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language Mathematics Art and design	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
18926	Mr M Ridout	Team inspector	English Design and technology Foundation stage	
28178	Mr J Connor	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Sidwell's CE Combined School is bigger than the average primary school. The nursery has places for 26 children in both the morning and afternoon sessions. In reception to Year 7 there are 250 pupils on roll, slightly fewer than at the time of the last inspection. Boys significantly outnumber girls, by 155 to 95. Pupils are from a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds and are drawn from a wide area. The school is popular with families from overseas with one or more parent attending the Universities of Exeter and Plymouth. This contributes to over 15 per cent of the total pupils having English as an additional language, a high percentage compared with other schools. A range of 15 first languages are spoken by these pupils, the commonest being Arabic and Panjabi. Twenty-five per cent of pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs and this is slightly above the national average. However, three per cent of pupils have statements of special educational needs and this is average. The special needs cover a wide spectrum of learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, currently 22 per cent, is above average. There is a significant number of pupils who either join or leave the school during a school year, most usually because they are housed in temporary accommodation for short periods. This turnover is typically around 20 per cent each year but can rise to over 30 per cent. Children's attainment on entry to the nursery is below average overall. The inspection of collective worship and religious education has been carried out by a separate Diocesan inspection.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The underlying trend of improvement at St Sidwell's is the result of very good leadership and management and good teaching. For the first time, pupils' standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are now close to national averages in English and science and showing steady improvement in mathematics. Improvement is continuing at Key Stage 3 due to very good teaching. The school is exemplary in its preparation of pupils for life in a multicultural society and achieves this through its very good practice in all aspects of educational inclusion. The good effectiveness of the school and its good response to pupils' diverse learning needs are further enhanced by the breadth of learning opportunities in and out of classrooms. The good quality of education and rising standards, together with a good capacity to succeed still further, enable the school to provide good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher leads and manages the school very well, with good support from the deputy headteacher, other senior managers and the governing body.
- Good provision for the Foundation Stage and Key Stages 2 and 3 promotes good progress by pupils
- The overall quality of teaching is good
- A very strong commitment to educational inclusion permeates all aspects of school life
- Pupils' good all-round personal development and the high quality of relationships reflect the very good provision for their moral, social and cultural development
- Very good educational and personal support and guidance for pupils reflect the commitment to raising standards
- There is a good partnership with parents

What could be improved

- Standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 1 are not high enough
- Mathematics standards at the end of Key Stage 2 need to be raised further
- Teachers' expectations of pupils need to be consistently high throughout the school
- Rates of attendance should be higher

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in April 1997, just before the present headteacher was appointed. The good overall improvement since the last inspection has resulted from the headteacher's leadership and the support she has received from all staff and the governing body. Most of the weaknesses highlighted by the original key issues have been resolved very successfully. This is most obvious in the area of management, where a wide range of improvements were needed and very good improvement has occurred. The limitations in the curriculum have been overcome with good improvements at the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2. Improvements have not been so consistent in the areas identified for raising pupils' attainment. There is not yet whole-school consistency in the communication of high expectations by all teachers. Similarly, teachers still vary in the extent to which they are challenging more able pupils although this is now achieved well in literacy and numeracy. Standards in information and communication technology show considerable improvement at Key Stage 2 but this has not been matched in design and technology where they are unsatisfactory. Compared with judgements made at the last inspection, improvement is evident in many aspects of the school's work. The most significant progress has been achieved in the monitoring and evaluation of performance, the quality of teaching, pupils' relationships with one another and with adults and financial management. Inspectors are confident about the school's capacity for further improvement.

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				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
English	E	E	E	D	well above A average above B average C below average D well below average E
mathematics	E	E	D	C	
science	E	E	E	D	

The table above fails to indicate that, since 1999, results in National Curriculum tests have shown regular improvement, with the school's rising annual targets for the end of Key Stage 2 being achieved each year. These targets are based on careful predictions that take account of pupils' prior attainment and data such as percentages of pupils with special

educational needs or with English as an additional language. The percentages achieving the higher-than-expected Level 5 rose in all tests in 2001. Current Year 6 pupils are benefiting from good teaching and show good improvement compared with their own past performance and the school's previous end of key stage test results. They are in line to achieve national average standards in English and science by the end of the school year with mathematics being below average. The targets set for them in the 2002 tests could well be higher.

Pupils now in Year 7 are already showing improvement on the standards that they achieved last year although their work in English and mathematics remains below average while science is now average. A particular strength is French, in which standards are above average.

The 2001 test results for seven-year-olds show slight improvement on the previous year. Compared with schools nationally, they were average in reading, writing and science but well below average in mathematics. In 2001 the percentage achieving the higher Level 3 shows a particularly good improvement in reading and small improvements in the other tests. Work seen during the inspection is of a lower overall standard and showing some underachievement, being average in reading but below average in writing, mathematics and science.

In other subjects, pupils attain standards in line with national expectations at ages seven, eleven and twelve with two exceptions. At the end of Key Stage 2, work in information and communication technology is above expectations. However, design and technology standards are below expectations throughout the school. Key Stage 2 and 3 standards are broadly similar to those at the time of the last inspection, with a notable improvement in information and communication technology. At Key Stage 3, French has improved. Children enter the Foundation Stage with standards below expectations in all areas of learning. Their good progress results in them exceeding expectations at age five in personal, social and emotional development, meeting expectations in mathematical, creative and physical development but being below expectations in communication, language and literacy and knowledge and understanding of the world.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' good attitudes are reflected in their obvious enthusiasm for school and the work they do.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is satisfactory overall but varies considerably between classes. It is very good in Years 4 to 7 and at the Foundation Stage where it helps to establish a good atmosphere for work.
Personal development and relationships	Very good relationships exist between pupils and between pupils and staff, contributing to pupils' good overall personal development.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Attendance figures are below national averages, largely as a result of holidays being taken during term-time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6	Year 7

Quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory	Good	Very good
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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.

Variations in teaching and learning between the key stages are primarily the result of the differences in the expectations that teachers have of pupils and the varying quality of behaviour management. The latter is best in Year 7 but is closely matched by that in Years 4 to 6 and the Foundation Stage. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught satisfactorily at Key Stage 1, well at Key Stage 2 and very well at Key Stage 3. Common to all is the good provision for the development of pupils' writing skills, with much variety across the subjects at Key Stage 2 in particular. The needs of different groups of pupils are generally met well in numeracy and literacy lessons. Teaching of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language (EAL) is good. Work is generally carefully planned and the good quality of teaching by specialist teaching and support staff enables these pupils to progress at least satisfactorily and, in the case of EAL pupils, well. There is good provision for more able pupils in literacy and numeracy, where classes have been created for such pupils in Years 4 and 5 to be taught together. Provision for more able pupils in other years and subjects is less well planned and the school management plan places high priority on improvement in this area. All teachers use support staff well, briefing them thoroughly on the objectives of learning activities. The work of support staff is of good quality, especially in the nursery, where support of the highest quality is provided by the nursery nurse.

Pupils generally work hard and the oldest and youngest pupils show particularly good levels of concentration and interest. At Key Stage 1 there is a tendency for pupils to be over-reliant on adult support and they lack the independence that is shown by the end of the Foundation Stage.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Generally rich and varied, the quality of learning opportunities is very good in the Foundation Stage, good at Key Stages 2 and 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 1.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good overall. There is early identification, good liaison with parents and regular review of pupils' progress towards the good, specific targets that are set for them.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good provision that enables pupils to progress well in their learning.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall with strong emphasis and very good provision for moral, social and cultural development and good provision for spiritual development across the curriculum. Provision for multicultural education is a strength of the school.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school is a caring community providing very good support and guidance. There is good attention to ensuring pupils' welfare. Good procedures are now in place for assessing pupils' attainment and progress and these are guiding curriculum planning satisfactorily.

The school has a good partnership with parents. It works hard to develop links, providing a good variety of information and involving parents well in their children's education.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good overall. The headteacher leads the school very well with very good support from the deputy headteacher and other senior managers. Subject co-ordinators carry out their responsibilities well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The provision of constructive guidance and a very clear vision of the school's strengths and weaknesses ensure good fulfilment of responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school identifies priorities, sets itself targets and pursues effective courses of action for future improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Very good use of physical and human resources and very efficient management of the finances available.

Staffing levels, learning resources and the adequacy of accommodation are satisfactory overall. Internally, the school has made imaginative improvements to all parts of the building. The playground areas cause concern due to their size, slope and poor condition. The school applies the principles of best value well, challenging itself and securing good value for money in the services and resources that it acquires.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school • Children's good progress • The good standard of teaching • The information provided about their children's progress • How the school deals with their questions or problems • The school has high expectations of its pupils • The high quality of leadership and management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The homework set for pupils • The behaviour of some pupils • The way that the school works with parents • The range of activities outside lessons

Inspectors endorse all the aspects that please parents. Most of parents' concerns are not supported by the inspection team. The behaviour of a small minority of pupils is inappropriate at times but the school's policies promote good behaviour successfully for the most part. Concern about extra-curricular activities is not supported by inspectors because a very good range is provided that compares very well with that found in other schools. There is good provision for homework, consistent with school policy and often stimulating for pupils. The school is judged to work closely with parents on all issues relating to their children's education and all-round development.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children in the nursery class vary considerably in their attainment when they start school at age three but, on average, the formal baseline assessment that is carried out soon after children enter the school shows overall attainment to be below the expectations of three-year-olds. However, good teaching and a rich variety of learning opportunities in both the nursery and the reception class result in good progress by all children. By the end of the Foundation Stage, when children are five, their progress is such that they achieve above expectations of five-year-olds in their personal, social and emotional development. In other areas of learning, attainment is not quite as high but it has progressed sufficiently to meet the early learning goals that have been set for the Foundation Stage in mathematical, creative and physical development. Least progress occurs in the areas of communication, language and literacy and knowledge and understanding of the world. Here, attainment is below expectations at age five and reflects the fact that teaching, though good, does not compensate for the low attainment of the children when they start school.
2. The school's results in end of Key Stage 1 National Curriculum tests for seven-year-olds have fluctuated during the past five years. Performance in the reading and writing tests shows similar patterns, rising in 1997, dropping in 1998 and then rising since then. In mathematics, results rose in 1997, dropped in 1998 and 1999 and then rose in 2000 and 2001. Compared with all other schools in 2001, pupils' results were average in reading and writing and well below average in mathematics. Teacher assessment of science showed standards to be average. Compared with similar schools, reading and writing were above average, mathematics was well below average and science was average. The percentages of pupils who reached the higher-than-expected Level 3 improved on 2000 and were below average in reading, average in writing and well below average in mathematics and science. Compared with similar schools, the Level 3 percentages were above average in reading and writing and well below average in mathematics and science.
3. In the national tests for eleven-year-olds at the end of Key Stage 2, results overall from 1997 to 2001 show regular, albeit small, annual improvements but the extent of the rising trend that has occurred nationally has not been matched by the school. In 2001, compared with all schools, the results were well below average in English, below average in mathematics and well below average in science. Compared with similar schools, English was below average, mathematics was average and science was below average. The percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 in the tests was average in English and science but below average in mathematics. However, compared with similar schools, Level 5's were above average in English and science and average in mathematics. Two factors combine to have kept the school's results comparatively low in some of these comparisons. Firstly is the percentage of pupils with special educational needs which is around 25 per cent overall but higher in some year groups. The learning difficulties of many of these pupils are addressed successfully by the school, enabling them to achieve close to their potential which, by the age of eleven, is usually Level 3 in the tests. The second feature of the school population is the high number of pupils who attend for short periods due to their families being housed in temporary accommodation. Additionally, the majority of the pupils for whom English is an additional language are in the school for the two years that their parents attend higher education courses. A significant feature of test results in recent years has been the steadily improving standards of boys while girls' results have been declining. The school has responded to this trend by placing it as a high

priority in the current management plan, seeking in the first instance to remove the differential in literacy and develop strategies to produce similar progress by both. Inspection evidence of work in lessons confirms that this is being achieved.

4. The significant turnover of pupils each year has to be taken into account by the school when it sets targets annually for the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2. This turnover has been as high as 45 per cent in some year groups and is one reason why the school has not, in the past, compared well with similar schools. The school also uses all the information available about pupils' attainment in the past, including a very thorough analysis of pupils' performance in tests in Years 3, 4 and 5, to arrive at its predictions although such information is rarely available for pupils who join the school during Key Stage 2. In 2001, the targets were for 56 per cent of pupils to achieve Level 4 in English and 58 per cent in mathematics and both targets were achieved. The commitment to raising standards is seen in the increased targets for 2002 which are 64 per cent at Level 4 in both English and mathematics. Several facts are encouraging for the school. Percentages attaining Level 5 were 22 per cent in English, 19 per cent in mathematics and 31 per cent in science. These results, when compared with the far lower percentages attaining Level 3 in the tests taken by these same pupils when they were seven, indicate that the more able pupils are making good progress during Key Stage 2. The school's analysis of the results achieved by pupils who have been at the school for the whole of Key Stage 2 shows that they are very close to national averages in all three subjects.
5. The standards seen during the inspection show some differences from the results in the national tests, and also from the judgements of work seen in classes during the previous inspection. The latter were of work matching national averages in English, mathematics and science at the end of both key stages and in Year 7. This inspection judges that Year 2 pupils are in line to achieve standards at the end of the year that are average in reading but below average in writing, mathematics and science. As a group, these pupils are similar in ability to those now in Year 3 and therefore are showing some underachievement at present. Attainment in mathematics is a slight improvement on the well below average test result in 2001 but their overall progress could be improved if teacher expectations were higher. During the last four years, the headteacher has worked hard with teachers to increase their level of expectation of what pupils can achieve. This, plus new teacher appointments, is having a significant effect at Key Stage 2 where, by Year 6, pupils are now in line to achieve average standards in English and science by the end of the year. Mathematics remains below average. The targets set for current Year 6 pupils are reasonably challenging in relation to these pupils' prior attainment but could now be revised upwards to reflect the consistently very good teaching of these subjects by their class teacher.
6. The pupils who took the end of Key Stage 2 tests in 2001 are now in Year 7 and already, less than half a term in this class, their standards show improvement. This is due to the very good teaching that they are receiving. Their current work is below average in English and mathematics which represents good progress in English. In science, pupils are catching up rapidly and standards are average in the work covered so far.
7. The good quality of the learning opportunities, particularly at Key Stages 2 and 3, is enabling pupils of all ages to maintain satisfactory and sometimes good levels of achievement in most other subjects. Standards at ages seven, eleven and twelve are generally in line with the expectations at these ages in all other subjects. One notable area of success is information and communication technology. The previous inspection judged standards to be below expectations at the end of Key Stage 2 and in Key Stage 3. At the end of Key Stage 2, standards are now above expectations and they match expectations in Key Stage 3. This good improvement is a result of the

training that teachers have received, their better planning and teaching of the subject, the improved resources and the good subject leadership. Similar progress has been achieved in the provision for French in Year 7 that has raised standards to above average compared with average at the previous inspection. The same progress has not been achieved in design and technology and weaknesses in the subject, which led to it being judged by the previous inspection to be below expectations at the end of Key Stage 2, continue to exist. Although attention has been paid to planning what pupils are to learn, these developments are not yet seen in the quality of pupils' work. Standards are currently below expectations at all ages. In music, standards in singing are good and an improvement compared with the previous inspection. However, it is not possible to judge standards in other aspects of the subject due to lack of evidence. Music lessons in five out of the seven classes were timetabled for the day after the inspection ended and the school was unable to provide any valid evidence of pupils' work. This inability points to weaknesses in monitoring the subject when neither class teachers nor the subject co-ordinator are able to judge with any certainty the standards or progress being achieved.

8. In relation to their abilities, children at the Foundation Stage achieve well. Key Stage 2 and 3 pupils are showing satisfactory levels of achievement in most subjects but there is underachievement by many Key Stage 1 pupils in English and mathematics in particular. However, the progress made by the large majority of pupils with special educational needs is good and often very good. There is significant progress in reading and numeracy skills and also in connection with personal targets relating to listening, social skills such as taking turns and the reduction of inappropriate behaviour. They approach their work with confidence due to the good levels of support they receive within the school. These targets are clear, appropriate to pupils' needs and are reviewed regularly. The more able pupils are also achieving the standards that they are capable of when the work planned for them is suitably challenging. This varies between teachers and between subjects and is most evident in literacy and numeracy lessons generally and in other subjects in Years 4 to 7. Pupils for whom English is an additional language often take a short while to accommodate to their new school and many attend the school for only two years. Some subject areas are more difficult than others as a result of the language base required. Early on in their school career they are often unable to do justice to the ideas and feelings that they have, although most develop mathematical skills quite quickly. Progress for most of these pupils is good, and often very good, which means that as they move through the school they develop language and literacy skills which allow them to express themselves effectively and understand a greater range of concepts. The performance of pupils with English as an additional language in the top years of the school is impressive in that it seems little different to that of any other pupil within the school. However, staff are aware that some pupils perform below their potential during the period in which they are acquiring the new language. Progress is very dependent on the day-to-day support they receive from informed teachers.
9. The boy-girl differences in standards are less evident in class work than they have been in National Curriculum tests. The school population comprises significantly more boys than girls and this difference is present in most classes. One significant feature of lessons with older pupils is the tendency of boys to dominate class discussions. For example, boys are far more likely to volunteer answers to teachers' questions. Conversely, if pupils then move into groups to work together on an activity, girls tend to take over the leadership of such groups. While boys and girls appear to be playing different roles in these situations, actual differences in standards of written work are not evident.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. The good attitudes of pupils at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained. Relationships are very good and a strength of the school. Pupils of all faiths and ethnic backgrounds get on well together, and they show very high respect for each other's feelings, values and beliefs. The high quality of these relationships creates a delightful atmosphere in many aspects of life in the school. Pupils are very tolerant and well informed about different beliefs and value systems because of their studies in religious education and in personal, social and health education. They understand that their actions have an impact on other people. They are able to reflect on their own feelings, for example in assemblies and in Family Group discussion time, and to empathise with others. For example, in a Year 6 history lesson, pupils effectively imagined the feelings of evacuees in World War Two.
11. Nearly all parents report that their children are happy to come to school. Children in the nursery arrive confidently and cheerfully at the beginning of each session. Pupils are keen to take part in a wide range of activities and to help around the school. Year 6 and Year 7 'fielders' assist mealtime assistants with lunchtime arrangements. The wide range of extra-curricular clubs is well supported. Pupils are happy to talk about their school and speak to visitors with politeness and confidence. Pupils show initiative and personal responsibility when they are given the opportunity. The school council is well established, and representatives from Years 2 to 7 enjoy discussing their views of the school and making suggestions for improvements. These views are valued and acted upon by the school.
12. A significant percentage of pupils have some form of learning difficulty and a small minority have serious difficulties with behaviour. The positive attitude of all adults in the school means that good role models are set. The inspection team was impressed with the understanding, acceptance and respect shown by pupils to one another. In most cases this avoids the loss of confidence that some pupils might experience, while it also reduces the time that can be wasted in terms of disruption within the classroom.
13. Behaviour is very good in the Foundation Stage, and from Year 4 upwards. It is much more variable in Years 1 to 3. A small minority of parents are dissatisfied with behaviour in the school. In lessons where behaviour is good or better, pupils co-operate well and listen to each other's contributions; there is a warm and positive atmosphere. For example, in a Year 4 literacy lesson, pupils were alert, keen to work and attentive. Behaviour in assemblies is always good and pupils enjoy these occasions. However, some pupils are irresponsible and immature in some lessons and around the school. Where behaviour is unsatisfactory in lessons, restlessness and inattention spoil the flow of teaching and learning; pupils call out and even answer the teacher back. Teachers do not always deal with this unsatisfactory behaviour consistently so that pupils cannot learn the consequences of behaving poorly. Occasionally the restlessness is caused by too long an introduction to an activity by the teacher. The number of exclusions is above average, but they are used effectively and as a last resort for persistent extreme behaviour. The number of pupils involved is very small.
14. Attendance, at 91.6 per cent in 1999/2000, is unsatisfactory and well below the national average of 94.4 per cent. The school acknowledges this and has set a higher target of 93 per cent for 2001-2002. This has just been achieved in the first weeks of the autumn term. However, a significant number of parents keep their children away from school for term-time holidays. Unauthorised absence is also slightly above the national average. Punctuality is satisfactory. Registration procedures are correctly followed at the beginning of each session, and registers are accurately marked.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

15. The overall quality of teaching is good. Teaching ranges from excellent to unsatisfactory. Of the 66 lessons observed, 34 per cent of teaching was very good or better and this included three excellent lessons with the Year 7 class. A further 38 per cent of teaching was good and 24 per cent satisfactory. Unsatisfactory teaching occurred in two lessons where the very challenging behaviour of pupils was not managed successfully. Teaching is satisfactory overall at Key Stage 1, good at the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2 and very good at Key Stage 3. This overall picture is a significant improvement compared with the last inspection although there have been several staff changes in that time. The improved monitoring of the quality of teaching by senior management has had good impact.
16. The quality of learning is also good overall, being highest in the Foundation Stage and in Years 4 to 7 and indicating the effort that pupils in these classes are putting into trying to reach the high expectations that their teachers have of them. In these classes, all pupils respond very well to teachers and other adults and work conscientiously and co-operatively. Pupils maintain good levels of concentration and interest in their work at all times, including occasions when they are required to work independently. Here they show commendable maturity in their attitudes. The pace at which they work, and the amount of work produced are good overall although these vary according to the expectations laid down by individual teachers. Generally, where the teacher's delivery is brisk and expectations are high, the pupils respond by working quicker and achieving more. These many good features of pupils' learning are consistently highest in the Year 7 class. Conversely, Key Stage 1 pupils do not generally match the qualities of learning of pupils older and younger than them because teachers' expectations are not high enough. Pupils have stopped using some of the ability to think for themselves and get on with work independently of adults that they show in the reception class. This is shown when, for example, they have a writing task and sit passively waiting for adults to come and help them with spellings when the teacher has displayed many of the words on the wall or whiteboard. Teachers need to promote more actively strategies that reduce such dependence on adults. The pupils' ability to think for themselves is not lost, as was evident when creating their own sequences in a very well taught Year 1 gymnastics lesson. However, teachers are not consistently giving pupils such levels of responsibility for their own learning in the classroom.
17. Throughout the school, the relationships between teachers and other adults in the classroom with pupils are very good and teachers make good use of support staff to provide additional instruction and guidance for pupils. Support staff are briefed thoroughly and the quality of their guidance to pupils is good. These staff and volunteers have a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning and to the progress that they make in lessons.
18. Teachers' subject knowledge is good overall. It is very good in art and design and good in mathematics and science but there are weaknesses in design and technology that adversely affect pupils' standards. The teaching of basic literacy skills is good. Teachers are implementing the National Literacy Strategy very effectively by generally providing a good range of activities that are matched well to the needs of groups of pupils of different abilities. Teachers are successful at using lessons in subjects other than English to develop pupils' speaking, reading and writing skills. The National Numeracy Strategy is also implemented well. Teachers are confident and promote number work strongly. Teachers have a good overall knowledge of information and communication technology and they use this successfully to plan appropriate learning opportunities to support pupils' learning in other subjects.

19. Teachers vary in the effectiveness of their management of pupils' behaviour. When this is at its best, notably in Years 4, 5, 6 and 7, teachers make their expectations very clear and provide much positive comment whenever good behaviour occurs. This is also a consistent feature of teaching in the Foundation Stage where the expectations communicated so clearly by the teachers, nursery nurse and classroom assistants help children to understand very clearly how they are expected to behave and treat others. On the occasions where behaviour management lacks consistency or the firmness that may be required, lessons are less successful and teaching and learning are no more than satisfactory and, on a very few occasions, unsatisfactory. Other weaknesses in teaching are comparatively rare but there is most variation in the extent to which teachers carry out ongoing assessment of pupils' learning during lessons. This is generally insufficient at Key Stage 1 where it does not follow the Foundation Stage practice of teachers and the nursery nurse who note and assess learning while pupils are working at an activity. This information is then used well to plan the next stage in learning for individuals. A similar strategy is used in Year 7. For example, the teacher informed pupils of exactly what he would be assessing during a physical education lesson so that their future needs could be identified. Throughout the school the pupils themselves are insufficiently involved in self-assessment of what or how well they are learning. Most teachers plan and discuss with the class what it is intended that they all should learn by the end of a lesson but this is rarely refined to a level of communicating different learning targets for different groups or individuals.
20. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well. Most teachers use individual education plans well to develop appropriate tasks and materials. They use questioning very effectively to ensure that pupils whose understanding is still developing have time to think and answer appropriately worded questions. Teaching assistants provide skilled and sensitive support for these pupils. In one class, a pupil experiencing difficulties of concentration and appropriate behaviour works with an assistant, who also helps other pupils when appropriate. There is a sensitive balance between support and allowing independence. The majority of the work takes place in the classroom, but the pupil is withdrawn when his behaviour indicates privacy and separation from the larger group would be beneficial. In this way the needs of all pupils are sensitively considered. On the few occasions when individual difficulties are not taken into account there is a lack of appropriate equipment within the class and tasks and groupings have not been considered in enough detail. The specialist teaching and support by the identified special needs staff is of a very high quality. Pupils with learning difficulties receive teaching, counselling and a deep interest that assists greatly in their progress.
21. The teaching of pupils who have English as an additional language is good throughout the school. The school has the support of a specialist teacher and teaching assistant. The former is only at the school for a fifth of the week and school-based staff provide most of the teaching. This group of staff is well trained and receives good advice on a regular basis from the external specialist teacher. Inevitably, this training and the sensitivity and awareness of school-based staff has limitations in the full and effective development of pupils with additional language needs. The inspection team saw many very good examples of teaching relating to this aspect of work. Key vocabulary is used well and materials frequently prepared to assist these pupils. Where they have access to a teaching assistant or teacher, pupils start work quickly and feel confident. However, there are a number of occasions in all classes where time pressure means that a pupil does not receive the essential clarification of a task or a concept. Thus, in one science lesson a pupil carried out a task relating to the comparison of paper absorbency and completed the worksheet. It was only at the end of the lesson that it became clear that the meaning of 'absorbency' was not understood by the pupil. A simple demonstration built into the lesson would have helped.

22. Some parents have expressed concern about homework provision but inspectors do not share this concern. Provision is in line with the expectations set out in the homework policy. It is regular and relates well to what is being taught and learned in class lessons. In addition to literacy and numeracy tasks, pupils have occasional work in most other subjects that ensures a good variety in what is being done at home.

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

23. The previous report highlighted the need to develop a more balanced curriculum. Since that time, the school has worked hard to accomplish this and has been very successful. There is now a rich and varied curriculum. It is enriched by very high quality extra-curricular activities and the school's outstanding commitment to including all pupils in all activities within the school. There is still more work to be done in the first three years of primary schooling to teach the new curriculum in a way that ensures maximum progress by all pupils.
24. St. Sidwell's provides good opportunities for all pupils in the full range of National Curriculum subjects. Long- and medium-term subject planning is good and well monitored in all subjects. This planning is based on appropriate policies and schemes of work which are always relevant and good within subjects such as English, mathematics, history, geography, art and design and physical education. The curriculum co-ordinators are aware that this process is a developing one and have plans to review the content and teaching of the curriculum on a regular basis. Great care has been taken to ensure that individual needs are met by, for example, setting within mathematics, occasional withdrawal for individuals with language needs and attention difficulties and a thorough reading recovery programme. Both the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been introduced well and are now part and parcel of day-to-day teaching within English and mathematics throughout the school. This has led to very focused teaching in the later years of Key Stage 2 and an improving structure within lessons at Key Stage 1.
25. The taught curriculum is enriched considerably by a very wide range of lunchtime and after-school clubs and activities. Some, such as the lateral thinking club and the after-school enrichment class, are already having an impact on the thinking skills of some pupils. Many others, such as the music clubs, stamp club and clubs for computers, cooking and first aid, provide experiences for pupils that are highly valued as enjoyable and well run activities. The school has become involved with the 'Out of School Learning Project' and this has added to the extra experiences it offers. Project activities are organised very successfully by the Year 5 teaching assistant. All pupils have the opportunity to experience residential trips to France or Dartmoor. The Activities Week is a popular enrichment activity in the summer term and recent initiatives such as 'Kidstock' have been tremendously successful. All of the activities are well matched to the age, interests and abilities of the pupils involved. Key Stage 1 pupils have similar opportunities to their older peers. This provision represents considerable commitment and imagination on the part of the teachers, assistants and parents who run them. The quality and variety of these activities is impressive and inspectors do not support the view held by some parents that there is not an interesting range of opportunities for pupils outside lessons.
26. More than a fifth of the school population is formally identified as having English as an additional language. Nearly a quarter of the pupils has some form of special educational need. It is a tribute to the staff and management of the school that all children have equal access to everything within and beyond the taught curriculum. In addition, the atmosphere both around the school and within lessons is totally inclusive. Every child is welcomed and accepted as of equal worth and importance. The inspection team was impressed by this aspect of school life which is of a very high quality and is a major strength of the school.
27. High value is placed on personal, social and health education (PSHE). This has now been incorporated into the newly designed curriculum and will be monitored over the coming year. Within this aspect of work, pupils have appropriate and effective

teaching related to sex education and the misuse of drugs. In addition, good work is carried out within lessons such as the family group sessions that assists pupils with their development as healthy and sensitive young people.

28. The school has built some effective links with local businesses and community organisations. For example, a firm of insurance brokers regularly sends younger members of staff to listen to individual readers. They provide valuable role models within the school. A construction firm has built the pond in the wildlife area. The school maintains close links with the local church and the 'Initiative in Christian Education' organisation and works closely with the Arabic School which uses the school premises. All of these arrangements reflect the welcoming and inclusive ethos of the school. There are some links with other schools and involvement in local curriculum cluster groups. In addition, the school works well with the local education authority advisory team, both providing and drawing on curriculum expertise. There is a close contact with the University of Plymouth, particularly with regard to teacher training placements. There is scope for the school to develop its community, business and school links to increase the benefit to learning gained from these successful projects.

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

29. This is a significant strength of the school. The provision for the spiritual education of pupils is good, respecting the background and faith of all pupils. The provision for the moral and social growth is very good indeed. Cultural development is also very good and this marks an improvement on the standards identified as good within the last report.
30. Respect, celebration and valuing are qualities that are strongly emphasised within the spiritual life of the school. These are reflected in the high quality assemblies, where important messages are given in a way that is both instructive and acceptable to all pupils. In a very good assembly on the theme of 'hidden blessings', a Year 6 class uses its knowledge of the Second World War, their growing confidence in public speaking and their gymnastic skills to demonstrate how relationships develop at times of hardship. This is a topical and valuable message delivered in a most exciting and varied way. There is a very good balance between the strong Christian ethos of the school and respect and celebration of all faiths. This assists in the inclusion of every pupil into the spiritual life of the school.
31. All pupils are aware of the school's values and know the meaning of right and wrong. This is enforced sensitively throughout the school and is particularly impressive in the consistency of discipline within the majority of classes. In addition, the reward system works well to reinforce the clear moral code that is spelt out in the school rules. There is little evidence of blame being used unnecessarily and, overall, there is a very constructive approach to good behaviour which emphasises what is beneficial to society and what is harmful. This strength and consistency has a clear and positive effect on the moral development of pupils.
32. By Year 7 pupils at St Sidwell's are well on the way to being responsible and thoughtful citizens. This arises from the careful attention to social skills and citizenship that the school provides. Lessons provide a range of social settings, groups, pairs and whole class, within which pupils work. There is a strong emphasis on how to work in collaboration and the importance of turntaking and respect for the views of others. Thus, in a Year 1 mathematics lesson pupils work in pairs with number fans to produce the answer for doubling questions in mental mathematics, while in a good Year 4 lesson for more able pupils there is good discussion in small groups relating to the development of the concept of percentages. Discussions to

round off lessons in many subjects encourage pupils to participate and listen to the ideas and views of others. In art and design, physical education, science and many other subjects, the inspection team were impressed by the collaboration and willingness to listen displayed by pupils in small and large groups. By Years 6 and 7 pupils have developed a mature way of working and show an adult approach to many topics from sex education to evaluating each other's art work. Both the school council and the work carried out in family groups add to the social provision and the maturity it generates.

33. Cultural education is now very good. There are many opportunities for pupils to visit museums and exhibitions. They meet artists, writers, poets and musicians who come into the school. They take a full part in their own pop festival and plant trees with the Devon Wild Life organisation. In keeping with its respect for all faiths, the school has good multicultural resources and uses festivals, displays and the pupils themselves to help everyone understand better why and how we interpret our world. Thus, at the end of Ramadan a parent brings in cake for her child and more for the whole class. This typifies both the recognition of individual beliefs and also the importance of sharing what is good about each. The displays within the school back this up in a very colourful way. All pupils have very good opportunities to experience and reflect on life and beliefs in a wide range of countries.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

34. The school provides very good educational support and guidance for pupils which helps to raise their achievements. Additional literacy work, booster classes and the provision of learning support assistants are good examples of this. Pupils are helped to set targets and to evaluate their performance, but targets need to be more tightly defined to be fully effective and self-evaluation needs to occur more frequently. Staff know pupils very well and work hard to help them to become mature. The care shown towards pupils who have specific difficulties is good. Staff know in detail the problems individual pupils experience, learning, physical, sensory and emotional. They use this knowledge to provide a consistent and appropriate programme of work. In social contexts this same awareness ensures that pupils receive responses that assist in their own self-control and learning development.
35. Arrangements for child protection are very good and meet statutory requirements. The school makes good use of a wide range of external agencies to support the welfare, development and behaviour of pupils. The school nurse makes an effective contribution to the welfare of pupils and liaises well with parents to achieve this. The school is well aware of the need for confidentiality about sensitive matters. Health and safety is given appropriate priority, but the surface of the playground and the arrival of cars at the end of the day during a physical education lesson give cause for concern.
36. The school has effective procedures for monitoring and improving attendance, but progress in raising rates is slow. There is further scope for the school to reward highest-attending classes or individuals to encourage more regular attendance.
37. Procedures are good for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. The behaviour policy is clear, and parents and pupils understand the system of rewards and sanctions. Where the policy is applied systematically, behaviour is generally good. However, in some classes, inconsistent approaches to the management of behaviour do not achieve good results so that pupils are rude to the teacher or refuse to obey instructions. Calling out and failing to take turns to answer are not routinely discouraged in some classes. Mealtime assistants generally provide satisfactory care but they occasionally fail to watch all areas of the playground and different groups of

children. The school eliminates oppressive behaviour well so that there was no evidence of racism or bullying during the inspection. The school has a delightful atmosphere in which differences are celebrated.

Assessment

38. The school's procedures for the assessment and monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress are good. Since the time of the last inspection the school has made good progress in ensuring that the assessment and marking of pupils' work are directed at identifying targets for the next stage of learning. The procedures for recording pupils' attainments are clear in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. The picture is mixed in the other subjects and in some cases little evidence of pupils' attainment and progress is recorded. The school is aware of this shortcoming and has plans to develop and implement a whole-school approach covering all subjects. A strength of the school's approach to assessment is the rigorous analysis of test results. There is a well-planned programme of standardised and national tests and half-termly assessments of units of work. The strategic use of the evidence gained from the results of tests and teacher assessments is used well to group pupils, set individual learning targets and to focus resources. Areas for improvement are the records of pupils' attainment which do not always provide a clear enough picture of what individuals and groups know, understand and can do. These records do not always enable teachers to plan the next stage of learning as effectively as they might. The good practice of some teachers in linking day-to-day assessments to the objectives for learning identified in planning is not consistent across the school.
39. Procedures begin with a baseline assessment that is rigorously implemented at the beginning of the children's time in the reception class. The information gained is appropriately used to move the children's learning forward. Arrangements for the statutory tests and assessments at the ages of seven and eleven are in line with national procedures. As part of the school's strategy to raise standards a well considered programme of regular tests is implemented across the school. The main focus of these tests is to monitor the pupils' attainment in literacy and numeracy. The results are systematically collated and used well to track pupils' progress through the school. The senior staff analyse the test results to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' performance. This information is used well to predict individual levels of attainment, guide target setting and to form teaching groups and sets.
40. The use made of assessments to help plan the next stage of learning is satisfactory overall. The teachers make good use of the information provided in pupils' reports, individual attainment profiles and reading records to organise their classes, especially at the beginning of the school year. They maintain record files which clearly chart pupils' attainment in tests. Most teachers regularly record what pupils have covered and what they have learned in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. However, the day-to-day arrangements to provide a picture of what individual pupils, or groups of pupils, know, understand and can do, is widely variable and does not generally provide a clear enough picture across all subjects.
41. Some teachers regularly record assessments of pupils' achievements and areas of difficulty in their weekly evaluations of planning. This good practice is having a positive impact on the rate of pupils' learning. In the teaching of literacy, for example, both the able and less able groups of pupils in the older age groups benefit because the teaching identifies what individuals can or cannot do and this information is used well to adjust the programme of work. Overall, there was little evidence of the recording of assessments linked to the clear learning objectives identified in teachers' planning, nor was there significant evidence of assessing pupils' day-to-day achievements against National Curriculum criteria. The monitoring of standards in some subjects is strengthened by the work of co-ordinators. The writing profiles are particularly well maintained. The work is accurately assessed and clearly annotated

using appropriate assessment criteria. The collections of work in other subjects are of variable quality. However, the pupils' records of achievement provide a broad picture of standards and progress across the school, but in some cases the examples seen were not annotated to indicate if any assessments had been made.

42. Teachers' marking often plays a significant role in assessing pupils' knowledge and understanding. In Year 7, for example, the marking and presentation policy is rigorously implemented but practice is variable across the school. The better examples of marking include comments that make clear whether pupils have completed tasks well and explain what they can do to improve their performance. Such good practice is most evident in Years 4 to 7. The pupils in this age range are made aware of learning targets for the whole class, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and the majority have an appropriate understanding of their own targets in these areas.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

43. Parents have positive views of the school. The majority feel that the school works closely with them, and nearly all feel comfortable about approaching the school with a problem. The school undertakes surveys of parents to canvass their views and ideas and these reflect similar support. The good partnership with parents has been maintained since the last inspection.
44. The school provides parents with a wide range of information about the curriculum, events and general news. The prospectus and letters to parents are detailed and sometimes wordy, so that some parents may find them difficult to read and understand. Particular efforts are made to ensure that the parents of pupils with English as an additional language are fully informed about what is going on and encouraged to take part in the life of the school. Some overseas parents provide help with interpretation. The partnership with families from overseas is particularly successful and reflects the hard work of the school in this area.
45. Parents are given good information about the progress their child is making through consultation evenings and the annual written reports. Reports meet statutory requirements and give good information about what pupils know, understand and can do in each subject, as well as indicating areas for improvement. Most parents feel well informed about their child's progress. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are always involved in reviews of statements and often become closely involved in the other individual education plans. All planning includes targets or recommendations for parents and pupils as well as teachers. Imaginative initiatives such as assistance with reading, setting up family groups and developing a professional group to deal with complex needs all have a significant degree of parental involvement and they are kept fully informed.
46. The school effectively encourages parents to contribute to its work. Parents are invited to help in class or to accompany educational visits. Four parents joined a Year 2 design and technology lesson to assist pupils with pinning patterns to felt and with sewing to make a glove puppet. A number of parents organise events for the Friends of St Sidwells, whilst others regularly help in Foundation Stage classes or by leading extra-curricular activities.
47. The majority of parents encourage the completion of homework. Some parents do not ensure that their children attend school as regularly as they should, and a number of parents choose to keep their children away from school for term-time holidays. Such absences reduce the overall progress made by the pupils concerned.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

48. Leadership and management of the school are very good. This judgement particularly reflects the qualities of the headteacher who was appointed shortly after the previous inspection. That inspection highlighted a number of weaknesses in the management of the school that she has systematically and very successfully rectified. School management has been further strengthened by the contribution of the deputy headteacher. In the short time since her appointment in April 2001 she has quickly developed managerial strengths that combine very good support for and a sharing of vision with the headteacher. She provides skilled, very effective guidance for other teachers in the development of their roles as subject co-ordinators. Individually, the co-ordinators of the Foundation Stage and Key Stages 2 and 3 are very effective in their roles. The former has recently added Key Stage 1 to her responsibilities and this is good delegation that will enable current concerns with the transition of children from the Foundation Stage to the slightly different working methods in Key Stage 1 to be addressed. These key staff have comparatively recently started working collaboratively as a senior management team and already provide ample evidence of their shared commitment to school improvement and ability to work as an efficient decision-making body. Each team member has clearly defined responsibilities and this adds to the overall efficiency with which management of the school is conducted.
49. The clarity of the headteacher's priorities for school improvement is the driving force behind the very good, purposeful leadership that has moulded teaching and non-teaching staff into a well-integrated, very effective team with a strong sense of purpose and very good working relationships. This enables the school's relevant aims and values to be integrated very well in all its work. All staff show high levels of concern for pupils' welfare. There is thus a very positive ethos that reflects the school's commitment to creating a caring environment for all pupils in which they are helped to achieve improving standards in their academic and personal development.
50. Staff with responsibilities as subject co-ordinators fulfil their responsibilities very successfully. The school management plan is much improved from that at the time of the previous inspection. The current plan, with its identification of priorities for three-year periods, has an ongoing programme of focusing on several subjects each year. Co-ordinators are thus able to structure their own three-year action plans to reflect the school's priorities. Over this period, each co-ordinator's planning has a good, manageable balance between monitoring subject standards and quality of teaching, training opportunities and maintenance tasks such as resource review. Detailed plans are written for the current school year and these have clear success criteria for each task within the plans. Curriculum leadership groups have recently been created to provide cohesion to future curriculum planning and monitoring. These three groups have clear terms of reference and will enable whole-school provision in subjects to be regularly reviewed and compensate for any lack of experience that an individual co-ordinator may have of a particular stage. A further good feature of delegation within the school is the use of specialist subject expertise, enabling Key Stage 3 pupils to be taught French by a part-time specialist and art and design. The high quality of teaching by these specialists is the main reason for the high standards achieved in these subjects by the pupils.
51. The school has a strong commitment to the educational inclusion of all pupils and implements a policy of equal opportunities thoroughly in all aspects of provision. The success with which policy is put into practice is indicated by all groups of pupils being seen as special while all are treated exactly the same. The outcomes from this approach are pupils who are prepared very thoroughly for life in a multicultural community, well informed and appreciative of the values of each group within that community. None of the barriers to learning that are sometimes experienced by

different groups are evident at St Sidwell's. The school believes that '...the curriculum should aim to provide opportunities for all pupils to learn and to achieve'. It fulfils this aim very well in its provision for pupils who have English as a additional language or come to England from overseas. The EAL specialist teacher provides good leadership and the specialist teaching assistant sets a very good role model for EAL teaching. Resources and training are good. EAL work relates to nearly 20 per cent of the school population, a very similar situation to special educational needs which has a school-based co-ordinator. The EAL co-ordinator, on the other hand, is based at the school for the equivalent of one day per week. The good work already carried out would be further enhanced by more time identified for school-based management and specialist teaching. This is an issue that the school can usefully address to further improve the good progress being made.

52. The senior management of the school is strongly committed to the appropriate resourcing of special educational needs (SEN) work. The chair of governors is also the SEN governor and provides regular and interested support for the co-ordinator. The co-ordinator herself provides very good leadership within the field of learning difficulties. Planning, timetabling, recording, training and assessment are all of a good quality. She is ably assisted by a group of experienced and skilled teaching assistants. Resources for supporting special needs work are good and good use is made of accommodation to ensure that the teaching and administration of this aspect of the school's work is valued. Care is taken to match adult support to pupils and training is often given. However, there are occasions when specialist training could be provided in more detail and a little earlier to ensure the most informed support from the beginning of the child's educational career.
53. The school has good systems for monitoring and evaluating its own performance. This is as a result of the headteacher's successful introduction of a range of procedures for monitoring and evaluating the curriculum, the quality of teaching and the standards of pupils' work. Teaching of literacy and numeracy is monitored very effectively, resulting in refinements of teachers' skills that, in turn, have had a good impact on standards of pupils' work. Much progress has been made in raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and this work, although needing further emphasis at Key Stage 1, has been very significant in raising standards to the levels now being achieved by the end of Key Stage 2. Standards of pupils' work are also monitored very effectively through thorough analysis of National Curriculum assessment test papers each year. This highlights strengths, weaknesses and trends and when the data indicates areas for concern, such as the differences in performance between boys and girls, the school is quick to act. The trend of improving standards by boys while girls' standards are declining is a main priority for attention in the current management plan, with the objective of securing equal improvement by all. Monitoring of pupils' work is also a regular feature of the work of subject co-ordinators. This provides an ongoing check on the standards that pupils are achieving, indicates the sort of standards that new teachers should be expecting and ensures that planning builds on what has been learned before. Performance monitoring and evaluation is thus a very practical tool that teachers use to ensure that learning is tailored to pupils' needs. Likewise, the arrangements for performance management that have recently been adopted are setting clear targets for teachers to work towards within their own professional development.

The governing body

54. As at the time of the previous inspection, the governing body fulfils all its statutory responsibilities and it makes a good contribution to school development. The effectiveness of its monitoring of provision and standards has improved since the last inspection. The school's overall management is strengthened by the very good

working relationship that has quickly developed between the headteacher and the governing body. The governing body provides good support for the work of the school and individual members visit the school to assist in a variety of ways. Through their visits and liaison with co-ordinators, governors are very familiar with the school's working methods. There is constructive monitoring of the school's developments by the governing body through visits and the reports received from teaching staff. The headteacher consults widely about proposed improvements, seeking the contributions of all staff and governors and developments proceed with the commitment of all concerned. As a result, the school management plan provides a good framework for school improvement and combines review of what has been achieved in the previous year with appropriate detail of prioritised targets for the current year. The financial and resource implications, including the demands on personnel, are identified and detailed costings and measures of success are included. The governing body has carefully monitored the action plan that followed the last inspection and parents have been regularly informed of progress with that action plan.

55. The governing body's finance committee has a clearly defined role. Governors are fully meeting their responsibilities in relation to budget setting and expenditure is carefully monitored. The governing body thoughtfully evaluates the cost-effectiveness of major spending decisions through the reports of the headteacher and its own monitoring. Governors compare the school's results with national averages and those for schools with a similar intake. A desire for high standards and improvement is central. These instruments enable the governing body to have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

Strategic use of resources

56. The school has a very efficient approach to financial management and effective use is made of available funding to improve pupils' education. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the impact of spending on standards are good and represent a good improvement on those reported at the time of the previous inspection. Governors give considerable thought to budget spending decisions and use of contingency funds to make sure that there are improvements to the quality of teaching and learning as a result. For example, additional learning support assistants have been provided to help teachers manage the provision for pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language. Grants for special educational needs and finance from the National Grid for Learning initiative are used efficiently and effectively. The school successfully applies best value procedures to all its financial transactions. Procedures for the day-to-day financial control and management of the school budget, including spending by subject co-ordinators, and other monies, such as petty cash and school dinner money, are very good. Recommendations from the most recent school audit have been met.

Staffing

57. The number, qualifications and experience of teachers and support staff to meet the demands of the curriculum are good. The school has a satisfactory ratio of teachers to pupils and a good number of additional learning support assistants. The special needs co-ordinator does not have a class responsibility. Consequently, she is able to concentrate on giving very good support to identified individuals and groups of pupils, as well as working alongside teachers in their classrooms. Procedures for helping teachers new to the school and supply teachers are good. The support programme for newly qualified teachers is very effective and a strong emphasis is given by mentors to tailoring the programme to meet each teacher's specific needs. For example, the newly qualified teacher on the staff has opportunities to reflect on and

develop her classroom practice and expertise away from the classroom, including training visits to other schools.

58. There is an extensive programme of training for teachers and support assistants, which is linked closely to initiatives in the school management plan as well as to needs identified by staff. For example, governors and senior staff are responding to a request from learning support assistants for more training in the use of information and communication technology. The national performance management policy is implemented well. Administrative staff deal efficiently with parents and visitors. They work effectively to reduce the amount of time teachers need to spend on paperwork. The school administrator keeps an efficient check on the budget and her financial knowledge and expertise is used effectively by governors because she attends all finance committee meetings. The school caretaker and cleaning staff maintain the school well and the school is kept very clean and tidy. Lunchtime staff and the school cooks make a valuable contribution to the smooth running of the school at midday, although a relatively high turnover of staff means regular training is necessary to maintain consistency in the quality of lunchtime provision.

Accommodation

59. The school's accommodation provides a good range of specialist rooms and reasonable sized classrooms. The governors have worked hard over the last few years to improve the décor and facilities and, as a result, rooms are light and well furnished. The original school building contains a brand new administrative area, computer suite, attractive assembly area, staffroom, five classrooms and an office for the special needs co-ordinator. Effective use is made of all these areas. They are displayed with many examples of pupils' work so that they are interesting and inviting to work in. An extension to the main building contains a hall, five classrooms, a food technology room and library areas. These are also well used and the governors and staff have showed ingenuity in making best use of a variety of small spaces created by the necessity for this extension to be built on two levels on a sloping site. The point where the old and the new buildings join is a busy thoroughfare with some awkward steps leading from the playground down to the hall entrance and to classrooms. This area is open to the weather and teaching and non-teaching staff maintain constant vigilance, particularly when the weather is wet, to ensure pupils' safety. Playground areas to the front of the school are of a reasonable size, but surfaces are in a poor state of maintenance and are not particularly safe for pupils to use during outside games lessons or at playtimes without constant reminders from staff to take care. Teachers make good use of the grass areas around the school to support several curriculum subjects, such as science, art and design, geography and physical education. Parents have contributed significantly to the development of an environmental area. There is a secure outside play area for pupils in the Foundation Stage. Overall, staff and pupils use the good accommodation and facilities efficiently and effectively.

Learning resources

60. The school has a satisfactory range of learning resources for most subjects throughout the school. Materials and equipment available for children in the Foundation Stage are of good quality. Literacy is particularly well provided for and governors and staff have made effective use of national funding, as well as finances from the school budget, to provide a good quantity of quality reading materials. There are good levels of resourcing in art and design and music. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from a wide range of suitable materials and the promotion of multicultural education is enhanced by a variety of quality books and artefacts. There is a good quantity of computers and printers in the computer suite and in and

around classrooms and these are used regularly. However, equipment varies considerably in age and usefulness and technical problems were common in lessons during the inspection. There is not enough software to support most areas of the curriculum satisfactorily. All other subjects of the curriculum have at least a satisfactory quantity and quality of resources, although the teaching of design and technology would benefit from additional tools and materials. Teachers make good use of resources obtained from outside sources to support pupils with English as an additional language, but the school has few of its own resources. Very good use is made of the local area to support pupils' learning, particularly in geography and history, and there are regular visitors to the school who extend pupils' experiences, for instance in the creative arts and sport.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

61. In order to improve the standards of work and the quality of education, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) raise standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 1 by more frequently assessing the progress that pupils are making and communicating higher expectations of pupils; (paragraphs 5, 16, 19, 40, 77, 78, 82, 89, 90, 93, 96, 100)
- (2) raise standards in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 by continuing the effective implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy, ensuring consistency in marking and assessment of pupils' work and making more use of information and communication technology to support pupils' mathematical learning; (paragraphs 5, 89, 91, 123)
- (3) improve the rate of pupils' attendance by rewarding high attendance and by discouraging more rigorously the incidence of pupils having holidays during term-time. (paragraphs 14, 36, 47)

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

- (4) extend existing examples of good practice in assessment to ensure consistency across the school; (paragraphs 19, 38, 40, 41)
- (5) further improve provision for pupils with English as an additional language by establishing a system of day-to-day management; (paragraphs 21, 38, 40, 51)
- (6) raise standards in design and technology throughout the school. (paragraphs 7, 108, 110)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	66
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	29

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	20	25	16	2	0	0
Percentage	4	30	38	24	4	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 point five percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y7
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	25	250
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	55

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y7
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	61

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	30

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	45
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	42

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.7
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	19	10	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	11	15
	Girls	10	10	10
	Total	24	21	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	83 (76)	72 (68)	86 (76)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	15	16
	Girls	10	10	10
	Total	26	25	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (71)	86 (76)	90 (84)
	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	23	14	37

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	11	16
	Girls	10	10	10
	Total	22	21	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	59 (50)	57 (53)	70 (71)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	n/a	n/a	n/a
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	n/a (56)	n/a (56)	n/a (65)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

*n/a - results are not available

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	183
Any other minority ethnic group	32

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	14	0
Other minority ethnic groups	1	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 – Y7

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26.9
Average class size	31.3

Education support staff: YR – Y7

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	225

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.0
Total number of education support staff	2.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	50
Number of pupils per FTE adult	8.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	610,614
Total expenditure	620,696
Expenditure per pupil	2,075
Balance brought forward from previous year	25,441
Balance carried forward to next year	15,359

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
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	275
Number of questionnaires returned	93

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	29	6	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	47	47	3	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	49	10	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	31	14	3	13
The teaching is good.	61	33	2	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	48	41	8	0	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	28	3	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	40	4	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	45	39	11	1	4
The school is well led and managed.	54	35	4	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	39	9	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	42	15	2	8

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

63. The quality of provision for children under five is very good. This is a particular strength of the school. This judgement represents an improvement since the last inspection when the provision was judged to be good. In particular the school is making good progress in building on national guidance to further enhance its curricular programme. This provision is distinctive and closely tailored to the learning needs of children between the ages of three and five.

The main strengths are:

- The good standards achieved in the children's personal, social and emotional development
- Good teaching and support, especially the high expectations of the adults
- The rich and relevant curriculum
- Very positive relationships and the supportive ethos
- Children of all abilities and backgrounds make good progress and achieve good levels of independence by the age of five

Areas for development are:

- Improve the day-to-day use of assessments, to track and target children more precisely, and thereby move their learning forward even more effectively
- Provide more information for parents about the work of the Foundation Stage and consider different ways of presenting this information to interest and inform the varied readership

64. The children come to school with a very wide range of attainments. The youngest attend the nursery class part time. Children transfer to full-time schooling in the reception class in the September or January of the school year their fifth birthday is reached. All of the children, including those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language, make good progress towards the early learning goals in each of the six areas of learning that make up the curriculum. By the age of five the children attain good standards in their personal, social and emotional development, and satisfactory standards in their mathematical, creative and physical development. Although progress is good, this is often in relation to a low starting point in early literacy skills, and as a result the majority of children do not fully attain the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy and in knowledge and understanding of the world.

Teaching and provision

65. The overall quality of teaching for children in the Foundation Stage is good. In the lessons observed the teaching ranged from satisfactory to very good. In the nursery, two sessions were satisfactory and the rest were good. In the reception class the range was satisfactory in one instance, good in three lessons and very good in three lessons. The nursery nurse makes a very positive contribution to the teaching of the nursery- and reception-age children. The impact of the good teaching is reflected in the good progress made by all the children, irrespective of ability, gender or background. The staff have a good understanding of the learning needs of children in this age range. They have high expectations and skilfully create a learning environment where the children feel valued. Effective strategies are used to bring learning alive, such as dressing up some of the children when discussing rainy days

and disguising the controllable robot as 'Elmer' to help the children link several elements of their learning together. The teaching is most effective where the children are invited to join in activities, such as making a patchwork quilt and the adults use questioning to develop discussion and create opportunities to reinforce the use of key vocabulary such as 'big' and 'small'. In most lessons the whole-class teaching sessions are used well to develop the children's knowledge and understanding and the well-established routines help to ensure the children quickly settle to a task. However, occasionally the activity sessions last too long and the children begin to lose interest.

66. The quality of the curriculum is very good. The school is making good progress in developing a distinctive curriculum for the children under five. The quality of planning is good and the school is developing a two-year scheme of work based on this provision. The arrangements for making baseline assessments in reception are well established and there are good arrangements for the adults to track the children's learning in both classes. This is most effective where assessments are linked to what the children know and can do, as well as recording their participation in a task. However, the results of day-to-day assessments are not always used as effectively as they could be to promote the learning of particular children.
67. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage is good. There is an action plan setting appropriate priorities for improvement. The provision of learning resources is good and recent improvements have considerably enhanced the outdoor learning environment. The school has good links with parents and carers. The informal daily contacts at school are both friendly and relaxed. The school plans to develop information booklets about the Foundation Stage and is aware of the need to cater more effectively for a varied audience in its written communications. There are good induction arrangements for children joining the nursery and several parents regularly assist in the classroom. The school regularly provides student placements and these opportunities are mutually beneficial.

Personal, social and emotional development

68. When they first attend the nursery, a significant number of children have immature skills in their personal, social and emotional development. By the time they leave the reception class the majority exceed the early learning goals set for them. This shows good achievement and reflects the skilful teaching in both the nursery and reception classes. The children are encouraged to join in all activities and quickly gain confidence in the friendly atmosphere. They happily play and work together in both classes and sometimes in mixed-age groups.
69. The adults provide very good examples for the children to follow. This effectively fosters trusting relationships and helps the children to understand one another's point of view and to show consideration for each other. For example, as they listened to the story of 'Elmer' the children in reception knew that it was natural to be different. The children in both classes enjoy their learning, for instance when exploring the sounds made by musical instruments. Their behaviour is very good and they are developing a good understanding of what is right and wrong. The teaching promotes children's personal development effectively by ensuring that all the equipment and resources that the children use are easily accessible to them. The regular opportunities for independent learning, where the children can work in mixed-age groups, supports them well in developing a good level of independence. The children show a growing independence in dressing, and personal hygiene is encouraged well by the staff.

Communication, language and literacy

70. The children come to the nursery with a very wide range of early literacy skills. The staff are aware that the children learning English as an additional language understand much of what they hear through the adults' use of gestures, signs and pictures. The staff provide sound support for these children and communicate meaning well in this way so that the children understand the classroom routines and activities. The children in reception enjoy telling their news and communicate reasonably confidently even if the language used is sometimes in words and phrases rather than sentences. Where teaching focuses on developing speaking and listening skills, such as through reading an interactive story with the children using a microphone for their responses, the children make good progress. By the end of reception, standards have risen but are still below the expected standards in speaking and listening for the majority.
71. In both the nursery and reception classes the children enjoy listening to stories and often choose to look at books. These positive attitudes are promoted well by the good reading displays. For example, in the 'jungle' and the book areas the attractive selection of books successfully encourages children to sit and 'read'. In the nursery the children are fascinated by the illustrations and excitedly act out familiar stories. The children in reception know that print tells them what the story is about and are starting to recognise words. They make up appropriate stories to go with the pictures using simple language and start at the front and go on to the back. Children make good progress in developing reading skills through the good teaching of phonic skills and are developing their knowledge of alphabet sounds and names well. Effective teaching ensures that children recognise their own name in the nursery and by reception write it unaided. The children make good progress in developing pencil skills. For example, the children in reception make good use of the writing area to write cards to 'Elmer' and to practise letter formation. Several of the children are on track to reach the early learning goals in reading, although aspects such as retelling and understanding the meaning of stories are less well developed due to their language development.

Mathematical development

72. By the end of the reception year, the majority of children meet the standards expected for their age in mathematics. They count to ten, recognise the number symbols and some count beyond this with increasing accuracy. They are familiar with a range of number rhymes and counting games that reinforce their learning well. The children are developing correct mathematical language for two-dimensional shapes, and size and quantity, such as 'big' and 'small'. The youngest children, for example, fill flowerpots with compost and compare them using words like 'bigger' and 'smaller'.
73. The good mathematics teaching in both classes places a strong emphasis on learning through practical experiences and using mathematics in a wide range of activities, such as counting games and making patterns. The older children developed a clear understanding of repeating patterns from making a patchwork design. Such activities enable the children to make good progress. The organisation of mathematics activities is good. The staff plan work for small groups, such as matching and comparing big and small items in the nursery, and they emphasise appropriate vocabulary that promotes the children's learning well. For example, children playing in the 'sand jungle' knew whether the animals were big or small. Lessons in numeracy are thoroughly planned in the reception class with good use of interesting resources, such as a number line, a computer program and a variety of 'matching' games. These help children practise sequencing their numbers. The use of enjoyable number games and a good variety of resources to help the children explore shapes and patterns makes learning fun and effective.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

74. Many children come to the nursery class with only limited general knowledge. The staff in the Foundation Stage classes plan a wide range of activities and experiences that effectively develop the children's learning. For example, the children choose appropriate clothes to dress for a rainy day and they use masks to help them act out an animal story. They experiment with wet and dry sand and learn the names of animals whilst sorting them. In reception the children confidently investigate materials and colour patterns by using a torch to make reflections in the 'shiny den'. They use technology equipment well, such as controlling a simulation program on the computer by using the mouse skilfully. Effective teaching ensures the children learn to program a controllable robot, dressed as 'Elmer', complete with a patchwork jacket. This makes learning fun and the children begin to predict the instructions needed for a particular journey. Children in both classes confidently use construction kits to make models. They talk very simply about their homes and families and use colour words to describe their paintings of animals such as the leopard and tiger. Some of the children's knowledge and understanding of the world is affected by their ability to ask questions about why things happen, how things work and to talk about features in the place they live. This means that at the end of the reception year the majority do not fully meet the expectations of the early learning goals.

Creative development

75. The children have a wide range of materials to explore in both classes. The teaching enables the children to make good progress and they achieve the early learning goals at the end of reception. They have good opportunities to draw, paint and explore colour. A painting or drawing activity is always available as a free choice activity. The children also model and explore shapes using play dough and in both classes they enjoy singing a range of rhymes and action songs. They use their imagination well in role-play activities, such as in the 'jungle' where they pretend to be the animals. The teaching effectively encourages and praises children's work and this means that they take care over their art work and proudly show it in assembly, for example.

Physical development

76. Children in the nursery class quickly develop an understanding of how to move safely with an awareness of space during their lessons in the hall and sessions outside. In reception the children move confidently, with good control and co-ordination. They make good progress and the majority achieve the early learning goals in all aspects of physical development by the age of five. The children in both classes have regular opportunities to play with large wheeled toys and construction blocks, as well as sand and water. In a physical education lesson, good teaching used musical games as a 'warm up' activity and the nursery children developed a wide range of movements linked to animals, such as the monkey and crocodile. The children in both classes also use a range of tools and materials confidently during practical activities in the classroom. In the nursery, for example, the children learn to cut and stick when making a collage picture of 'Elmer' and in reception the children cut and stick carefully and accurately when making patterns for a quilt. They know that you have to be careful with scissors and this results from good teaching that promotes an awareness of safety.

ENGLISH

77. Overall, standards in English have declined slightly since the previous inspection when the standards were judged to be broadly satisfactory throughout. This inspection finds standards in line to be below average by the end of Year 2, average by the end of Year 6 and below average in Year 7. In Year 2, this reflects a fall in standards compared with the results of the 2001 National Curriculum tests. However, Year 6 pupils are on course to attain higher results than their predecessors by the end of the year. This is the result of very effective teaching in the upper school. The below average standards in Year 7 reflect past performance but once again the good teaching is promoting improvement, albeit from a low starting point.

Speaking and Listening

78. By the age of seven, pupils' attainment in speaking and listening is below average. They make satisfactory progress in relation to their earlier learning and most pupils improve their ability to listen to their teachers. They mostly pay close attention to what teachers are saying but a significant minority have difficulty in following instructions and listening carefully to each other's responses. These pupils do not always show appropriate respect for what their peers have to say. Attainment in speaking is variable in lessons as the teaching provides too few structured opportunities to improve pupils' speaking skills. For example in a lesson with pupils in Year 2, there was too great an emphasis on modelling the writing of a story and showing pupils spelling patterns, instead of encouraging them to contribute ideas based on the 'shared text'. Similarly, in Year 1, the teaching was not fully successful in using pupils' good ideas to model the writing of a sentence because many found it hard to listen. Overall, many pupils in the infants demonstrate a lack of appropriate vocabulary when attempting to communicate their thoughts and feelings.
79. By the age of eleven, pupils' attainment in speaking and listening is average. Most pupils have the confidence to put forward their point of view in discussion, although there are some that speak quietly and with hesitation. This was evident when pupils in Year 4 discussed the main features of instructional texts. Pupils enthusiastically made suggestions but some pupils lacked a sufficiently wide vocabulary to help them articulate their ideas clearly. In Years 5 and 6 the pupils have learned the conventions of discussion and conversation, listening while others speak and waiting their turn to contribute. Most listen with careful concentration to other pupils and their teachers, particularly when they are interested and stimulated by what they hear. The pupils benefit from regular opportunities for speaking and listening during the literacy hour, and teachers take every opportunity during this time to widen pupils' vocabulary and extend their understanding of the use of language.

Reading

80. Pupils' attainment in reading by the age of seven is average but a significant minority underachieve. The pupils show that they are acquiring a range of reading skills, and generally make satisfactory progress in relation to their earlier learning. They read with developing accuracy and respond with interest to what they have read, but show less ability to talk with confidence about the story and characters. More able pupils clearly understand the difference between fiction and non-fiction books, and are gaining confidence in locating information. As they progress through the infants, pupils are acquiring a sound range of strategies, such as using sounds and blends at the beginning of words, and using sounds to build the whole word. A few successfully use the sense of the surrounding text they are reading to help them read unfamiliar words. Pupils' reading skills are satisfactorily developed during the literacy hour. Suitable use is made of the shared and guided reading time to enable pupils to gain a greater understanding of what they read but too little use is made of reading in other subjects. The systems for home reading are appropriate.

81. By the age of eleven, pupils' attainment in reading is average. Pupils show an enjoyment of the books they read, and respond to the humour and subject matter with interest. Many find it more difficult to express opinions about plot and character. More able pupils explain the reasons for their views on what they read by referring to the appropriate part of the book, but the level of the text read by many pupils is below what would be expected for the age group. Some pupils' knowledge of a range of authors is limited. However, many older pupils are increasing the range of books they read. They often take good account of the views of others when selecting books. Although pupils' knowledge and understanding of a range of literature is at an early stage, when given the opportunity, as in a lesson about the work of an established author, the older pupils show that they have an appreciation of the writers' style and the content of the writing. The work done in the literacy hour, especially in Years 5 and 6, is having a very positive impact in this respect, but the older pupils have not had sufficient input over time, and so their knowledge of literature is not as good as it could be. Pupils know how to use books for information, and their library and research skills are developing particularly well. This aspect is particularly well supported through the work undertaken in geography, history and religious education. Overall pupils' progress is satisfactory.

Writing

82. By the age of seven, attainment in writing is below average for most pupils. Able pupils in Year 2 use capital letters and full stops to punctuate their work correctly and many are beginning to use interesting sentence connectives. They satisfactorily organise and plan extended stories and accounts for a range of purposes. Some use interesting vocabulary and express their ideas clearly in well-organised and structured sentences. Spelling is mostly consistent and handwriting is accurately formed and mostly of a consistent size. The majority of pupils spell a range of familiar words accurately, although their choice of vocabulary is secure rather than adventurous. Sentences are sometimes punctuated with capital letters, commas and full stops but the amount of writing is often limited. Handwriting is consistently taught but presentation is widely variable. The less able pupils successfully communicate meaning through simple words and phrases. Letters are appropriately formed but writing is usually large. Pupils in Year 1 show an understanding of capital letters and full stops. The more able pupils write at length as they speak and the majority write short stories well. Spelling and handwriting is developing appropriately.
83. Pupils' attainment in writing by the age of eleven is close to the national average. They have a sound knowledge of the requirements for grammar and punctuation. Basic punctuation and sentence construction are satisfactory but the organisation of ideas into paragraphs is less secure for many pupils. More able pupils use punctuation, including speech, well and sentences are generally well structured with the effective use of some extended phrases. Ideas are developed logically and organised into paragraphs. Most pupils write neatly and present work well but there is only limited evidence of drafting in the work of younger pupils. The pupils are aware that writing is used for a range of purposes. The writing of many older pupils is varied and interesting and includes stories, poetry and factual writing. Work during the literacy hour is having a positive effect on pupils' ability to use more powerful language and the older pupils have good opportunities to refine their skills, especially during extended writing lessons. This is having a positive impact on the standards achieved. The majority of pupils are on course to achieve at least satisfactory standards in independent writing. They are developing both fluency of style and content, and in most cases the work is carefully and neatly presented.

84. Spelling is developing appropriately by the end of Year 2 but the strong emphasis on the teaching of phonics and spelling patterns in the upper school is having very positive results. Pupils learn spellings that are tested weekly and the older pupils are strongly encouraged to use dictionaries and thesauri to check their work. The written work of many pupils in Years 5 and 6 is generally accurate and contains few errors.
85. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. Progress is satisfactory in the infants and improves towards the end of Year 6. The pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress. They receive carefully targeted support that quickly enables them to integrate fully and effectively. Several pupils no longer require specific support and maintain similar progress to their peers.
86. Although standards are below average at the beginning of Year 7, in all aspects of English, very effective teaching is enabling the pupils to make steady gains in learning. The pupils have a sound knowledge of spelling strategies and are beginning to describe some of the techniques used by authors to gain the reader's interest. Many pupils use a limited vocabulary when speaking, but most are attentive listeners, and are confident when contributing to the lesson, especially when sharing ideas formulated with a partner. Fewer than half the class are confident in organising their own extended writing but good teaching is providing them with the necessary strategies to improve.
87. The overall quality of teaching is good. In the lessons observed with pupils in Years 1 and 2 the teaching was satisfactory. In lessons with the older pupils the teaching was at least satisfactory, and often good or very good. The teachers' excellent expectations and management of the learning together with their very high expectations and very good relationships with the pupils are the significant features of this good and very good teaching. Teachers across the school have a good understanding of how to teach reading and writing. The teaching in Years 1 and 2 was satisfactory because the pace of learning was rather slow, the tasks provided were not always closely enough matched to the pupils' needs and the expectations for learning were not sufficiently clear. This was evident where pupils in Year 2 found it very difficult to read and order sentences because they lacked sufficient guidance in organising their work. However, where the task is clear and interesting, such as when pupils in Year 1 were given word lists, closely matched to their ability, and asked to locate words during a 'word bingo' game, they worked enthusiastically. In the most successful lessons the teachers are clear about what they want pupils to know and often share this information with the pupils. This is most effective when the lesson objective is couched in easy to understand terms. There are frequent examples of very good marking in some classes, but it is consistently good in Years 5, 6 and 7. Such marking tells pupils what they have done well and what they need to do next to achieve a higher standard. Teaching assistants are used appropriately in Years 1, 2 and 3. In the rest of the school they are often used very effectively. Several of the assistants have considerable expertise. They are well informed and support the pupils well, especially those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language. This good support makes a positive contribution to the good progress these pupils often make in the upper school. Most teachers manage pupils well. In a few cases a significant minority of pupils are disruptive but for the most part teachers establish a calm purposeful atmosphere in the classrooms so that all the pupils can work effectively. Literacy skills are effectively developed across the curriculum by the older pupils who often achieve well in writing for a variety of purposes.
88. The management of English is good. The literacy hour has been successfully implemented and the school is building particularly well on the National Literacy Strategy. This is particularly evident where mixed-age groups of able or less able

pupils in the upper school make good progress when they are taught in small classes. The headteacher and the co-ordinator have systematically monitored teaching and learning. The rigorous analysis of test results together with the setting of realistic and challenging targets is having a very positive impact in raising standards by the end of Year 6. Although there is no separate library, the provision of books is good, but their potential for learning is not always maximised.

MATHEMATICS

89. The levels of attainment in mathematics are still below what is expected nationally throughout the school. In particular there are inadequate numbers of pupils reaching the higher levels required at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. However, the trend is upwards and the current inspection evidence indicates that good teaching and new initiatives, such as the establishment of the numeracy hour and some setting in Key Stages 2 and 3, are having beneficial effects on mathematics standards. Attention to enrichment and thinking skills is also beginning to bear fruit among the more able pupils.
90. When they enter Year 1 most pupils have a sound basis for the skills relating to number and shape. They show strength in the use of number bonds up to 20, most recognise simple patterns and are familiar with the smaller denominations of money. They have a satisfactory knowledge of the basic two- and three-dimensional shapes. During Key Stage 1 they continue to develop number and shape skills and some of the skills required relating to the application of mathematics, such as estimation, tallying and explaining their methods to others. Knowledge of mathematical terms, such as 'circular', 'rectangular', 'addition' and 'subtraction', develop for most pupils. Within Key Stage 1 the lack of effective software means that progress in simple data handling does not develop as well as it should. In many lessons the time given to more able pupils and those pupils for whom English is an additional language does not challenge them sufficiently and, in general, teacher expectation is still too low to assist in the rate of progress that is seen elsewhere in the school. This is also seen in the marking of work, which is regular, but does not provide enough stimuli for pupils of all abilities. As a result, some of the progress achieved during the Foundation Stage is lost and standards are below average by the end of Year 2.
91. Progress through most of Key Stage 2 is good for all groups of pupils. They learn to discuss the strategies they use and realise that there are many ways of tackling problems. The increased emphasis on mental mathematics has assisted in the further development of number skills and, by Year 6, more able pupils have satisfactory understanding of percentages, relate these well to fractions and extend ratios to the development of proportions. Although calculators are used for checking, all pupils have developed satisfactory number skills and use division to check multiplication work and combine strategies such as approximation and rounding up and down. However, there is still a significant group who require apparatus to assist in the completion of addition and subtraction. All pupils develop an understanding of symmetry and are confident in discussing the properties of most two- and three-dimensional shapes. Some useful work is carried out with regard to data handling using pie charts and graphs, but this is an area that still needs development for all pupils. There is currently not enough extension work using databases to ensure adequate development in data handling.
92. Mathematics in Year 7 builds on the sound basis laid in the previous years and most pupils develop knowledge of, and skills in, using negative and positive numbers, solve a range of problems relating to speed and distance and draw transformations within four quadrants. Probability skills and skills relating to money, discounts and basic algebra develop satisfactorily. Evidence gained during the inspection indicates that, although the attainment levels of pupils leaving at the end of Year 7 are lower than many of their peers in other schools, the trend within the school is upwards. There are clear indications that, when a tighter structure is developed in the earlier years of primary education and as the growing usage of mental mathematics sessions and reflection on strategies has had a short while to fully establish itself, the good progress already being seen in some classes will become standard throughout the school and levels of attainment will continue to rise.

93. Overall, the teaching of mathematics is good and with older pupils it is often very good. The best teaching is characterised by good pace within lessons, the efficient use of resources and a strong emphasis on mental processes. Teachers use questioning well to challenge the full range of pupils and give them time to respond and explain what they have been doing and why. Class teachers work closely with teaching assistants and this allows pupils who are moving on or are finding difficulties to receive appropriate support when it is needed. Thus, in one very good Year 5 mathematics lesson dealing with multiplication and division there are three ability groups within the class. The early mental mathematics session provides different pupils with different, but well-matched, questions. Group work is well planned and resources, such as calculators and place value charts, are available without any wasting of time. The final, plenary, session sees pupils presenting individual strategies using the overhead projector. Progress has been good as the result of pace, humour and very good planning. Above all, expectations have been high and the quality of the work indicates that pupils have responded well. Similarly, when expectations are not high, unsatisfactory teaching leads to pupils' progress dropping. Resources are not efficiently deployed, some pupils are confused about the tasks and more time is spent on management than on questioning and listening.
94. The significant developments that have taken place within mathematics arise from the good leadership provided by the co-ordinator. The strengths of the numeracy hour, pace, focus and planned development, are very noticeable particularly in Key Stages 2 and 3. The monitoring of how successfully the curriculum has been taught and how pupils have progressed is good. With whole-school co-ordination the numeracy hour developments and lesson structures are already beginning to show increased pupil progress. Close attention now needs to be given to progression from reception through Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 and analysed to ensure that teacher expectation and competence is of a high standard throughout the school. Two aspects that will contribute to this are a more consistent and supportive use of marking and the increased integration of information and communication technology within mathematics.

SCIENCE

95. Standards in science were judged by the previous inspection to be average throughout the school and this was consistent with the results being achieved in National Curriculum tests. There has been some deterioration in standards insofar as test results have not kept up with the results that have been occurring nationally. Some improvement is now evident at the end of Key Stage 2, where current Year 6 pupils are achieving average standards and are thus halting the significant decline that has occurred since 1998. Good improvement is also evident in Year 7 and pupils have improved compared with the results that they achieved in the 2001 national tests. In both cases, these improvements have resulted from consistently good teaching and the subject co-ordinator's good impact on the subject's recent development
96. The work of Year 2 pupils is currently of below average standards. They are acquiring a satisfactory range of knowledge and understanding of the topics that they study but their written work has weaknesses. This reflects the overall standards in literacy skills. Too many pupils fail to use correct terminology in tasks such as the labelling of diagrams or the recording of what happens in investigations. Scrutiny of the work covered in Year 2 shows that pupils experience a broad curriculum with good emphasis on practical investigations. From the work of pupils who have just moved on to Year 3 it is obvious that they are taught to think scientifically. They are encouraged to make predictions about what might happen in an investigation and to

consider what has to be kept the same if a test is to be fair. Current Year 2 pupils show their good levels of interest. A lesson on human health and growth, with the strong stimulus of a visit by a mother and toddler, led to good understanding of changes and differences between babies, toddlers and the pupils as they are now. While this good understanding was shown orally, the written task of drawing diagrams to illustrate these differences did not reflect the level of knowledge. Despite the teacher's provision of key words for these diagrams, few pupils completed the task successfully.

97. Year 6 pupils show that consistent progress is being achieved by pupils as they move through Key Stage 2. Pupils have broad knowledge across a wide range of topics. They achieve good standards in investigative work and this is due, in part, to the frequent opportunities provided for them to design and carry out experiments. As a result, they have a good routine of automatically establishing a hypothesis and then incorporating their good knowledge of how to ensure that a test is fair as they set about testing the hypothesis. The use of correct terminology by Year 6 pupils was evident in a lesson in which they studied food chains in different habitats. Reporting back to the class using charts prepared for the overhead projector, pupils demonstrated good understanding in their well-presented reports. As the lesson progressed they also showed a real fascination with the topic as they developed their awareness of the complexity of the food chains and their relationship to larger food webs.
98. Scrutiny of Year 7 work shows over-emphasis on factual knowledge at the expense of practical experiment and this halts the progress made in investigative skills that is achieved in Year 6. The current order in which topics are studied in Year 7 denies pupils opportunities for practical enquiry in the first part of the year. However, current Year 7 pupils have good knowledge of human organs, cells and cell division.
99. Teaching and learning are good overall but there are variations between stages with Key Stage 1 being satisfactory and Key Stage 2 good. All teachers plan lessons thoroughly. There is generally good modification of tasks for pupils with special educational needs and, due to the good support that learning assistants provide, these pupils make satisfactory progress. Good progress is achieved in Year 6 where, although support staff are not present, pupils work in pairs deliberately structured to have a more able and a less able pupil working together. Pupils with special educational needs gain most from this arrangement. More able pupils are generally not challenged sufficiently throughout the school with additional questioning or extension activities arising incidentally during lessons rather than being planned beforehand. Pupils with English as an additional language learn quickly and teachers' lesson plans always include notes on any modification of activities that may be necessary. Marking is generally good, providing constructive feedback that identifies areas for further improvement as well as confirming successful aspects of the work. The exception is Year 7, where work has little more than a tick, which contrasts sharply with marking of other subjects with this class. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and provide clear explanations.
100. In the best teaching, there are high expectations of pupils in terms of standards of behaviour, co-operation and the learning to be achieved. All pupils are appropriately challenged by these expectations. In an excellent lesson seen at Key Stage 3, human reproduction was taught with exceptional skill. The combination of teacher input, well-structured learning activities and expectation of mature response resulted in significant gains in knowledge by all pupils. Although emphasised as a lesson focusing on physiological facts, pupils' questions brought issues of sex education to the fore and these were handled with impressive sensitivity and expertise. Year 5 pupils responded equally successfully to their teacher's expectation of co-operation

within groups when planning how they would investigate measurement of the amount of air in soil. At Key Stage 1, teachers' expectations are generally lower and pupils are over-dependent on adult help for the completion of their learning activities. This reduces their pace of working.

101. Throughout the school teachers use resources well, ensuring they are well prepared and have good potential to help pupils' learning. Charts and tables, together with recording of results in graphs, is making a satisfactory contribution to the development of pupils' numeracy skills but information and communication technology is not used sufficiently as a means of creating these records of results. Pupils' writing skills are developed well by pupils recording results of most investigations in their own words. This enables pupils to reinforce their understanding of scientific vocabulary and provides good development of handwriting and spelling skills. Presentation of work is consequently good.
102. The co-ordinator manages the subject well. The curriculum has been modified well to incorporate guidelines produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. The co-ordinator has clear and appropriate priorities that are presented in a good subject action plan. These include the further development of work in Year 7 and extension of the subject's links with information and communication technology. Such priorities have arisen from constructive evaluation of what has been observed while monitoring teaching and pupils' work. Resources are good and, while the school does not have some of the more specialised equipment that might support Year 7 work, the quality of teaching more than compensates to ensure that these pupils have a relevant curriculum.

ART AND DESIGN

103. At the time of the previous inspection, attainment in art was in line with expectations at age seven and above expectations at eleven. Standards remain the same and art and design continue to be well taught. The previous inspection identified Key Stages 2 and 3 teaching as good. It is now often very good. Although no Key Stage 1 lessons were observed during this inspection, scrutiny of work and displays indicates that this area of teaching is now also good. All pupils leave the school with art skills and attitudes that are totally appropriate for their age. Art and design at St Sidwell's has a significant impact. It provides pleasurable experiences, develops skills or presentation and reflection, values the views and feelings of pupils and provides attractive and instructive displays around the school.
104. There is a very wide range of knowledge and understanding among the youngest pupils within Key Stage 1. However, by the end of Year 1 all pupils have gained good pencil control and use a range of media such as chalks, crayons, pastels and paint. There is good development of spatial awareness and control by pupils and techniques such as perspective, shading and colour contrasts develop well. They use sewing and paper weaving to build on their work on patterns in mathematics and present stories they have heard in the form of collages. They produce good observational work from local buildings and show a steady development in representing forms such as clouds, trees and people. A good range of materials are used and tie-dye work, together with clay, is used to good effect. Although there is some discussion of work, there is still room for development in the time that all pupils have to evaluate their own and others' work.
105. Work during Key Stages 2 and 3 is of a good and often very good standard. The wide range of experiences continue and pupils are introduced to new techniques such as digital imaging using camera and computer. Work with pencil and charcoal develops very well and three-dimensional modelling in both plaster and clay is often of a very

high standard. Art and design lessons within these classes are characterised by the reflection that pupils show with regard to planning, developing and evaluating their work. They have a range of techniques from which they can choose and they steadily develop the ability to match forms of presentation to the story or message they wish to convey.

106. Teaching of art and design is good throughout the school. Within Key Stage 2 it is often very good and occasionally inspirational. Thus, a Year 7 class works on the theme of 'self-image' by developing hand and face plaster casts. The lesson is well designed, gives pupils regular updates of how much time is available, but creates within this a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere. The teacher provides advice and guidance of the very highest quality, but always encourages pupils to think for themselves and assess what they are doing and why. This approach is well developed by the teaching assistant. Visual diaries are used very well to allow pupils to plan work, annotate their plans and review the process. This is further enhanced by the use of video filming within the lesson to provide a running record of the processes involved. The resulting artefacts are of a very high quality and make a dramatic display. More important, there has been very significant development in pupils' control of the medium and their ability to think and plan.
107. Art and design has always been a strength within the curriculum. However, thanks to the very good leadership of the current co-ordinator there has been significant development in many aspects of this subject. The scheme of work is imaginative and backed by a good range of resources. Standards are high and this is reinforced by the good quality of work displayed around the school and the excellent use made of visual diaries. The co-ordinator herself sets an excellent role-model for pupils and staff. Staff should now ensure that they benefit from the co-teaching taking place as this will further increase the quality of teaching overall. Some effective use is made of information and communication technology, especially developing patterns with younger children and image manipulation in Key Stage 2. This is now a suitable area for development as is the use of 'virtual galleries' using the Internet.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

108. There was little evidence available to track pupils' achievements and progress in design and technology. This in itself points to weaknesses in the school's monitoring of the subject. Judgements are based on the observation of two lessons with pupils between six and eight-years-old, discussions with pupils and the subject co-ordinator, the analysis of teachers' planning and the scrutiny of a very limited range of pupils' work. The evidence confirms that the standards achieved by the majority of pupils are below those normally found for pupils in this age range. When the school was last inspected, the standards achieved were judged as satisfactory overall, but the making skills of the older pupils were underdeveloped. Since the last inspection the school has made satisfactory progress in improving the planning of its provision but this has yet to impact on the standards achieved and, consequently, the progress in pupils' learning is unsatisfactory.
109. Younger pupils have suitable opportunities to design the filling for sandwiches and to make a variety of models but the teaching does not place sufficient emphasis on using the pupils' own design ideas. The products completed, such as finger puppets and 'winding-mechanisms', are well finished but show few elements of originality. Teaching in the lessons observed was satisfactory. In planning for the lesson with younger pupils the teacher had built well on the scheme of work and chosen a suitable project. The pupils recalled sewing designs using binca and the teaching linked this well to the making of glove puppets. However, the very tight brief for the pupils, such as the use of prepared patterns and the provision of ready-made heads

for the puppets, limited the development of pupils' design and making skills. They were provided with a good choice of coloured materials and the majority used scissors well. However, a significant number of pupils, mostly boys, lacked skill in pinning their patterns together. This lack of skill led to increasing frustration but the majority persevered well. In the lesson with older pupils the project was to design and make a box to hold six sweets. This unit of work was well planned and the necessary resources were readily available. Most of the pupils had made a good start in preparing their mock-up design during the previous lesson. However, the slow start to the lesson did not capture pupils' attention because the teaching did not clearly demonstrate the skills required, such as scoring, nor were the pupils encouraged to use appropriate terms for each step of the process. Although a significant number of pupils misbehaved at the beginning of the lesson the vast majority showed a good level of involvement in making their boxes from card. They understand the function of tabs and can draw a plan or 'net' for their finished product with reasonable accuracy. During the period of practical activity the teaching suitably encouraged the pupils to gain success. The pupils used craft knives very responsibly and most scored the card and folded their boxes well. At the end of the lesson the teacher emphasised the use of key vocabulary but by this time many pupils found it difficult to listen and made little progress in evaluating the products discussed.

110. Although very few of the products made by older pupils were seen, the scheme of work provides for appropriate progression in pupils' skills. It is evident that where projects are set in a relevant context, such as designing air raid shelters and making thermal hats in Year 6, and considering design, packaging and marketing criteria in Year 7, the pupils achieve well. However, factors such as weaknesses in some teachers' subject knowledge and confidence, and limited resources mean that pupils' knowledge and skills are not always effectively developed.

GEOGRAPHY

111. Pupils' attainments by the ages of seven, eleven and twelve are in line with those normally expected of pupils of their ages. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress. When the school was last inspected, no judgement was made about pupils' attainment by the age of seven; standards in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 are similar to those reported at that time. Teachers make effective use of the local area to extend and bring relevance to pupils' learning. However, they do not always build progressively on pupils' previous learning and so there are inconsistencies in pupils' progress between year groups and key stages.
112. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils show a satisfactory knowledge of the local environment. This is because there is good provision for use of the immediate locality to promote investigative and mapping skills. For example, Year 2 pupils compare and contrast amenities in Exeter with those of a fictional Scottish island. This is successful in helping pupils make decisions about which of the two places they would prefer to live in and why. Teachers use the school grounds well to promote environmental themes. For example, Year 1 pupils were observed discussing how they might improve the school grounds. They were keen to express their views to the whole class and to talk amongst themselves in small groups. The teacher used photographs and questions well to stimulate their thinking and maintain their interest. As a result, the more able pupils produced detailed diagrams, indicating how their ideas would improve the school grounds and benefit pupils. Less able pupils and those with special educational needs produced simple but effective drawings and models to demonstrate their ideas. Pupils with English as an additional language benefited from opportunities in a whole-class session at the end of the lesson to talk about their diagrams.

113. At Key Stage 2, scrutiny of pupils' past work shows that their rate of progress slows down in Year 3. The subject is not covered in so much depth as in Key Stage 1 classes and presentation of pupils' work is often poor. Progress begins to improve in Year 4 and by Year 5, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are higher and, as a result, progress in Years 5 and 6 is often good. Teachers in these classes give pupils regular opportunities to pose key questions and provide them with appropriate resources to look for answers to these questions. For example, Year 5 pupils were observed working on a project about water. The teacher gave pupils considerable responsibility to work together to find information about similarities and differences in the way water is used, for instance in India and the United Kingdom. Pupils responded well to their teachers' high expectations, tackled their research tasks with enthusiasm and made good progress in their learning as a result. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils also responded positively to opportunities to use their skills, knowledge and understanding to draft news reports, using information from previous learning about severe weather, such as hurricanes. This activity was very successful in encouraging pupils to use skills learned in literacy and information and communication technology lessons.
114. Pupils' good progress is sustained at Key Stage 3 in Year 7. Enquiry skills play an important part in lessons, with pupils confidently using photographs, maps and books to good effect to find out about the local area and contrasting localities, such as Bangladesh.
115. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory throughout the school and is particularly good in Years 5, 6 and 7. Teachers' planning is always thorough and is closely linked to national guidelines in its content and the geographical vocabulary pupils are expected to learn. However, the level of challenge provided by activities is inconsistent because activities are not always matched closely enough to pupils' needs. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are largely informal, with individual teachers deciding what is most appropriate for their pupils. Teachers vary in their subject knowledge and expertise and this leads to variations in the quality of pupils' learning. Secondly, monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning by the co-ordinator does not include observation of lessons or sufficiently critical analysis of teachers' planning.
116. The subject co-ordinator is new to the post and has had no time to have an impact on standards. However, she is well qualified and experienced and is very aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject. She has produced a useful three-year action plan to promote improvements to provision and standards, including regular observations of her colleagues' teaching and sampling of pupils' work to promote consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve. There is a shortage of software for teachers to make best use of information and communication technology to promote learning, but pupils at all key stages are given useful opportunities to wordprocess their work or create charts to record their findings.

HISTORY

117. Pupils' attainments by the ages of seven, eleven and twelve are in line with those normally expected of pupils of their ages. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress. Standards are similar to those reported at the time of the previous inspection. Teachers successfully promote pupils' skills of historical enquiry and their understanding of chronology from an early age. The subject is used well to extend pupils' literacy skills. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve vary and are

highest in Years 5, 6 and 7. Consequently, pupils' progress is often good in these classes.

118. No lessons were seen at Key Stage 1 during the inspection because of timetabling arrangements and so no judgement can be made about the quality of teaching and learning. However, scrutiny of pupils' work shows that teachers provide a wide range of historical activities and, as a result, by the age of seven, the standard of pupils' research skills and their ability to organise information is at least satisfactory and often good. For example, work about Florence Nightingale and the Great Fire of London shows that pupils record what they have found out in simple sentences, drawings and diagrams that reflect their developing understanding of the lives of people in the past. More able pupils develop their work further by recording well thought out similarities and differences between life then and now, for example in Year 1 when studying the way people's leisure activities at the seaside have changed since Victorian times.
119. At Key Stage 2, pupils sustain satisfactory levels of progress in Years 3 and 4 as a result of broad coverage of historical projects linked to helpful trips and visits to places of historical interest. In Years 5 and 6, progress accelerates considerably and is often good. This is because teachers in Years 5 and 6 have higher expectations of pupils' levels of attainment, behaviour and presentation of work and, as a result, pupils' attitudes are very good and they work hard at their tasks. In a Year 3 lesson about Roman Britain, the teacher had selected a good quality video for pupils to watch. Pupils showed a good recall of facts from previous lessons during whole-class discussions. However, their concentration was poor and the restless behaviour of many of them led to several unnecessary interruptions and had a negative impact on the quality of pupils' learning. In lessons observed in Years 5 and 6, progress was good because teachers sustained a good pace to learning. They used questions skilfully to promote thinking and gave pupils opportunities to use their skills, knowledge and understanding to formulate views and opinions about life in the historical periods being studied. For example, Year 6 pupils pretended they were evacuees in the Second World War and wrote letters home. They showed good recall of facts and information, as well as a sympathetic understanding of some of the emotions experienced by children then.
120. At Key Stage 3 in Year 7, good progress is maintained because the teacher builds successfully on pupils' well-developed skills of historical enquiry. This was seen in an excellent lesson about the events of 1066, in which the teacher gave responsibility to pupils for their own learning as they discussed questions they wanted answered about the Battle of Hastings. As a result, standards of discussion, participation and concentration were very good and pupils of all abilities gained evident pleasure from their achievements.
121. In all classes throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language receive very good support from learning support assistants. The assistants liaise closely with class teachers to make sure that these pupils are fully included in all activities. As a result, pupils make good progress overall.
122. The subject co-ordinator provides good leadership. He is well qualified and experienced and is using his good subject knowledge and enthusiasm to effectively lead staff in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of their planning. He has prepared a useful action plan for further improvements in the subject, which is dependent on opportunities, included in the school management plan, for him to observe his colleagues teach so that he can gain a deeper understanding of strengths and weaknesses in standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

123. Pupils' standards by the ages of seven and twelve are in line with those normally expected of pupils of their age; they are above those expected by the age of eleven. Progress made by pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 2. This reflects a good overall improvement since the previous inspection, when standards were reported to be in line with expectations at Key Stage 1 and below expectations at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. This is because teachers' subject knowledge is much improved. The subject is used well to support learning in several areas of the curriculum and is especially effective in promoting pupils' literacy skills, particularly in Key Stages 2 and 3. The use of the subject to support numeracy is less well developed. The quantity and quality of resources have been improved, although there are shortages in the quantity of software to support pupils' enquiry and research skills.
124. In Key Stage 1, pupils receive a good introduction to the basic skills of information and communication technology. This is the result of confident teaching and regular opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in the computer suite. For example, pupils' wordprocessing skills are satisfactory and most pupils change font size and colour well. They have experience of programming a moving toy. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 show satisfactory skills of mouse control and the ability to log on to their personal file, save work and follow instructions on-screen. For example, Year 2 pupils were observed using a database for the first time. The teacher had made effective use of homework to support this lesson by asking pupils to gather information at home about some of their favourite foods. After a good demonstration by the teacher, pupils proceeded to enter their information into the database. The lesson illustrated pupils' good levels of confidence when using computers, but showed that for most, typing skills and knowledge of the layout of the keyboard are weak. The more able pupils completed the task relatively quickly, but most pupils took a long time to enter the data because they used only one finger to type and had to search for characters on the keyboard. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language received good support from learning support assistants and, as a result, were able to eventually complete the task.
125. Teachers continue to extend pupils' skills at a satisfactory rate early in Key Stage 2. There are good examples of Year 3 pupils' wordprocessed accounts of how they made weather equipment in geography and accounts of a visit by Years 3 and 4 pupils to a historical site. However, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are higher later on in the key stage and, as a result, pupils in Years 5 and 6 make good and sometimes very good progress in their skills development. Lessons in Year 3 are marred by some pupils' poor behaviour, which slows the progress made by all pupils. Nevertheless, the pupils of all abilities who persevere and concentrate use their skills well and, in a lesson observed, these pupils produced poems of a satisfactory standard. In Years 5 and 6, the balance teachers plan in lessons between whole-class instruction and pupil activity is good. This means that pupils are working at computers soon after the start of a lesson. In this way, teachers capitalise on pupils' good attitudes to information and communication technology and their keenness to practise and refine their skills. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils made good progress as they worked on drafting newspaper reports about the effects of a hurricane on people's lives in the West Indies, because the teacher's introduction to the lesson was short and to the point. Pupils were full of enthusiasm and ideas and were able to log on and commence work almost straight away. Key Stage 2 pupils have little or no opportunities to develop skills of control technology and this means that curriculum provision does not meet statutory requirements.

126. In Key Stage 3, the Year 7 teacher has similarly high expectations of his pupils and, by maintaining a good pace to lessons, successfully encourages them to use their keyboard skills quickly and accurately.
127. One of the main reasons why standards have improved significantly since the previous inspection is the effective way that teachers use information and communication technology to promote pupils' literacy skills. This is of benefit to all pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and English as an additional language. One lesson a week in the computer suite is set aside for a literacy-based activity and teachers take full advantage of this arrangement. For example, pupils in Years 4 and 5 were observed using cut and paste techniques to sequence a jumbled set of instructions into the correct order. Pupils competently centred and underlined their work, as well as adding colour and changing font size. In this way, pupils' knowledge and understanding of sequencing was successfully extended as they practised their computer skills.
128. The subject co-ordinator is new to the post and so has had no time to have a significant impact on standards. However, she has produced a useful action plan intended to sustain the good improvements of the last four years and set in place a programme to upgrade the quality and extend the range of resources, as well as introduce control technology into the Key Stage 2 provision. She is aware that the computer suite, although used effectively, contains relatively old computers which need to be replaced in the near future. The range of software available for teachers to use in subjects such as numeracy, art and design, geography and history is limited and this means that pupils' research and enquiry skills in particular are not always promoted as well as they could be in some lessons.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

FRENCH

129. Overall, provision for French in the school is good. Good teaching enables many pupils to achieve standards that are in line to exceed expectations by the end of Year 7. The status of the subject is raised successfully by the existence of a specialist room for all lessons and a good level of resources overall although the resources for independent reading are limited. Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology.
130. Standards of work seen and lesson observation indicate that pupils in Year 7 are currently working at between Level 2 and Level 3 of the National Curriculum Programme of Study for French in all four attainment targets. The work that pupils undertook in the subject last year indicates that some more able pupils reached Level 4 by the end of the year. This represents above average attainment. Pupils can participate in prepared conversations of three or four exchanges, they can read and understand short paragraphs and extract main points and details, and they can listen to and understand short passages and dialogues consisting of familiar language spoken at near normal speed, although they may need repetition. All pupils attain well overall because of the good quality of the teaching and the provision of appropriate materials. Less able pupils still manage to reach levels at least in line with those of their peers in secondary schools. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and attain as well as other pupils.
131. Teaching in the subject is good: pupils are aware of the learning objectives set for the lesson; the teacher uses French as the main method of communication in the classroom, which raises the level of challenge to pupils and ensures that expectations

are high; the teacher presents the pupils with a good model of spoken language to imitate; the teacher uses a variety of media for the presentation of new language and supports meaning with visuals, mime or gesture; pupils are actively involved in lessons through using non-verbal responses which allow the teacher to assess understanding at a glance, for instance by holding up exercise book pages showing 'Oui' or 'Non' in response to questions; questioning is conducted at pace and is carefully graded through simple yes/no responses to alternatives and finally to open-ended questions; there is a variety of working contexts so that pupils have opportunities to work as a class, individually or in pairs; the teacher sensibly uses English to clear up any potential misunderstandings, although there is no planned strategy for doing so which would help pupils even more.

132. Pupils are orderly and attentive. They respond with enthusiasm to the brisk pace of the lesson. They answer questions confidently, even when their pronunciation is approximate. They collaborate well when working in pairs, and listen with concentration. Relationships with the teacher are good, and there is a calm, purposeful atmosphere in the classroom. Pupils respond with very good behaviour. The good teaching coupled with the enthusiastic response of the pupils mean that pupils learn at a good rate, quickly assimilating new vocabulary and being able to recall previously learned language and apply it in new contexts.
133. Material provision for the teaching of French is good: concentrating the teaching into one base room allows the teacher to create a French environment through display; a modern, up-to-date course is in use, which fully delivers all the requirements of the National Curriculum, and each pupil has access to a text book and workbook; a good quality tape recorder is available to the teacher, and the good acoustics in the teaching room mean that pupils have a good experience of listening to a variety of voices; native speakers occasionally support the work of the teacher when they are available; there is good quality support from the county advisory service in the form of liaison meetings with middle schools; appropriate in-service training opportunities; and a comprehensive handbook of good practice which is regularly updated. The school participates in the county Bridging Assignment which is designed to promote continuity between middle and high schools. This ensures that pupils at St Sidwell's have the same opportunity to work at the same level as pupils in the middle schools. This is of benefit to pupils on transfer to the high school. In terms of extra-curricular provision the school undertakes a residential visit to France every other year.
134. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory in that shorter teaching sessions have been introduced. This has clearly benefited pupils in terms of improved standards of attainment.

MUSIC

135. Judgements on standards are hampered by the limited evidence available. From lesson observations at Key Stage 1 the standard of singing is above expectations by the end of the key stage. Performance on percussion instruments by Year 1 pupils meets the expectations for the age. No Key Stage 2 class lessons occurred during the inspection and the school has no significant evidence of pupils' standards. This fact indicates weaknesses in the subject, including insufficient assessment and lack of permanent evidence of pupils' learning, that the new co-ordinator is fully aware of and which are being addressed by new initiatives.
136. Key Stage 1 pupils sing enthusiastically and tunefully in lessons, assemblies and the choir that a good number attend at lunchtime. They retain words and melody well and have a good repertoire of memorised songs and hymns. Good listening skills enable them to perform isolated sections of songs accurately and they work conscientiously

at such practice in order to improve the quality of their singing. No music-making other than extra-curricular activity was observed at Key Stage 2. Discussion with older pupils confirmed their enjoyment of the subject and the opportunities provided for instrumental work both in and out of lessons.

137. Teaching and learning are good overall at Key Stage 1 with good planning and appropriate guidance to help pupils to improve their performance skills. This is particularly evident in the teaching of singing which benefits from the expertise of the reception teacher. This places demands on pupils by challenging them to work hard at improvement while retaining a lively pace and sparkle to lessons that promote a real love of singing. The very good teaching and learning in a Key Stage 1 hymn practice was characterised by a careful balance between technical work to improve performance, accompanied and unaccompanied practice and the clear, confident and joyful singing of complete songs. The full participation of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, was gained by the teacher's infectious enthusiasm and all pupils progressed well.
138. The co-ordinator leads the subject well, having assisted a colleague for one year before taking over from the start of this year. The curriculum has recently been amended to incorporate new guidelines that will improve provision for older pupils. The subject action plan has detailed actions to address the co-ordinator's priorities for a three-year period. These include the development of much needed forms of permanent recording of pupils' work through the use of music books, audio and video recording. Staff training needs are identified. The school's musical tradition is particularly strong at the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Nursery and reception children, and a good number of their parents, enjoyed their participation in a 'Let's Make Music' project funded by the Family Education Development Trust. Working with a resident musician produced a very broad range of music-making activities and the published report of project activities singles out the school for its involvement, commitment and high quality work. There are good numbers of pupils involved in extra-curricular activities at Key Stage 1 with the choir being very popular. Recorder lessons are provided at both key stages but there is no choir for Key Stage 2 pupils. These have opportunities for instrumental tuition, currently on saxophone, keyboard or guitar.
139. Despite lack of evidence of Key Stage 2 work, there is judged to be satisfactory improvement since the last inspection due to the raised standards of singing, good curriculum development and the co-ordinator's well-formulated plans for the subject.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

140. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection and continue to meet expectations at ages seven, eleven and twelve. There has been good development of the curriculum by the co-ordinator, teaching is good overall and there is good provision of extra-curricular activities that encourages participation in a good variety of sports.
141. Standards in gymnastics and dance match expectations by the end of Key Stage 1. In both areas of activity pupils are developing a smooth flow in their movement when they link actions together to perform sequences. Gymnastic apparatus is moved safely and co-operatively and ideas practised on the floor are adapted and extended successfully when transferred to the apparatus. Pupils jump confidently from apparatus and landing technique is satisfactory. By the end of Key Stage 2 basic actions such as rolls, balances and cartwheels are performed with technical correctness. In games, Year 6 pupils show sound technique when performing throwing, catching and striking actions, They throw accurately to partners and

demonstrate good hand/eye co-ordination when striking or bouncing a ball. Although pupils have not been observed swimming, teachers' records indicate that national standards are reached, with most pupils achieving at least the requirement to swim 25 metres competently and confidently. In all areas of activity, pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language generally achieve similar standards to their peers. All pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the effects of exercise on the body as a result of the good attention that teachers pay to this in all lessons.

142. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are planned thoroughly and teachers pay good attention to health and safety factors. Good teaching incorporates good use of selected pupils to demonstrate specific actions that reinforce key features of what is to be learned. The pupils observing these demonstrations are encouraged to look out for particular features or evaluate what is particularly good about what they are watching. Very good games teaching, such as that seen with Year 7 pupils, incorporates a good range of learning activities that build well on earlier learning. Teachers' levels of subject knowledge are generally good, especially in games and gymnastics. Pupils' good rates of learning result from their willingness to practise hard at skill improvement. A Year 6 lesson on short tennis skills demonstrated this commitment well. Extended practise, building on the teacher's good specific guidance on technique, resulted in many pupils making significant progress in the lesson to a point where long rallies could be sustained. Teachers use their observation skills well to carry out ongoing assessment of pupils' learning and lessons frequently contain on-the-spot changes to planned activities in order that immediate needs can be met.
143. The co-ordinator provides very good leadership and management based on his own high level of subject expertise. The long-term curriculum planning has recently been extended to combine guidelines from the Qualification and Curriculum Authority with those produced by the local education authority. In practice, the majority of teachers are using the excellent local authority guidelines for teaching and learning in the different areas and activities. The curriculum is broad and retains six areas of activity. Time allocation is good with pupils having close to two hours per week, excluding any participation in extra-curricular activity. Present arrangements for subject co-ordination mean that the co-ordinator has had no time for monitoring the planning or teaching of the subject but this is planned for this school year. Through informal observation he has a good awareness of pupils' standards and more able pupils are guided towards local sources of specialist coaching that will meet their advanced needs. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities, all of which are for mixed gender groups and offers many opportunities for involvement in competitive sport at local level. The school is also involved in a 'Fit to Succeed' project that reinforces pupils' understanding of the benefits of health-related exercise. Resources are satisfactory overall although some gymnastic apparatus is close to needing replacement. Facilities are adequate although the size of the hall limits the scope of what Year 7 pupils can perform. External facilities are unsatisfactory, with sloping uneven playground surfaces. The larger playground is in poor condition with broken tarmac and holes in the surface that are both unsafe and also adversely affect the learning of games skills. This work space needs urgent attention.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

144. Inspected by a separate Diocesan inspection.

