

INSPECTION REPORT

RUSSELL LOWER SCHOOL

Ampthill, Bedford

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109495

Headteacher: Mrs J Bramwell

Acting headteacher at time of inspection: Mrs J Sealey

Reporting inspector: Mr J T Bishop
12184

Dates of inspection: 14 – 17 January 2002

Inspection number: 194166

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Queens Road Ampthill Bedfordshire
Postcode:	MK45 2TD
Telephone number:	01525 755664
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Robert Freeman
Date of previous inspection:	13 May 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
12184	John Bishop	Registered inspector	English as an additional language Equal opportunities Special educational needs English Geography History Physical education	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9744	Peter Brown	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
21372	Ken Hobday	Team inspector	Foundation stage Art Design and technology Science	How well are pupils taught?
22274	Vera Rogers	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Mathematics Music Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Russell Lower School is a community school for boys and girls of all abilities aged from four to nine years. There are 231 pupils on roll including 52 children aged under five in the reception classes. The school is centrally situated in the rural town of Ampthill and serves a community from a wide mix of socio-economic backgrounds; most families have at least one parent in regular employment. On entry to the reception classes, overall attainment is just below what is usually expected for the children's age. Few have any experience of pre-school education. Although there are some pupils from other nationalities, there are no pupils requiring extra support because they have English as a second language. Thirty-five pupils have been identified as having special educational needs with one pupil having a statement; this is below the national average. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. An acting headteacher has been in post since September 2001 due to the long-term ill-health of the headteacher. The school was last inspected in 1997.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school with many strengths. It maintained well above national average standards at the end of Year 2 in English and mathematics over a period of four years until 2001, when mathematics dropped slightly to above the national average. At the end of Year 4, standards are above national averages. The school serves the community well. The quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science is generally good, although it could be higher in most other subjects of the curriculum. The leadership and management of the school are good and manifest themselves in a strong commitment to maintaining high standards. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Results in national tests and assessments at the end of Year 2 have been maintained well above national averages in reading and writing and above in mathematics. These standards are currently maintained in Years 3 and 4.
- Most teaching is good in English, mathematics and science and results in the pupils making very good progress. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support and progress well towards their targets.
- The leadership and management of the school are good. The acting headteacher, staff and governors are committed to the maintenance of high standards and continual improvement.
- The school is a caring community with a strong ethos based on the values of respect and co-operation. Consequently, relationships and pupils' behaviour and personal development are good.
- The school is a safe establishment and procedures for child protection and pupils' welfare are very good.
- The school has won the confidence of parents; home-school links provide very good support for pupils' learning.
- Attendance is very good.

What could be improved

- Standards in all subjects other than English, mathematics and science are not consistently as good as they might be.
- The role of subject managers in monitoring the implementation of the curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects is underdeveloped.
- The assessment of pupils' attainment in some subjects, is insufficient to measure the individual progress of pupils or to help teachers plan what to do next.
- Higher-attaining pupils require more challenge in some lessons, particularly in science.
- National guidelines for the education of pupils in reception classes are not yet fully implemented.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has addressed successfully the issues in the last inspection report except that day-to-day assessments in some subjects still require further development. Assessments are sound in English and mathematics. The monitoring and evaluating of teaching is undertaken by the headteacher and her deputy but subject leaders have insufficient opportunities to do this in their subjects. Standards in English, and science are higher than at the time of the last inspection and are similar in mathematics. There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching; no unsatisfactory lessons were seen during the inspection. The school's improvement plan has appropriate priorities and these are leading to greater staff knowledge of subjects through staff development and an effective system of self-evaluation. Subject policies and schemes of work have been reviewed and are offering increased support to teachers in planning their lessons. Information and communication technology is an improved subject due to the provision and effective use of the computer suite, although classroom computers are under-used. Improvements made since the last inspection are sound and the capacity for further improvement is good.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	All schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
Reading	A	A	A	C
Writing	A*	A	A	A
Mathematics	A	A	B	C

Key

well above average A
 above average B
 average C
 below average D
 well below average E

The results show that in 2001, standards in mathematics were above the national average and were well above in reading and writing at the end of Year 2. These results also show that standards have been maintained over a number of years. Pupils have achieved well as the overall attainment of children entering the school in the reception classes is below average. When compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, standards are well above average in writing and in line in reading and mathematics. The overall standard of work seen in Year 4 indicates that standards are above national averages in English, mathematics and science with the school successfully meeting its targets. Throughout all years, standards in all other subjects are satisfactory.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have good attitudes to learning, are keen to come to school and concentrate well in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good throughout the school
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils develop confidence as they progress through the school and become increasingly more responsible. The good relationships within the school help to create a safe and stimulating environment.

Attendance	Very good. The attendance rate is well above the national average. Lessons start promptly and no time is wasted.
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The pupils' positive approach to school provides a good basis for their learning and makes an important contribution to the levels of attainment they achieve.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is generally satisfactory but is usually good in English and mathematics. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen in the inspection. This is an improvement on the last inspection. The quality of teaching varies from class to class and is best when teachers have been established in the school for some time and have benefited from the available staff development. There are sound procedures for inducting new teachers into the school. In the better lessons, what pupils are to learn is shared with them, resources are readily available and teachers have good knowledge of their subjects. In the less successful lessons, the pace is slow and pupils are insufficiently involved in discussions and become unsure of what to do. The on-going assessment of pupils' work, including marking, does not help pupils understand what it is they must do to improve. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teachers and classroom assistants and they receive appropriate work. Teachers work hard in successfully ensuring that the needs of different groups of pupils are being met. Literacy and numeracy are well taught, with teachers having a good understanding of their subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and relevant. Educational visits provide practical experiences to extend the pupils' understanding of the world. Insufficient time is allowed for physical education activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs receive good support and progress well towards the targets set in their individual education plans.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for personal development through the promotion of spiritual awareness, cultural and social development is sound. Provision for moral development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school provides a safe and caring learning environment. Child protection is very good. Procedures for assessment and the way in which information gained is used to support teachers' planning in the non-core subjects are unsatisfactory.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher	Good. The acting headteacher has a clear vision for the school and central to this is the aim to maintain high standards. She is effective in

and other key staff	monitoring a team with a shared sense of values and priorities. The acting deputy headteacher and other key staff support her ably.
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How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their roles conscientiously and are fully involved in the school development process. They support the staff effectively and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. All statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school analyses its strengths and weaknesses effectively in order to decide what to do next.
The strategic use of resources	The school manages and uses its resources soundly and priorities for development are financed appropriately. Staff and governors seek to obtain the best value for their spending.

The accommodation is in generally good order. The design of the area containing the reception classes allows noise to penetrate from one room to another making concentration difficult for the children.

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 and make good progress. • Behaviour in the school is good. • Teaching is good. • Parents are comfortable in approaching the school. • Children are expected to work hard. • The school is well led and managed. • The school is helping children to become mature and responsible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount and quality of homework. • The information on how children are progressing. • A more interesting range of activities outside lessons.

The school enjoys a very good relationship with the parents and receives much support from them. A few parents have some concerns about the following matters. The inspection team considers that homework is provided consistently in appropriate amounts in line with national guidelines, mainly in English and mathematics. The information on pupils' progress is appropriate with staff approachable when there are concerns. There is a narrow range of activities outside lessons; these are football, netball and French. There are also breakfast and after-school clubs. The curriculum is supported satisfactorily by extra activities.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children enter the reception class with a wide range of attainment. Assessments carried out soon after children start school indicate that, in most years of entry, children are generally below what is expected nationally in all areas of learning. Few children have experienced pre-school provision. Children in the reception year make satisfactory progress and on entry to Year 1, their attainment is typical for this age group; most are on course to reach the Early Learning Goals in all areas of learning except creative development and in communication, language and literacy. Most children are aware of different forms of print and contribute well in discussions. They are being introduced to the alphabet through work on initial letter sounds; they enjoy handling books and develop appropriate early writing skills. Older children count up to 20, the younger up to 10. Their grasp of mathematical vocabulary, such as 'more, smaller, circle' is less well established.
2. At the end of Year 2, standards reported in national tests for 2001 indicate that pupils are attaining levels in reading and writing that are well above the national average and above in mathematics. This represents an improvement since the last inspection in 1997 and well above average results have been maintained each year since then, except for a slight decline in mathematics in 2001. In 2001, standards in the national tests, when compared with those of similar schools, are in line in reading and mathematics and well above in writing. These results represent an improvement on 2000 in writing, and a slight decrease in reading and mathematics, but represent significant progress for pupils from the below-average attainment evident on entry to school. Teachers' assessments in science showed the school's performance to be above the national average. Work seen during the inspection indicates that the good standards are being consistently maintained. There are no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls. The school's performance targets in reading, writing and mathematics were all reached last year. The school has concentrated on the core subjects of English and mathematics and this has resulted in consistently high standards over recent years. The teachers understand these subjects well and teach the relevant national strategies thoroughly.
3. At the end of Year 4, voluntary tests and teacher assessments undertaken within the school indicate that the standards achieved in Year 2 are being successfully built upon in Years 3 and 4 and this maintains the situation reported in the last inspection report. Work seen during the inspection indicates that pupils in the current Year 4 are, at present, achieving above the national average in English and mathematics and are in line in science.
4. Progress in English is very good in Years 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 and 4. Pupils generally listen well to one another and to adults. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 acquire an understanding of the basic sounds suggested by letters. Pupils are taught to write systematically and many are proficient by the end of Year 2 in relating real or imagined events in a logical order. Progress is good in Year 3 and 4 because pupils are set challenging tasks and because literacy is well used to support learning in other subjects of the curriculum.
5. In mathematics, pupils in all year groups are making at least sound and often good progress. In Years 1 and 2, numeracy skills are developing well with pupils confident in measuring, writing numbers to 20 and recognising many two- and three-dimensional shapes. In Years 3 to 4, pupils gain a good knowledge of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. They carry out mental calculations well and are developing skills in recording data using line graphs and pie charts, although information and communication technology is insufficiently used in this respect.
6. By the time pupils leave the school, at the age of nine, pupils have made satisfactory progress in science. According to teachers' assessments and work seen during the inspection, standards are in line with the national average. Teachers receive much support from the scheme of work, although further progress for the more able in all years is inhibited by a lack of extension work

- when the main purpose of the lesson has been completed.
7. In all years, pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they are well supported by both teachers and learning support assistants. Those requiring support are identified early and the school takes the right steps to ensure that their progress is continually monitored and that the provision offered is constantly under review. At present, the individual education plans in place for pupils with special educational needs are limited to literacy and do not cover other subjects; this constrains their effectiveness. Testing procedures are appropriate, systematic and manageable.
 8. Attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory across the school. Recent substantial additions to the resources available are becoming effective in raising standards. Skills are taught systematically and pupils' individual progress is monitored and recorded. The technology is well used for the learning of ICT skills but is under-used in supporting the other subjects of the curriculum.
 9. Standards in all other subjects are satisfactory. This repeats the findings of the last inspection report.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils within all age groups display a positive attitude to the school, which provides a good basis on which learning can take place. They are enthusiastic about coming to school, which is reflected in the very high levels of attendance achieved. Within the classroom, they are keen to participate in learning activities and readily involve themselves, particularly in tasks of an interactive nature. They express pride in their school and hold their teachers in high regard. They display a high level of confidence, which contributes positively to their rate of learning and personal development.
11. Pupils consistently behave well in all years, providing an orderly environment in which learning can take place. In the classroom, pupils are attentive, keen to learn and co-operative with both teachers and fellow pupils. In the school corridors and playground, pupils show respect for each other and for visitors. The school actively promotes high standards of courtesy and these values are reflected in the behaviour of pupils. Play activities are meaningful and constructive, with pupils socialising effectively with one another. No instances of oppressive behaviour were observed, either in the classroom or playground. The good standard of behaviour that characterises the school is reflected in the total absence of exclusions within recent years.
12. Pupils relate well both to teachers and to one another. They are sensitive to the needs of others and are always willing to provide a helping hand when required. Particular note was made of the obvious concern expressed by pupils when one of their number complained of feeling unwell. In all age groups, pupils displayed confidence in approaching staff, both teaching and non-teaching, and were able to converse with adults easily without reticence or embarrassment.
13. The school encourages initiative and the acceptance of responsibility effectively by the delegation of both simple tasks and assignments involving some planning and organisation. A particular example is the involvement of pupils in the running of the Easter term parents' open evening, during which the children act as hosts to their visiting parents.
14. Levels of attendance are consistently very good throughout the school and significantly exceed national averages. Likewise, levels of unauthorised absence fall below the national average. The very high level of attendance is a major strength of the school and makes a major contribution to the achievement of high academic standards.
15. Registration is conducted quickly and without fuss. The punctuality of pupils is very good, with virtually all pupils arriving promptly on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. The overall standard of teaching is sound, but a substantial proportion is good or very good. During the inspection, teaching was good in 37 per cent of lessons and very good in 9 per cent. In all other lessons teaching was satisfactory and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. This is a substantial improvement on the last inspection, when one in five lessons in Years 1 and 2 and a small number in Years 3 and 4 were unsatisfactory. During the inspection, there were no significant differences between the quality of teaching in the various age ranges, except that the very good teaching was all observed in the Year 2 and the mixed Years 3 and 4 classes. The current level of consistent, competent teaching makes a significant contribution to the standards achieved, particularly in English and mathematics.
17. The quality of teaching in the reception classes is satisfactory but with some good features. Both teachers have been appointed recently. The Foundation Stage co-ordinator is a newly-qualified teacher. She has established good routines, which are enabling children to feel secure and valued. The second teacher began her full-time appointment at the beginning of the current term after a period working part-time with the youngest children. She has already established a good rapport with the children in her class. The teachers are supported by an experienced nursery nurse supplemented, in the afternoons only, by a second nursery nurse. Both teachers have established sound management and control and teach basic skills well. However, the impact of their teaching is limited by a number of factors. In the mornings, the nursery nurse is deployed appropriately in the class containing the younger children. This leaves the other class with no second adult during the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Consequently, the teacher is unable to give enough support to individual children to enable them to make faster progress. Many of the activities given to children following whole-class teaching in literacy serve to occupy children rather than enhance their skills in this area of learning. This new team of teachers has not yet had time to assess their curriculum and organisation and to bring it fully in line with recent national guidance. There is a need to plan both the indoor and outdoor environment to provide a positive context for all six areas of learning and to increase the degree of interaction between adults and children as they engage in play.
18. In Years 1 to 4, good and very good teaching is most often to be found in English, mathematics and science. This reflects the school's emphasis on these important subjects. The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented well and most of the very good teaching was observed in literacy lessons. Now that teachers are more familiar with the detailed guidance contained in the strategy, they teach more confidently and make appropriate adaptations where necessary to the structure of the lesson. For example, one lesson lacked variety. Pupils worked on changing nouns into adjectives in all three parts of the lesson and struggled to retain interest in their work. In the best English lessons, there is a purposeful atmosphere as pupils work on stimulating material that they are clearly able to relate to the objectives for the lesson.
19. Teachers are using the National Numeracy Strategy to provide well-structured lessons in mathematics and over half of the lessons observed were good or very good. In the initial mental session, many lessons are characterised by a lively pace and effective use of resources. Pupils are given work at appropriate levels of difficulty, particularly in the Years 3 and 4 classes in which pupils are grouped into sets based on their ability in the subject. Teachers retain the interest of their pupils and ensure they understand the purpose of the lesson clearly. In some lessons, particularly those for younger pupils, teachers have low expectations about the level of pupils' work. They ask all pupils to complete the same page of a workbook. Higher attaining pupils do this very rapidly and are often capable of working at a higher level. The quality of teaching in science lessons is good overall. The strong emphasis on practical and investigative activities stimulates the interest of pupils. Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to teach confidently and clearly. Activities are very well organised and the importance of accurate recording is emphasised. The major weakness in science teaching is in the appropriate provision of tasks for all levels of ability. Many pupils are given tasks that do not enable them to add to the skills and understanding they already possess.
20. Teaching in other subjects is not as strong as it is in English and mathematics but is always at

least satisfactory. Lessons are planned thoroughly, although objectives for particular lessons are sometimes not specific enough. A strong feature in almost all teaching is the good management of pupils. As a result, there is an orderly atmosphere in classrooms enabling pupils to learn without disruption. Their good relationship with their teachers encourages them to work hard, particularly on written and practical tasks. Most pupils listen well to their teachers, although not as well to their peers. Some teachers fail to make pupils sufficiently aware that their learning can also be enhanced by other pupils' contributions. Information and communication technology is insufficiently used to raise standards in subjects across the curriculum. Lessons generally move at a brisk pace, with learning support assistants well briefed to offer good support, enabling pupils to make sound progress. However, in some lessons, no extra work is available for pupils who complete the main thrust of the lesson early; this reduces the challenge available and thus progress is limited, particularly for the more able pupils.

21. Teachers make appropriate use of a good range of resources to enhance their teaching. Learning support assistants are used to assist pupils with special educational needs, enabling them to be included fully in each activity. In the Years 3 and 4 classes, the organisation of pupils into three sets for mathematics, based on pupils' ability, enables pupils with special educational needs to make good progress with appropriate support. In the initial, introductory phase of each lesson these assistants are sometimes under-used, but in the better lessons they play a vital role. For example, in a very good English lesson for Years 3 and 4 pupils, the support assistant recorded words suggested by the pupils on the board, enabling the teacher to proceed at a faster pace. Time is mostly well used, but some lessons are too long. More variety in length is required to avoid pupils losing interest. Information and communication technology resources are under utilised in most classes, both to develop information technology capability and to support learning within subjects. There is a programme of homework activities, appropriate to the age and ability of the pupils, which is used effectively to complement and occasionally to extend pupils' classroom learning. There are no pupils with English as an additional language who require extra support. The school has not yet developed a strategy for identifying and managing pupils who are gifted and talented but this is planned for in the school development plan.
22. A weaker feature of teaching is the on-going assessment and marking of pupils' work. There is some good practice in this area, however. For example, in the reception classes, as teachers and children look together at work which has been completed, the teacher celebrates children's achievements but also indicates ways in which the next piece of work can be improved. In many classes, however, much of the marking is superficial. Teachers show that they value pupils' efforts by adding a written comment, but do little to indicate pupils' gains in learning specific skills or to indicate the next step the pupil needs to take. Most frequently this is because all pupils have completed the same task and will move on to a common subsequent piece of work. Work is rarely assessed in order to provide variable starting points in order that pupils receive work appropriate to their level of skill and understanding. There is considerable scope to increase pupils' responsibility for their own learning and the efficiency of that learning. Most lessons are strongly teacher-directed and give pupils insufficient opportunity to plan, initiate and extend their own learning more independently.

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

23. The curriculum planned for pupils in Years 1 to 4 is broad, balanced and relevant and meets statutory requirements to teach all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. The school has taken into account the recommendations of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's (QCA) guidance, the National Numeracy Strategy and the Literacy Strategy. There is, however, insufficient time planned for physical education and this constrains the raising of standards. Although the curriculum planned for children in the reception classes is based on the national guidance, it does not fully take into account the guidance in planning to deliver all the areas of learning.

24. Since the last inspection the school has taken into account the recommendations of the Curriculum 2000 and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's guidance which are used as the basis for the school's schemes of work. Recently, the school has installed a computer suite, which provides all pupils with opportunities to have access to ICT and develop their skills more effectively.
25. The school's planning is based on a two-year rolling programme for subjects other than mathematics and science to ensure full coverage of the curriculum, particularly for pupils who are in mixed-age classes in Key Stage 2. Each subject has a long-term plan that ensures that knowledge is acquired progressively as pupils move through the school. Teachers medium- and short-term planning identifies more specifically where skills and understanding are developed.
26. The school provides for education about drugs' misuse as part of its personal, social and health education programme. Sex education is not taught as a separate subject. Parents are well-informed about these arrangements.
27. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Individual education plans are carefully written to provide programmes of work, which enable each pupil to have full access to the curriculum. Provision and procedures are consistent with the nationally accepted Code of Practice for special educational needs.
28. The provision of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory, overall. The school offers pupils opportunities to take part in football, netball and French, and pupils have access to breakfast and after-school clubs. Learning is supported well by a range of educational visits to places of interest such as museums and the local area and places of worship, which successfully extend pupils' knowledge of the wider world. Visitors to school include orchestral groups, an opera group, creative arts and the police and fire services. Representatives from the local churches also lead assemblies on a regular basis.
29. The school has good links with other schools within the area and with the middle school to which these pupils transfer. These enable teachers to ensure that the pupils have a common curriculum programme and also provide opportunities for curriculum co-ordinators to observe practice in other schools. The school has links with the community that provide some enhancement to the curriculum, including local churches and local businesses.
30. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory overall. Within this area there are significant strengths in provision for the moral development of the pupils. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory, overall. There are, however, strengths within this provision. These are to be found in the planned assemblies, which provide some opportunity for pupils to reflect on a range of issues and include a daily act of collective worship. Achievement is celebrated in special assemblies each week with acknowledgement for positive attitudes, academic progress and personal achievement. However, within the daily life of the school and its environment there are not enough opportunities for pupils to reflect on wider issues.
31. Provision for pupils' moral development is good. The pupils are involved in formulating the class rules and these are displayed in each classroom. Teachers use a number of reward systems to acknowledge pupils' achievements and there are clear procedures for dealing with unacceptable behaviour. Values are fostered through the caring and good relationships that exist between staff and pupils and the good example set by all those working in the school.
32. The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' social development. Positive relationships among pupils and teachers are promoted successfully and pupils are encouraged to show consideration for the needs of others. In most lessons, teachers provide opportunities for pupils to work together and to co-operate. Pupils are encouraged to share their ideas and equipment with each other. Pupils have some opportunities to carry out responsibilities within the school, such as preparing the hall for assembly, and older pupils have organised fund-raising for several charities. The extra-curricular activities and clubs, both before and after school, provide opportunities for pupils to mix with each other socially.

33. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory, overall. An appropriate emphasis is given to life in a multi-faith and multicultural society. Pupils become aware of other faiths and traditions through their religious education lessons. A variety of festivals are celebrated as well as the Christian ones. Pupils have opportunities to learn about the art and music of different cultures and ages. Several visiting musical groups provides opportunities for pupils to understand a range of musical cultures. In history, pupils develop a sense of British culture and ancient civilisations and how they contribute to today's life styles and customs, whilst in geography, teachers provide opportunities for pupils to understand how different people live in different countries.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

34. Procedures for safeguarding the health, safety, and security of pupils are very good and fully meet both the needs of the school and also statutory requirements. The health and safety policy provides detailed information concerning organisational arrangements, including the allocation of specific responsibilities to the whole school community, including the governing body, members of staff and pupils. Procedures for implementing the policy are comprehensively documented and relevant to the needs of the school.
35. The governing body is very effective in monitoring health and safety performance by conducting periodic audits and by carrying out risk assessments as appropriate. As a result of this proactive approach, all members of the school community display a high level of health and safety awareness.
36. Accidents, however minor, are properly recorded and, where appropriate, thoroughly investigated. First aid arrangements are totally adequate, as are those related to fire prevention and control.
37. Access into the school is controlled by a security system, which is effective in preventing unauthorised entry. The high level of security awareness is demonstrated by the refusal of pupils to admit visitors into the school building unless authorised to do so by a member of staff.
38. Health and safety implications within the classroom are fully appreciated by teachers and are highlighted appropriately during lessons. Particular care is taken with external visits, and fully documented risk assessments are conducted in advance, the details of which are fully communicated to members of staff, parent helpers and the pupils themselves.
39. Arrangements for child protection are totally satisfactory and fully meet statutory requirements. An experienced teacher has been designated with the responsibility for child protection, and her role is publicised by a poster in the main reception. The school is represented at local child protection meetings, and formal training has been given to both teaching and non-teaching staff. This training has been fully successful in familiarising all members of staff with their duties and responsibilities with respect to child protection matters.
40. Procedures for monitoring attendance are very good, and the importance of pupils attending school regularly is publicised effectively in the school brochure, the monthly newsletters and the home-school agreement. A computerised attendance recording system highlights potential attendance problems with both speed and accuracy, thereby making possible a timely intervention. In the rare cases of unexplained absences, follow-up procedures are quickly and effectively implemented. Close liaison exists between the school and the educational welfare officer, which contributes very positively to the promotion and maintenance of high attendance.
41. Very effective behaviour management policies and procedures are in place. A detailed behaviour policy operates that details behaviour requirements, the school's reward strategy and the sanctions which can potentially apply. The policy is consistently applied and is fully understood and accepted by staff and pupils alike. The pupils themselves are involved in the formulation of codes of practice and these are posted on all classroom walls.

42. Although the incidence of oppressive behaviour is very low, very effective procedures are in place to cope with such situations. Accusations of bullying, or other forms of oppressive behaviour, are fully investigated prior to appropriate action being taken. Awareness of bullying as an issue is high, and pupils are fully aware of the action they need to take should they be confronted with this particular problem.

43. Teachers are highly competent in providing help, guidance and support to the pupils in their charge, creating a nurturing environment in which pupils are helped to develop to their full potential, both academically and socially.
44. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are sound in English, mathematics, science, ICT and religious education. They are less well-developed in other subjects. The procedures that are in place, though detailed, are used inconsistently in helping teachers to improve and develop their planning of future lessons.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

45. The school has developed, and is successfully maintaining, a very strong partnership with parents. This relationship makes a highly significant contribution both to the academic and social development of pupils and constitutes a major strength of the school.
46. Parents hold the school in very high regard believing it to provide a very good quality of education delivered within a safe, secure and caring environment. Behaviour is seen to be good, and pupils appear thoroughly to enjoy their school life. Parents are strong in their belief that teachers are supportive, approachable and totally professional in the discharge of their duties. These opinions are fully endorsed by the findings of the inspection team.
47. Involvement of parents within the classroom is considerable and contributes very significantly to the quality of teaching and learning. Assistance is carefully directed and helpers are clear as to the precise role expected of them within any particular lesson.
48. The help of parents is also used very effectively with school visits. Careful briefing is given to helpers on potential health and safety risks, this information being based on documented risk assessments prepared in advance.
49. Parental involvement in pupils' learning at home is willingly given and makes a significant contribution to pupils' academic progress. Parents and carers provide regular and valuable assistance to their children with homework and other activities, working always in close liaison with the school. The effectiveness of parental assistance is greatly enhanced by the high quality of information provided by the school through the medium of subject-based parental workshops, information leaflets (e.g. *Helping your Child with Reading*), and the homework diary.
50. Parental support to pupils is underpinned by the ready access to teachers provided by the school. Teachers are available for informal consultation immediately prior to, and immediately following, the school day. More formal contact operates through parent evenings held in the autumn and summer, which provide very effective opportunities for parents to receive in-depth feedback concerning their child's progress at school. An open evening held in the spring term is helpful in providing a further opportunity for parents to view their children's work.
51. Written information provided by the school is high in both quality and quantity. Newsletters, issued monthly, contain relevant information concerning current events but also highlight important issues, such as regular attendance and health and safety matters. This information is very effectively reinforced by class information sheets, issued to parents each term, which provide a programme of work which will be followed by that particular year group. The school brochure is comprehensive in scope, reader-friendly, and provides a very useful introduction to the school.
52. The governing body issues an annual report to parents that provides detailed information concerning the events of the previous year. The report fully meets statutory requirements and plays a valuable role in consolidating the partnership between the school and parents.
53. Pupils' progress reports are detailed, well-presented and easy to read. They are very effective in providing information as to pupils' attainment in each subject and also provide valuable feedback as to social development. A particular strength of the reports is their clear identification of

- potential development areas relevant to each individual pupil.
54. The partnership between school and home is formally confirmed through the home-school agreement that details effectively the respective responsibilities of the school, parents and pupils.
 55. The Russell School and Home Association provides a valuable bridge between the school and parents. Informal contact is facilitated through a wide range of social and fund-raising activities, which are well supported and highly successful in supplementing school funds.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

56. The leadership and management of the acting headteacher and key staff are good. The headteacher, teachers and governors have worked together to maintain the school's reputation for success during the long-term absence of the permanent headteacher. The acting headteacher's leadership provides good educational direction for the school and she, ably supported by the acting deputy headteacher, has kept the morale of the staff high and the school has maintained its academic success in national tests. The school community has been drawn together effectively to raise standards and ensure that pupils have high expectations of themselves. Parents have confidence in the school and its leadership and offer strong support to the work of the school. Rigorous analysis of the school's test results has been made and this has identified areas of learning, such as pupils' writing, which required further development; this has resulted in substantial improvement. The school has a happy and caring ethos and this has a positive impact on the standards of pupils' behaviour, thus creating a good learning environment. Equal opportunities are provided and the progress of all pupils is monitored carefully to ensure that they participate fully in all work and activities.
57. The governing body fulfils the legal requirement to ensure that the school teaches the whole of the National Curriculum and religious education. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities well and are closely involved in all aspects of the school's work. They have numerous committees with financial and curriculum matters thoroughly discussed to the benefit of the school's development.
58. There are appropriate schemes of work for all subjects and these are reviewed regularly and amended when necessary. Subject leaders are responsible for providing action plans for their subjects and maintaining a budget. This they do well. Procedures for monitoring the progress of pupils' work and evaluating the teaching have taken place but have lapsed during the current pressures caused by the absence of the headteacher. The school has focused attention on the basic skills to good purpose as well as setting up strong systems which offer guidance and support to teachers in all subjects. This has resulted in above- and well-above national average standards being maintained over a series of years, particularly in English and mathematics.
59. There are sufficient experienced and well-qualified staff to teach the full range of the National Curriculum, religious education and the Foundation Stage containing the reception classes. At present, the teachers of the reception classes receive insufficient adult support in the classrooms for the provision to be as effective as it might be. The absence of the headteacher has resulted in one Year 2 class being taught by the acting headteacher and two other colleagues on temporary contracts. However, this situation is well managed and the quality of education offered remains good. The school's performance management system is well based on individual targets for staff and all established staff have been involved correctly. The teamwork between teachers and between teachers and learning support staff is good and this takes the school forward effectively and adds pace to improvements. There is no designated leader to Years 3 and 4 and this inhibits curriculum development and decision-making. The school has successfully evaluated its own performance and this has resulted in a development plan with appropriate priorities detailed and costed; this is an improvement since the last inspection.
60. Overall, financial planning is sound. The carry-forward figures at the end of the last financial year was small but careful management has the end-of-year surplus for 2001/2 at an appropriate level. Governors ensure that resources are obtained at the most competitive price. Systems for the

regular financial management in the school office are good and audit recommendations have been acted upon. Office matters are dealt with effectively so that they do not impinge upon classroom teaching and teachers can proceed with their work uninterrupted.

61. The school's environment is in generally good condition and is well cared for. The school is a pleasant place in which to work but the design of the reception classes results in noise transferring from one class to another, often affecting the concentration of the children. Learning resources are good throughout and this is another improvement since the last inspection. The specific grant for ICT has been well spent and computer resources are good.
62. The key issues from the last inspection have been dealt with effectively, although assessment of pupils' work on a day-to-day basis remains an issue. Curriculum provision has been enhanced and the quality of teaching has improved. As a result, pupils' very good levels of attainment have been maintained. The school's capacity for further improvement is good.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

63. The governing body should include the following specific matters as key issues in its post-inspection action plan.

(1) Improve standards in subjects other than English, mathematics and science by

- Using day-to-day assessments, including the marking of pupils' work, to adjust the content of lessons - so achieving a better match of work to pupils' abilities and ensuring that pupils know what it is they have to do to improve
- Devising appropriate, helpful and manageable systems for assessing pupils' attainment in those subjects where procedures are not already in place
- Ensuring that subject leaders play a more active role in monitoring the implementation of the curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects
- Recognising that higher-attaining pupils require appropriate extension work to challenge them

(See paragraphs 20, 22, 44, 58, 62, 84, 87, 88, 92, 96, 99, 100, 102, 104, 108, 113, 117, 124, 128, 132, 136)

(2) Implement fully the recent national guidelines for the education of pupils in reception classes by

- Providing more diverse opportunities to promote creative development
- Using the outdoor environment to promote all areas of learning
- Providing more opportunities for children to investigate, explore and initiate their own activities
- Increasing effective adult inter-action in the children's play
- Reviewing the structure and use of the area containing the reception classes in order to develop an atmosphere more conducive to learning
- Ensure existing assessments relate directly to the 'stepping-stones', leading towards the early learning goals

(See paragraphs 17, 22, 23, 59, 61, 66, 67, 68, 69, 72, 74, 76)

(3) In addition to the above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan

- Providing more reference books and developing the school library as an effective learning resource *(See paragraphs 85, 81)*
- Ensuring that the school's handwriting policy is consistently implemented in all classes and placing more emphasis on the presentation of pupils' work in all subjects *(See paragraphs 83, 93)*
- Increase the use of computers based in classrooms so that the skills acquired when using

the computer suite can be consolidated and used more widely to support learning in other curriculum subjects (See *paragraphs 8, 20, 21, 84, 95, 116, 122*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	46
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	4	17	25	0	0	0
Percentage	0	9	36	55	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR– Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	231
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR– Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	35

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	16

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.0

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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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	31	17

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	30	30	30
	Girls	17	17	17
	Total	47	47	47
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	98 (96)	98 (96)	98 (96)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	30	30	30
	Girls	17	17	17
	Total	47	47	47
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	98 (98)	98 (100)	98 (100)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	2
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	176
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

There have been no exclusions

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.5
Average class size	26.9

Education support staff: YR– Y4

Total number of education support staff	7.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	135

Financial information

Financial year	2000-01
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	£
Total income	464,928
Total expenditure	474,115
Expenditure per pupil	1,984
Balance brought forward from previous year	10,548

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1.0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3.0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	213
Number of questionnaires returned	103

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	61	37	1	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	58	38	2	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	41	50	3	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	55	10	1	2
The teaching is good.	57	39	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	50	38	12	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	27	1	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	37	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	48	38	9	0	5
The school is well led and managed.	56	38	0	0	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	42	2	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	39	19	3	17

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

64. Pupils enter the reception classes on a part-time basis at the beginning of each academic year. Those with a fifth birthday in the autumn term attend full-time after the October half-term; younger children attend full-time from the beginning of the spring term. At the time of the inspection, the majority of children had been attending full-time for only a week.
65. At the time of the previous inspection, standards of attainment were good in language and literacy and satisfactory in all other areas of learning by the end of the reception year. They are now not as good as this. Standards of attainment in communication, language and literacy and creative development are below average, whilst those in the other four areas of learning are at expected levels. This is because standards of attainment on entry have steadily declined since 1997 according to initial tests taken by children on entry, although areas which are weak vary to some extent from year to year. Many children have little or no experience of pre-school education.
66. Progress in moving towards a more distinctive Foundation Stage curriculum has been limited, largely because the two teachers are both new to their posts. Each day, children experience a modified literacy hour and numeracy lesson, emphasising appropriately the primary importance of communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. Other areas of learning are addressed during the remainder of each day, but lessons are based on National Curriculum subjects and do not enable children to make adequate progress towards all the early learning goals. Policy documents are insufficiently consistent and clear to enable teachers and support staff to plan an appropriate programme of activities based on recent national guidance for the Foundation Stage. There is an insufficiently wide range of assessment based on focused observations of children engaging in normal classroom activities. Existing assessment does not relate directly to the 'stepping-stones' leading towards the whole range of early learning goals.

Personal, social and emotional development

67. There is satisfactory provision for this area of learning. The staff have created a secure environment in which all children feel valued. Teaching is satisfactory and a positive attitude to learning is encouraged and achieved. They have clear and consistent expectations of good behaviour and manage the children well. As a result, children's behaviour is good. Even those who have recently started attending full-time have established very positive relationships with all the adults they work with. Children are encouraged to work alongside each other and are learning to share resources. Because of the way the day is structured, there is less opportunity for children to select or initiate activities on their own, or to find and return their own equipment. They do not persist in undertaking activities requiring higher levels of concentration. Nevertheless, most children are on course to meet the early learning goals in this area of learning.

Communication, language and literacy

68. This aspect receives particular emphasis within the curriculum as the school is aware that many children enter the reception classes with low levels of attainment, especially in the skills required to begin to read and write. One hour each morning is devoted to activities with a literacy focus. Elements of the literacy framework are used effectively by staff to promote speaking skills. Teachers are adept at modelling the process of reading as they share a 'big book' with their class. They explain the features of the text without detracting from the story itself. As a result, children enjoy listening to stories and concentrate well on this activity. Teaching is generally satisfactory but many of the independent activities that follow the whole-class session fail to advance literacy skills. This is because, in one class, there are insufficient adults to monitor and support the work done by the children. Much of the time is spent in colouring parts of printed worksheets and pupils have little awareness of the meaning of the accompanying words. There is considerable scope to relate these independent activities more closely to the literacy objectives for the lesson.

Although some children are making good progress in this aspect of literacy, notably where levels of adult support are greater, children with higher initial attainment levels are making unsatisfactory progress. Many of their tasks are undemanding. Few children, as yet, know the sounds or names of letters, or recognise any of the words in the books they have to read. However, teachers maintain good records of children's attainment in reading.

69. Children practise writing letters, often by writing over the teacher's writing. They are encouraged to write for a range of purposes, but opportunities to do this are too restricted. For example, role-play activities do not include the sort of situations, such as shops, doctors' surgeries or cafes, which lend themselves to writing for a specific purpose. There is no designated writing area for children to experiment independently with mark making. Most children are likely to attain the early learning goals relating to speaking and listening by the end of the reception year, but a substantial proportion is unlikely to attain those relating to reading and writing.

Mathematical development

70. This area is given appropriate emphasis through the daily numeracy lesson. A mixture of practical and written work is provided and teaching methods are varied to allow children to learn in the ways that best suit them. Through routines such as the completion of the calendar, children develop a sense of order and sequence. Practical experience with sand, water and construction toys extends their understanding of weight and capacity.
71. Teaching is sound and children make good progress in this area of learning and most are expected to attain the relevant early learning goals. Older children count reliably to 20 and younger children mostly to ten, although, for some of the latter, one-to-one correspondence of objects to number names is not securely established. Most recognise and write the numerals up to nine. Their grasp of mathematical vocabulary, such as *more*, *smaller* or *circle* is less assured.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

72. The provision for this area of learning relies upon a limited number of lessons in National Curriculum subjects and teaching in these is satisfactory. A strong feature is the work to learn about the beliefs and cultures of other people. For example, during the inspection a religious education lesson developed children's knowledge of the Chinese New Year festival, comparing the celebrations with those of Christmas. In design and technology lessons, children learn how to prepare a range of foods. They use information and communication technology to support their learning, for example, by using a program helping them to develop their sense of number. Science, history and geography lessons add to their knowledge, but there are few opportunities for children independently to investigate objects and materials, to examine items of equipment to find out how they work or to select their own tools and materials to make things.
73. There is intermittent progress towards the early learning goals in this area of learning. There are not enough opportunities for children to consolidate the learning that occurs in subject-based lessons. Some use the computer with relative confidence or join and assemble materials competently. Children are inexperienced in exploring and investigating, showing only limited curiosity about the features of objects around them. However, most are likely to attain the majority of the early learning goals by the end of the year.

Physical development

74. There is an outdoor play area with a good amount of tarmac, a grassed area, flower beds and shrubs, but this contains no large apparatus to help children to develop their climbing and co-ordination skills. In addition, each class uses the hall for a physical education lesson once a week. During the colder seasons of the year, the outdoor area is not used. This represents inadequate provision for most aspects of physical development.

75. The physical education lessons in the inspection week could not be observed and the outdoor area was not in use. Consequently, it is not possible to judge the progress children are making towards most of the early learning goals in this area. In those aspects of physical development that were observed, such as the small motor skills used in cutting, sticking or building, children are on course to meet the relevant goals and the teaching is satisfactory.

Creative development

76. Children's need to develop creatively is poorly served by the provision in the reception classes. Children express their ideas in paint, print or collage principally in weekly art lessons. Their choice of media is limited and there are few occasions when they are able to engage in more spontaneous art activities. There are insufficient opportunities for them to use their imaginations in role-play or in their speaking and writing. Teaching is unsatisfactory when staff do not model creative play effectively by participating, by extending scenarios or by introducing further relevant vocabulary. There are some opportunities for imaginative play using sand, water, toy animals or vehicles. Music forms an important part of the weekly programme, with a formal lesson supplemented by songs and singing games to promote areas of learning such as mathematics. There is some good use of time on these activities, as when children are lined-up waiting to go to lunch. However, there are few opportunities for children to dance or to experiment with musical instruments. The classroom environment itself does little to stimulate imaginative activity.
77. In consequence, children are unlikely to attain all the early learning goals for creative development. Their artwork is carefully executed but often lacks imaginative flair. Many children lack the confidence and experience to express themselves in creative ways.

ENGLISH

78. Standards in reading and writing are well above national averages by the age of seven and above the national average by the time pupils reach the age of nine. Current standards are a little below those recorded at the end of last year for Year 2 because of differences in attainment between the different year groups. Nevertheless, this inspection confirms that standards, overall, have improved on those reported in the last inspection and have remained consistently well above over the past four years.
79. In Years 1 and 2, pupils are given a good grounding in the basic skills of reading, learning thoroughly the sounds suggested by letters used individually or in combination. Sounds of the week for Year 2 during the inspection were, for example, 'ur' and 'er'. Pupils are taught to write systematically and by Year 2, many are proficient in relating real or imagined events in logical order. Pupils are accustomed to writing for a range of purposes such as stories, letters and instructions. Standards have remained above or well above national averages in all years, including Years 3 and 4, because there is consistently good teaching in English lessons. Expectations here are high, pupils are set challenging tasks to improve their writing skills and literacy lessons are used imaginatively to support learning in other areas of the curriculum, such as history and geography. Boys and girls perform equally well across the school. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in their acquisition of reading and writing skills; they are well supported by both teachers and classroom assistants.
80. On entry to school, standards in speaking and listening are below average. Rapid improvement follows due to planned experiences in speaking and listening, such as drama. Pupils are given good opportunities to express their views or to justify opinions. Many pupils are, or become, articulate by the end of Year 2 and offer reasons to support their views. By the age of nine, many are confident speakers, expressing themselves convincingly on matters that concern them. Pupils generally listen attentively and concentrate well, with teachers employing good strategies to hold their attention. Teachers use questioning well to probe pupils' understanding, leading them on to the next stage in their thinking. They read expressively to the class so that pupils become absorbed in the texts they are sharing. Pupils listen carefully to others when they are

discussing work in pairs or in groups, generally respecting the views of the others.

81. By the age of five, many pupils recognise whole words and identify individual sounds. As they move through Years 1 and 2, they develop a good understanding of the value of sounds indicated by letters used singly or in combination because they are taught regularly and systematically. Pupils practise reading regularly, receiving good support in their efforts both at school and at home, so that by Year 2 many are reading fluently and competently. In Years 3 and 4, pupils continue to make good progress in their reading because skills continue to be practised regularly. For example, teachers expect that all will read regularly at home and pupils' progress is monitored well. Those who read fluently are guided to read different and more challenging texts, so that pupils are introduced to a range of writing for different purposes and audiences. In turn, this helps to improve the quality of pupils' writing. The library is under-resourced with non-fiction reference books and the system in use for finding relevant books is difficult for pupils to understand. This limits pupils' skills in researching areas of learning and their familiarity with non-fiction. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in their reading, receiving good support from classroom assistants who are well briefed by the teacher.
82. From the age of five, pupils are able to order sentences in sequence to retell a story such as *Oops* by Colin McNaughton. By Year 2, some pupils begin to develop an awareness that their writing will be read by others. Some begin to write well in poetic style when writing "Winter Fun" and using computer skills to display their work effectively. By the end of Year 4, writing is still above the national average because pupils are invited to write at length on a range of themes. Studies in history and geography are used to build up writing skills, although some of the tasks are routine and lack stimulation. Pupils write readily and easily and their enthusiasm is matched by teachers' enthusiasm for the subject. Writing is an area which has shown much improvement since the last inspection.
83. Standards in spelling across the school are good because this aspect of English is taught systematically and regularly. There are clear expectations in all years that spellings will be learnt each week, and parents support pupils' efforts well. Home-school contact books ensure that there is good liaison between parents and teachers, which helps the monitoring of pupils' progress. In handwriting, standards are unsatisfactory. While a cursive script is taught from Year 1, there is insufficient insistence on its application in everyday writing, with the result that some pupils write in fluent, joined hand by the time they reach Year 4, while others still print. Standards of presentation vary similarly across the school.
84. Teaching is generally good throughout. Teachers use clear explanations and careful questioning to determine pupils' level of understanding and ensure that they know what is expected of them when a new task is set. Teachers know their pupils well and understand what they need to learn next with some teachers sharing this information with pupils. All teachers set clear written targets for each pupil and these are effective in contributing to the high standards in English. Lessons are well-structured and usually proceed at a good pace. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, overall, because their work is well-monitored and supported. The National Strategy's guidelines are used well to inform teachers' planning. Work is marked carefully and regularly but teachers' comments are not helpful in assisting pupils in understanding what they need to do to improve. Good lessons are characterised by well-planned teaching that sets targets for each activity so that pupils are in no doubt what they are expected to achieve. These lessons offer challenge to pupils of all abilities. There are examples of good use of information and communication technology skills in English but in general, this resource is under-used in promoting learning in English. Teachers generally manage their pupils well because they develop good relationships with them and because pupils usually enjoy the work they are set.
85. The English curriculum is sufficiently broad and balanced and is very well managed. As a result, the school carefully identifies strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning and is aware of the steps it needs to take to continue with the improvements made in recent years. Pupils' learning is monitored rigorously and the information is used to increasing effect when teachers are planning new work. The curriculum is enhanced with a World Book Day on the theme of 'Stories from Around the World' and a 'creative day', with a variety of English activities throughout the

chosen day. Resources for the subject are good, except for reference books in the library.

MATHEMATICS

86. Findings of the inspection are that standards are above average at age seven and at the end of Year 4. This represents an improvement in standards by the end of Year 2 since the last inspection, whilst the above-average standards in Years 3 and 4 have been maintained.
87. In the national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2001, the percentage of pupils who achieved the expected level (Level 2) was above that found nationally whilst the proportion of pupils who achieved the higher level (Level 3) was close to the national average. When this is converted into a points score, it shows that standards were above average, overall. When the results are compared with pupils from similar schools, their attainment was close to the average. In the tests for 2001 there was no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls. There has been a decline in the overall achievements of the pupils since 1999. The key factors that have affected standards at the end of the key stage are the below-average starting point of pupils and the lack of sufficient challenge for the higher-attaining pupils.
88. The quality of learning is satisfactory, overall. However, the pace in some lessons is slow and this affects the rate of pupils' learning. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported during mathematics and make good progress against their prior attainment. The progress of the higher-attaining pupils, however, is often below that expected. The school is not yet formally identifying gifted and talented pupils in mathematics, although teachers have a clear awareness of who the more able pupils are. Teachers do not generally provide sufficient challenge for these pupils by planning work that fully meets their needs and, as a result, some do not achieve as well as they might.
89. Since the last inspection, the school has recognised the need to improve standards in mathematics across the school and as a result has introduced the National Numeracy Strategy, with clearer planning of the curriculum and well-focused training for teachers and learning support assistants. This has improved the overall quality of teaching and raised teachers' subject knowledge and confidence.
90. By the age of seven, most pupils understand and use numbers to 100. They add and subtract numbers to 20, distinguish between odd and even numbers and solve simple problems. They understand the value of money and calculate sums to over £1.00. They are beginning to use their twos, fives and tens multiplication tables appropriately in simple multiplication and division. Pupils' previous work shows that they have a sound knowledge of simple fractions, such as halves and quarters. They understand the properties of simple two- and three-dimensional shapes and are beginning to use standard units, such as centimetres, when measuring. They understand how to tell the time in hour, half-hour and quarter hours. The pupils in Years 1 and 2 collect data, tally this and record the information in pictorial graphs. For example, pupils in Year 1 have recorded information about the methods they use to travel to school, in a large pictorial graph. Pupils make satisfactory progress in mental arithmetic. They learn their tables and number bonds systematically and work out a range of mental arithmetic problems related to these.
91. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 continue to build on their skills, knowledge and understanding of number. They develop their knowledge of place value of numbers to six figures, using these to calculate in addition and subtraction and to solve problems. They measure using standard measures, such as millimetres, centimetres, metres and kilometres, know the properties of two-dimensional shapes and work out the perimeter and areas of these. They develop their knowledge of fractions and use these to calculate fractions of numbers such as $30 \div 7$, writing the answer as a mixed number. Their understanding of data collection and interpretation is developed further to include bar line charts, block graphs and pie charts. Pupils maintain their steady progress in developing their knowledge of multiplication tables and mental arithmetic, with regular practice.
92. The quality of teaching throughout the school is good, overall. During the inspection, over half the teaching observed was good, with one very good lesson observed. The teaching during the oral

and mental sessions is usually good, with teachers using probing questioning and full discussion and a range of strategies to engage pupils' interest. For example, pupils in Year 2 were introduced to the importance of the zero when learning about place value through a game, taking out blocks of tens and units from a bag, then identifying and describing the numbers. They then moved on to explore numbers further with an extension of the 'game', which they played in groups. A strong factor in the effective teaching seen across the school is the high priority given to developing pupils' thinking and understanding of mathematics. Teachers show confidence in their subject knowledge and, as a result, the mental arithmetic and early parts of lessons are generally good. However, when giving pupils the tasks to complete to support their learning, teachers depend too heavily on all pupils completing the same exercise from the published workbooks, which the school has adopted. All pupils, particularly in Years 1 and 2 are initially expected to complete the same task, with no regard to the ability or needs of the individual pupils and, as a result, some pupils, particularly those of higher ability levels, finish quickly and are insufficiently challenged. There is sometimes a further activity given to these pupils but this does not usually provide more than further examples to complete or just slightly more difficult examples. In Years 3 and 4, the pupils work in ability groups from across the key stage but within these sets the pupils tend to practise the same exercise or task. Again this means that those who are of higher ability are not always challenged as much as they might be. Pupils with special educational needs are usually supported within mathematics lessons and this helps them to make good progress.

93. Teachers in both key stages are confident with the National Numeracy Strategy, which has been implemented effectively, and lesson planning has improved as a result of this. A good deal of staff training for teachers and teaching assistants has taken place and this has improved staff subject knowledge and expertise as well as their confidence in the subject. Although teachers generally expect their pupils to work hard they do not emphasise the need to set their work out neatly and to write clearly.
94. As a result of the range of strategies used, the good levels of discussion and questioning that takes place, the pupils enjoy their work and in lessons they are enthusiastic but well-behaved. They join in with mental sessions, concentrate well and are well-motivated. Pupils work well in pairs or in small groups and share ideas.
95. Some opportunities are given for pupils to use ICT to extend and practise their mathematical knowledge; this is usually to reinforce work in number bonds and multiplication tables. Although there are some opportunities for the use and development of mathematical skills in other areas of the curriculum, this is generally insufficiently developed.
96. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress are good, overall. Teachers regularly assess pupils' progress on completion of units of work and include mental tests and tests on multiplication tables. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are also assessed at the end of each term using the criteria developed by the local authority advisory team. Additionally, the school uses optional standardised tests at the end of the year. The results of these tests are recorded and used to monitor the progress of the individual pupils as they move through the school. They are also used to set targets for individuals each year. However, the use of assessment is not yet used effectively by teachers when planning lessons; for example, in lessons in Years 1 and 2, information was not used to provide work of a sufficiently challenging nature to the higher achieving pupils. The co-ordinator analyses the results of the statutory tests and this information is used to identify weaknesses. All pupils' work is marked with some supportive comments, but in general there is little guidance on what needs to be improved.
97. The co-ordinator manages and leads the subject effectively. She has good subject knowledge, and has been largely responsible for introducing the National Numeracy Strategy and ensuring that it is securely in place, and that all staff have received adequate training. She has had opportunity to monitor the teaching and learning as well as evaluating the results of the tests across the school. Resources are good and are used well to assist pupils in their learning.

SCIENCE

98. In 2001, teachers' assessments of pupils aged seven indicated that almost all had reached at least the expected Level 2 and that two pupils in every five had reached the higher Level 3. These results were above the national average. Inspection evidence indicates that, again, almost all of the current Year 2 pupils are likely to reach the expected level, but that few will reach the higher level. This is because the same tasks are given to all pupils and more able pupils have had insufficient experience of working at a higher level to achieve more advanced results. Pupils' attainment, overall, is in line with the national average. This is also the case for pupils aged nine. These older pupils have built up an appropriate level of knowledge in the various areas of the subject through undertaking practical activities. At both ages, standards in relation to the national average have remained the same as those at the time of the previous inspection.
99. The youngest pupils in Key Stage 1 sort objects according to the type of material from which they are made. These pupils distinguish successfully between items that are living and non-living and are aware of how we use our senses to classify materials. In Year 2, pupils use a more sophisticated range of properties to classify groups of objects. They name all five senses and the major parts of the human body. Higher-attaining pupils list criteria which distinguish living from non-living objects and describe how babies grow up. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make at least satisfactory progress through the key stage. This is because there is a strong bias towards practical activities, enabling pupils to learn new concepts effectively and enabling those with lower levels of literacy to be fully included in the work and with support to record results successfully. However, some higher ability pupils make insufficient progress. Although teachers may ask them to record in more advanced ways, they do not use the information they possess about the attainment levels of these pupils to provide work that advances their scientific skills and understanding.
100. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 study science topics on a two-year rotational basis. The strong emphasis on practical and investigative activity continues, enabling pupils to deepen their understanding of materials, life forms and physical processes. Most work is completed on worksheets designed to increase successively the degree to which pupils record investigations independently. Unfortunately, however, both year groups in each class use the same worksheets, so that Year 4 pupils cannot progress satisfactorily from their attainment levels in the previous year. Pupils are beginning to understand how to make a test fair. Many pupils with above-average attainment recognise and explain why tests are fair, but most pupils' understanding of this aspect of experimentation requires further development. Pupils in Year 4 have little experience of planning their own investigations and choosing methods of recording their findings. These pupils have made good progress in building scientific vocabulary because teachers introduce and reinforce new words systematically. They understand and use confidently words such as *insulation*, *absorption*, *translucent* and *opaque*. Pupils know which changes are reversible and which are not. They understand some physical processes and explain cause and effect. An example of this occurred when a pupil commented that transparent sticky tape becomes translucent when fingerprints are added to the sticky surface.
101. The quality of teaching is good, overall. All lessons were rated as either good or satisfactory. Teachers plan together in teams and provide lessons with clear targets, which are shared with the pupils. Because of this joint planning process, there is very good correspondence between the curriculum of parallel classes. Most teachers have good subject knowledge. This enables them to structure work logically and to introduce new concepts clearly. As a result of this good, confident teaching of basic skills, pupils acquire new knowledge rapidly. Teachers use a good range of resources, not only in their lessons but also to provide interesting displays. Occasionally, as in one Year 2 class, these contain interactive elements to enable pupils to explore further. Most teachers manage their pupils very well in science lessons. This creates orderly classrooms where pupils are not disrupted as they work at a good pace. In the best lessons, teachers use the feedback after group work to extend pupils' understanding through challenging questions.
102. The most significant weakness in teaching relates to the tasks given to pupils at differing levels of attainment. In most classes, the task is identical for all pupils, although the method and extent of

recording may vary. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress as they often receive additional support to enable them to make a full contribution to both oral and written work. However, the tasks provided often fail to extend the skills of higher-attaining pupils and these make insufficient progress. Occasionally, the pace of teaching is too slow to maintain the interest of all pupils. They become restless and inattentive, although always settling down well when given practical or written tasks.

103. There are appropriate assessment arrangements for science. At the end of each unit of work, the results of a simple test are recorded to show the level of attainment of individual pupils. This information is insufficiently used to provide additional input for those who show they have not understood, although it is used to vary the programme of activities in the following year where necessary. Good links are made between science and several other subjects. For example, opportunities are taken to use mathematical and information and communication technology skills to illustrate the results of investigations. However, the potential of the subject to provide a vehicle for extended writing, so helping to consolidate literacy skills, is underdeveloped.
104. A new co-ordinator was appointed at the beginning of the school year. She has already used a good range of methods to monitor teachers' planning and pupils' learning and has formed an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school's provision. As yet, she has had little opportunity to monitor the quality of teaching. There are good plans to use the current 'Science Year' to provide extra interesting activities involving parents as well as pupils.

ART AND DESIGN

105. At the time of the previous inspection, standards were judged to be in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1 and at the end of Year 4. It was possible to observe only a single lesson in the subject, insufficient to draw general conclusions about the quality of teaching or standards of attainment. Examination of samples of pupils' work in sketch-books and portfolios, together with the work attractively displayed around the school, indicates that standards have been maintained at a similar level to those in 1997. It is also evident that a suitable range of art and design skills is taught and that the requirements of the National Curriculum are met. There have been improvements in the curriculum as new national guidance has been selectively adopted and this has led to a more balanced and varied programme than was evident in 1997. However, because of a concentration on the core subjects of English and mathematics, there has been inadequate progress in planning and assuring the progressive acquisition of skills in art.
106. Year 1 and Year 2 pupils have completed a very similar programme in the subject, but in most instances the work in Year 2 displays a higher degree of skill in drawing, particularly in pen drawings of the Cholmondeley sisters based on an eighteenth century original. All four classes have produced very effective winter pictures of silhouetted tree shapes on a marbled background, but these show only limited individuality or variation from the basic technique. Year 2 pupils have studied the work of some famous artists. Using computers, they have produced striking pieces of artwork based on the work of Mondrian. Opportunities are frequently taken to link art to other subjects. For example, in Year 1, pupils have used white chalk on black paper to draw the human skeleton and have illustrated their classroom rules. In Year 2, pupils have linked art with religious education as they draw Mehndi patterns. In most Year 1 and 2 classes, sketch-books are in use but have sometimes been introduced very recently or used only sparingly.
107. Year 3 pupils have made insufficient use of their sketch-books. They have been little used to collect ideas for future reference or to experiment with new techniques. In Year 4, some sketch-books show more signs of use, including exercises in colour mixing, but the generally small amount and variety of work indicates the lack of an agreed policy on their use. Pupils in Key Stage 2, including those with special educational needs, make appropriate progress in other aspects of the subject. Photographic evidence indicates that the programme has included three-dimensional work using Modroc and clay and that pupils have increasing opportunities to express their ideas more individually. They continue to study and copy the styles of well-known artists, including modern ones such as Andy Warhol. However, there is inadequate attention to the work

of artists outside the Western European tradition. Pupils in Year 4 show greater technical skills and imagination. They have produced some very pleasing winter landscapes using paint and tissue paper. Many pupils of this age use perspective accurately to draw pictures of chairs.

108. At present, the school is using a scheme of work that combines elements of the former school scheme with recent national guidance. The newly appointed co-ordinator recognises that further work is required to integrate the disparate elements and to ensure that key skills, such as those of observational drawing, are taught systematically. She has recognised the need to increase staff confidence in teaching art through specific training in skills and techniques. Most of the budget for the subject is spent on consumable items, but there is a need to develop a resource bank of photographic and printed material, particularly to illustrate the work of female artists and of those from more diverse cultures. The use of information and communication technology is well-developed and includes placing pupils' work on the school's website for parents to see. Visiting artists regularly feature in the programme, helping pupils to understand artistic processes in action. Strengths and weaknesses in the subject are recognised in the subject action plan but the subject co-ordinator has insufficient time to monitor pupils' work and evaluate teaching in other classes.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

109. At the previous inspection, standards in design and technology were in line with national expectations at the ages of seven and nine. This remains the case, but the subject has a low profile in the school because of the concentration recently upon the core subjects of English and mathematics. Skills in the designing element of the subject are underdeveloped in Years 3 and 4.
110. In Year 1, pupils explore the components of a puppet to find out how it works. They have designed Christmas cards and tree decorations and tasted food to evaluate its quality. Their finished products are at the level expected at this age. Pupils in Year 2 have designed and made hats and vehicles, recording the resources they will use in words or pictures. The design brief permitted only a limited choice of modes of manufacture, but standards both of designing and making are typical for this age.
111. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 examine the construction and use of torches as the first stage in designing and making one for themselves. They identify features of each torch but find it difficult to explain the reasons for details of the design. When they write about the torches, much of the writing is descriptive rather than evaluative. They are more successful in identifying which torches are suited to particular uses. These pupils have also designed and made musical instruments, where a wider design brief resulted in a greater diversity of product, including photo frames and purses. The latter have been made with some care and technical skill but are all to a common design, apart from small variations in the closure mechanisms. The accompanying designs show a poor understanding of the design process, showing decorative finish but no annotation to show the method of closure. There is little evidence to indicate that pupils evaluate their own work or have the opportunity to revise their design in the light of practical experience.
112. Just two lessons were observed in this subject, too few to draw conclusions about the overall quality of teaching. However, pupils enjoy design and technology lessons and co-operate well in pairs as they examine a variety of torches, for example. The subject is timetabled at the same time as art. Where teachers are less confident about the subject, this common timetabling adversely affects the teaching of specific design and technology skills as too much time is devoted to planning and executing decorative finishes. Insufficient time is spent on practising skills and evaluating processes and products.
113. As in art and design, which has the same co-ordinator, elements of the older school scheme of work have been combined with units from recent national guidance. The latter have been well chosen to provide greater emphasis on previously under-represented areas. The co-ordinator envisages that further adjustments will be made as a result of her monitoring to ensure that skills are taught more progressively. She requires more time to monitor all aspects of the subject and to raise its profile in the school. Current assessment arrangements are inadequate as they concentrate upon the quality of the finished product to the exclusion of pupils' skills in design and evaluation.

HISTORY / GEOGRAPHY

114. Standards and progress in both history and geography are satisfactory throughout the school. When the school was last inspected, progress and standards in these subjects were found to be satisfactory. No history lessons were seen in Years 3 and 4.
115. By the age of seven, pupils know about Wales and plan a visit to this area using the literacy lesson's travels of Barnaby Bear to increase relevance to the pupils. By the age of nine, they are aware of environmental issues relating to transport. In history, pupils in Years 1 and 2, understand how time passes when studying a time-line to demonstrate the length of Queen Victoria's reign. By the age of nine, they have studied famous people, such as Guy Fawkes and Florence Nightingale, and are aware of how their problems compare with modern day problems. The knowledge of pupils in Years 3 and 4 is extended by visits to Verulamium to study Romans and West Stow to learn about Anglo-Saxons and they have learnt much about the lifestyles of those periods.
116. In both history and geography, teaching was generally satisfactory with some good features. Teachers prepare their lessons and made every effort to ensure that lessons are interesting. Pupils show much interest and enjoyment in these subjects and try hard to do good work. There are clear aims in the planning of lessons but these aims are not always adhered to as the lesson proceeds, thus reducing the effectiveness of the plans. There are planning intentions to involve ICT as a support for learning in history and geography, but this aspect is under-used constraining pupils' opportunities to use the skills they learn in the computer suite. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teachers, enabling them to join fully in the lessons.
117. Currently, the history and geography curriculum is broad and balanced. The arrangements for assessment are underdeveloped but provision to rectify this has been introduced, although it is not yet effective in helping teachers to improve the provision offered. The subject leader has identified areas of development in the subjects and has prepared action plans to address them. The provision of resources in both history and geography is good. There are opportunities for visits that enhance the history and geography curriculum.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

118. The previous inspection reported that standards were in line with those expected at the end of Year 2, and by the end of Year 4, and that pupils made satisfactory progress, overall. However, the school did not have satisfactory systems to assess and record pupils' attainment and progress. The school's overall plan also lacked a scheme to indicate skills development as pupils move through the school. The school has maintained the, overall, satisfactory standards in all years although there are some omissions in meeting standards in some elements of the new requirements for information and communication technology. Some gaps in the pupils' knowledge and skills remain as a result of the lack of appropriate equipment. There is a lack of software for musical composition, simulations and monitoring sensors. The school is aware of these gaps and has plans to further improve its provision. The school has recently acquired resources and facilities for these, for example, e-mail and internet connections, the sensor, scanner and digital scanner, and plans are in hand to implement these as soon as possible.
119. There have been significant improvements in provision for the subject. Grant funding has been used well to upgrade resources and to improve teaching skills. There is now a computer suite that can accommodate half a class, as well as the computers in each classroom. The school has also purchased more software to link with every curriculum area other than for physical education. Teachers and support staff have received training so that they are now more confident and competent to teach the required curriculum. Training is on-going to ensure that the school keeps up with continuous developments. The school has also adopted national recommendations as a basis for the scheme of work and this ensures that skills are taught progressively as pupils move through the school. Procedures for assessment have been developed based on these

recommendations. These initiatives are helping to raise provision and standards further throughout the school. The subject remains a priority for further development and there are clear targets for improvement in the school's development plan.

120. By the age of seven, pupils develop their knowledge of how to use the computer keyboard satisfactorily. They use their word processing skills to write text and use art programs to design and draw pictures, using the fill tool carefully. Pupils in Year 2 prepare and enter information on a chart ensuring that the answers to their questions can only have a yes/no answer.
121. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 prepare graphs and charts based on data about themselves. They use their word processing skills well to draft and edit their writing, presenting information about the Moon Landing in newspaper format. They continue to develop their skills in design using art programs such as Dazzle to produce designs for stamps.
122. Although there were few direct lessons of ICT observed during the week, evidence suggests that teaching is satisfactory, overall. Although teachers are responding well to training opportunities, a few still lack confidence in using ICT across the curriculum; during the inspection, the computers in classrooms were not used at all in some classes. Where teachers have confidence, there was appropriate use of the computers to extend and develop pupils' skills and knowledge in subjects such as mathematics and English. However, opportunities for the use of the computers in classrooms, both to support learning in other subjects across the curriculum and to consolidate the skills that the pupils have learned in lessons in the computer suite, are underdeveloped. The appointment of a skilled teaching assistant to support learning in the computer suite is having a considerable impact on the quality of teaching and learning.
123. The attitudes and enthusiasm of the pupils are obvious and contribute to lessons that hold pupils' interest. Pupils concentrate well, as a result, and put a lot of effort into their work. They co-operate well in pairs, discussing the way forward and overcoming problems. They take a pride in their completed work.
124. The subject co-ordinator has only recently taken over the role. She is keen to develop the use of computers further and continue to help support colleagues. She has not yet had the opportunity to monitor the teaching and learning. Recently, the school has introduced a system for assessing and recording pupils' progress. This is not yet established sufficiently to make a contribution to the quality of teachers' planning for different groups within the class. Resources are satisfactory, overall. The computer suite provides a good resource and is used well, although it is in a small area and there are insufficient computers for a whole class to use in there. This creates some difficulties with organisation.

MUSIC

125. In the previous inspection, standards in music were found to be in line with national expectations by the end of Year 2, and by the end of Year 4, with many pupils achieving above this in some aspects. During this inspection, due to timetable arrangements, only one lesson of music was observed in Years 1 and 2 and two lessons in Years 3 and 4. There is, therefore, insufficient evidence to make secure judgements in music for pupils at the age of seven; the limited evidence available in Years 3 and 4 suggests that standards are in line with those expected.
126. In the one lesson observed, in Key Stage 1, the pupils recognise that different effects are achieved by scraping, shaking and tapping instruments. They accompany the telling of a story using these sound effects appropriately. They sing a song based on Chinese music, maintaining the tune satisfactorily. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have developed their understanding of rhythmic patterns and recognise these when listening to the piece of music Tubular Bells by Mike Oldfield. They maintained the pulse and rhythm well by clapping when chanting a verse and followed the musical notation, then developed this to sustain three rhythmic patterns well. They understand the terms *rhythm*, *ostinato*, *duration* and *pulse*. All pupils in Years 3 and 4 learn to play the recorder during their music lessons. They play simple tunes well whilst reading the music. The

singing in assemblies is satisfactory. In the lessons observed, the pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily, overall.

127. The quality of teaching observed was, overall, satisfactory. In the one good lesson, the teacher generated the interest of the pupils through her own enthusiasm, maintaining a good pace and using resources well. Lessons are planned to cover a range of activities. All teachers teach music, although their subject knowledge is variable. Some lack confidence and in these lessons the pace of the lesson is slow and, as a result, pupils lose interest and learning is not improved. The school offers older pupils extra-curricular opportunities to develop their musical skills, when they have the opportunity to learn the violin. Those seen learning to play the violin are making good progress in reading music and developing sound technique in their playing.
128. The co-ordinator has only taken on the role during this month. She does not have specialist knowledge of the subject and is intending to develop this in the near future. The school uses national recommendations and guidelines alongside a published scheme. There are no formal systems for assessing the achievements of pupils. The school has regular visits from musical groups representing a good cross section of musical cultures and providing pupils with good opportunities to experience a wide variety of music. Resources are good and include some from other cultures.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

129. Standards in physical education are in line with what is usually expected nationally by the time pupils reach the ages of seven and nine. This maintains the overall situation reported at the time of the last inspection. There is no difference in standards between boys and girls.
130. Lessons were only seen in gymnastics. Other aspects of the physical education curriculum are timetabled to take place at appropriate times of the year. The curriculum time available is restricted to one hour per week. This is insufficient to provide full coverage of the required curriculum and, hence, restricts pupils' further progress.
131. Pupils work enthusiastically in gymnastics. They explore ways of changing speed and direction and are aware of how body parts can be used as points of balance. The quality of teaching was satisfactory in the two lessons seen during the inspection. A more detailed scheme of work has been introduced since the last inspection. This provides clear guidance to teachers and is helping teachers' confidence in teaching the subject to rise through the extra expertise acquired. Lessons have variable pace with teachers sometimes discussing activities for too long, with pupils losing concentration as a result. Demonstrations of good practice are regularly used but these usually come at the end of an activity leaving pupils with no opportunities to evaluate or exceed what they have seen. Lessons are well planned and constructed. Pupils who have special educational needs have full access to all physical activities and are well supported by classroom assistants when required.
132. The subject leader is responsible for a budget for the subject. This has resulted in the subject being well-resourced. She has also prepared an action plan as part of the school's development plan and this ensures that the subject continues to develop. She plans for Year 1 and 2 to ensure continuity but this planning element is not carried forward to Years 3 and 4, and this limits the effectiveness of continuity and progression in the learning of physical education skills. The subject leader regularly takes advice and attends training courses to update her knowledge. The current provision of extra-curricular activities consists of football and netball, for which outside expertise is employed. The skills of the subject leader are not fully utilised in raising standards in that she has insufficient time to monitor what is happening in other classes.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

133. Standards in religious education meet the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus by the end of Year 2 and Year 4 and pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. This is similar to the findings of the previous inspection.

134. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are introduced to stories from the Bible, such as the birth and episodes from the life of Jesus and some of the parables he told. They learn about other faiths, such as Islam. They learn about how the different religions celebrate special events such as the naming ceremonies for new babies. They learn about aspects of Islam and the significance of the mosque as a special place for Muslims. They understand that the Bible is a special book for Christians whilst the Qur'an is a special book for the Muslims. The pupils show an increasing understanding of celebrations such as Christmas and the customs associated with them.
135. In Years 3 and 4, pupils continue to develop their knowledge of Christianity through stories about the life of Jesus and his teachings and reflect on the effect of these on our lives. They consider stories from the Old Testament, such as the story of Jonah. They develop their knowledge and understanding of the ceremonies associated with other religions, such as Judaism, Buddhism and Christianity and make comparisons between these. They learn how Christianity has influenced the actions of people in the past, such as St Alban and St Francis, and consider the effect that the Christian belief has in our daily lives.
136. It is not possible to make a secure judgement about the quality of teaching in Years 3 and 4 as only one lesson was observed. In Years 1 and 2 the teaching is satisfactory, overall. Evidence from pupils' previous work indicates that pupils make satisfactory progress, overall. Teaching involves pupils in a good level of discussion; for example, when discussing the Islamic naming ceremony in Year 2. In these lessons, teachers make good use of pupils' own experiences and feelings. Discussions take place with reverence for the practices of Islam. These lessons help pupils to develop their speaking and listening very well, because they want to share what they know and feel and are interested in what their friends have to say. Teachers use artefacts and pictures well to illustrate aspects of the different religions. Teachers are consistent in expecting pupils to record their learning either in pictures or in writing but, generally, the same activities are planned for pupils of all abilities. On these occasions, pupils with below average attainment and special educational needs have support in recording their work. Teachers' planning follows the Locally Agreed Syllabus alongside suggestions of national recommendations. This provides continuity and progression as pupils move through the school. Indications are that teachers' subject knowledge is variable, particularly with regard to the different religions being studied, and this leads to a lack of confidence when planning activities that will develop pupils' understanding and learning to the full. Since the last inspection, the school has improved procedures for assessment by introducing a system of assessing and recording the achievements of pupils at the end of each unit of work.
137. The co-ordinator provides good leadership. She has had some opportunities to monitor teaching and learning in lessons. She also monitors teachers' planning and samples pupils' work. Resources for the subject have improved since the last inspection, with particular emphasis on the purchase of artefacts from different faiths. The school has also provided opportunities for pupils to visit places of worship, such as the local churches, synagogue and mosque.