

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

**SHEPTON MALLET  
NURSERY AND  
INFANT SCHOOL**

Shepton Mallet

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123660

Headteacher: Mrs N Pauley

Reporting inspector: Mr K Hodge  
18466

Dates of inspection: 19-22 November 2001

Inspection number: 194193

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	County
Age range of pupils:	3-7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Waterloo Road Shepton Mallet Somerset
Postcode:	BA4 5HE
Telephone number:	01749 342322
Fax number:	01749 346060
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Whittock
Date of previous inspection:	May 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
18466	Kevin Hodge	Registered inspector	Science, information and communication technology, design and technology, physical education	The pupils' results and achievements How well is the school led and managed.
14083	Andy Anderson	Lay inspector		The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How the school cares for its pupils. How the school works in partnership with the parents.
19387	Mari Powell	Team inspector	English, art and design, music, religious education, equal opportunities	How well are pupils taught.
A11419	Jeannie Underwood	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage, mathematics, geography, history, special educational needs	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**

Shepton Mallet Nursery and Infant School is an average size school with 187 pupils on roll. It is a short distance from the centre of Shepton Mallet and serves a diverse socio-economic area. Most of the pupils come from the immediate locality, which has significant pockets of social housing and families with modest incomes. The number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is slightly above the national average. There are no pupils from ethnic minorities and none speaks English as an additional language.

There is a nursery attached to the school, which serves the wider area. The children enter the nursery in the September after their third birthday for either the morning or afternoon sessions. Most of them transfer into the main school, but approximately one in three enters the reception class with no pre-school experience. Other pupils enter the reception class at the beginning of the year in which they are five. The school tests the pupils' attainment on entry and most are below average. The number of pupils on the school's register for special educational needs and with statements for special educational need is above average. In the school's policies, there are clearly stated aims for promoting the pupils' personal and academic development.

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

This is a good school that provides high levels of care, security and enjoyment for its pupils. The children accept responsibilities that quickly develop their relationships with others. Many of the pupils achieve well and acquire appropriate skills in many subjects. By the age of seven, they attain particularly well in their writing and art. The pupils in the nursery and the reception classes learn well and are soundly prepared for their future work. In aspects of reading and mathematics, their attainment is low when compared to the national expectations, but is better than that of similar schools. The leadership provided by the headteacher and staff is good, following a period of uncertainty when several members of staff either retired or gained promotion. Although many of the teachers are relatively new to the school, a good level of teamwork is developing. The headteacher leads the school well, shows high levels of care for the pupils, and clearly sees the raising of standards as important. The teaching throughout the school is generally good, with few weaknesses. Several governors are new to their roles, but are determined to support the school in its next phase of development. In view of the consistently good quality teaching, the progress that the pupils make, and the very high standards of care shown for them, the school gives good value for money.

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

- The school promotes high standards of writing and art for the pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- The headteacher and governors provide good direction and leadership to the work of the school.
- The teaching is generally good throughout the school, and is occasionally very good.
- It promotes very positive attitudes from its pupils who like the school very much.
- It helps its pupils to form very good relationships with each other and the adults in the school.
- It develops the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness very well.
- It cares for its pupils very well and promotes attendance very effectively.
- It promotes effective links with the local community.
- It gives the pupils a secure start in the nursery and reception classes.

### What could be improved

- The pupils' fluency in reading in Years 1 and 2
- The pupils' abilities in mathematics in Years 1 and 2
- Aspects of the accommodation

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

### HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in May 1997. The report identified some weaker areas for development. Since then, the school has made satisfactory improvement overall. There has been significant enhancement in the pupils' writing, in both their day-to-day work and in their national test results compared to similar schools. The raising of standards in mathematics generally has not been as successful, but the pupils steadily gain skills as they progress through the school. In all other subjects, the pupils' attain the nationally expected levels for their age except in art and design where they attain standards above those expected nationally. The curriculum is broad and balanced, which is a similar picture to the last inspection. Although the school has just come through a period of change in staffing, it has maintained the good leadership and high standards of care and behaviour highlighted in the last report. Overall, the pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is very good, which is an improvement, particularly the multicultural element. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during this inspection, which is another improvement, but there are still areas of the accommodation that are unsatisfactory. The recent opening of a computer suite is a vast improvement on the level of resources to support the information and communication technology curriculum.

### STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by seven-year-olds based on the National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
Reading	C	D	E	C
Writing	A	C	C	A
Mathematics	C	E	E	D

<b>Key</b>	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Compared to schools nationally, the standards that the pupils attain have generally declined each year since 1999. However, when compared to similar schools, their attainment is generally much better in their writing and comparable in reading, but in mathematics it is below average. The school focused a significant amount of effort on enhancing the pupils' writing abilities. As a result, their attainment is now broadly average compared to all schools nationally and is significantly higher compared to similar schools. The inspection evidence indicates that the standards in writing are now rising. In reading and mathematics, the pupils attain well below average standards compared schools nationally, but are broadly average in reading when compared to similar schools. The school is making both mathematics



and reading the next major areas for improvement. This seems entirely appropriate because in the pupils' day-to-day work standards are below average in mathematics, and their reading skills are not consistently applied. Nevertheless, there is good evidence from the school's own testing to indicate that the school helps its pupils make significant progress and achieve well from a lower than average starting point in both of these subjects. In the rest of the curriculum, they attain standards expected for pupils of this age and time of the academic year, but their work in art and design is above average. In religious education, they achieve the standards expected in the locally agreed syllabus.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The school has good routines to develop the pupils' attitudes towards the school. They enjoy their lessons and make visitors feel welcome. The involvement of the pupils in the running of the school, such as in the school council, is a significant strength and is appreciated by the pupils who readily tell visitors about its importance.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The pupils relate well to each other and behave well in and around the school. They enter the hall for assembly and physical education lessons quietly. They listen attentively and often offer to wait at doors to allow others to pass through.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The school council and the daily 'special helpers' promote high levels of self-esteem for the pupils. In the playground, pupils who feel lonely pair themselves with others to encourage friendships and the best-behaved pupils in the dining hall are nominated the 'table of the week'. There are good relationships between all members of the school community.
Attendance	Good. This has improved significantly over the past two years, and the school has excellent arrangements for monitoring attendance.

The pupils work together well and have good relationships with each other. They move around the school safely and carefully, and greet visitors warmly and politely. In the playground, they use the play equipment well. Some of the pupils have responsibilities to help others that are feeling either sad or lonely. The recently formed school council is popular with the pupils. It helps them to develop a greater sense of responsibility to both the school and each other. In lessons, they are attentive and settle down to work quickly when asked. They are generally keen to complete their work, and only become restless when they spend a long time sitting and listening.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good

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

The teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good overall. In nearly three quarters of the lessons seen, the teaching was either good or better. Very good teaching was seen in five lessons across the age groups and, in a religious education lesson in Year 1, some excellent teaching was observed. In a very small number of lessons, the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching were finely balanced, but no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The teachers generally plan thoroughly, usually in teams, and all have good relationships with their pupils. Throughout the school, their class management is good, which helps the pupils to achieve well in nearly all lessons. It is leading to good learning and achievement in the pupils' daily activities. The teaching of the national strategies in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory throughout the school, particularly in developing the pupils' writing abilities, but a longer time allocated for reading would help to enhance the pupils' reading skills further.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum is broad, balanced and covers all of the required aspects of the National Curriculum. Many policies and schemes have been revised and updated and others are being reviewed in the next year. These are replacing some that are becoming slightly out of date, such as science, and taking account of the improvements to the resources of the school such as the computer suite. The curriculum for the youngest pupils up to the age of five is developing satisfactorily. The range of extracurricular activities is good, and includes a choir and a sign language club.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Throughout the school, the teaching and organisation are good and enable the pupils to make better than average progress. The school is 'inclusive' and makes good provision for all its pupils regardless of their difficulties and abilities.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. This is a significant strength of the school. The school develops the pupils' awareness of themselves very well during assemblies, and reminds them about the proper way to deal with others. Their social development is very good, with the pupils having specific duties and responsibilities that they take seriously. Their cultural development is good, and the multicultural elements are promoted well with special assemblies and projects to raise their awareness.
How well the school cares for its pupils	There are very good arrangements for the care of the children, including notes home to parents informing them of any accidents and injuries. All members of staff are aware of the child protection arrangements.

The links with the parents continue to be good generally, and the information provided for them is of a high standard. There are regular meetings with parents to discuss the pupils' progress. The links with the community are well developed and the pupils use the facilities of the local secondary school.

The curriculum is planned appropriately and covers all of the required areas. All subjects have appropriate schemes of work, although some of these are being revised and updated. The school has particularly focused upon developing the pupils' writing skills, and on improvements to the information and communication technology curriculum. There is also a good range of extra curricular activities for a school of this size. It makes particularly good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school cares for its pupils very well and has very good routines for ensuring

their safety and well being. It is particularly diligent in letting the parents know about any injuries sustained during the day.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides clear and determined leadership for the school, and is ably supported by the acting deputy headteacher. They actively promote a team approach, and have guided the school well though a period of uncertainty and staff changes.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governing body is committed to supporting the school, and the longer serving members provide stability and guidance. They fulfil their dual role of support and 'critical friend' with sincerity and enthusiasm.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school makes appropriate use of information to compare its performance with others, and to identify areas where it needs to improve. As the teamwork in the school develops, the capacity for the school to improve will likewise increase.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school has efficient and transparent accounting systems and makes appropriate use of its finances to support its priorities. Through consultation on priorities and careful consideration of how it spends its money, the principles of 'best value' are successfully applied.

The headteacher has a clear sense of purpose and is very caring of both the staff and the pupils. The staff work well as a team to tackle the many tasks that are jointly identified. Their annual action plans help to guide developments and form the basis for school improvement planning. The governors support the school well, and give appropriate guidance and oversight to its work. Although many of them are new, they have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Some visit the school regularly, but this is not yet systematic. The provision for the pupils with special educational needs is well managed and successful. The school's 'inclusive' approach to all pupils is a strength, and there is regular analysis of how certain groups of the pupils are achieving.

The school secretary administers the day-to-day finances well, and the school uses its money wisely. The resources of the school have been improved in some areas and are now satisfactory overall. The poor condition of the hall and the inadequate size of the play area in the nursery make some areas of the curriculum, such as physical education, difficult to implement fully. The classrooms for the reception classes are also in poor condition. Nevertheless, the building is used effectively in many ways, such as housing the new computer suite. Taking into account the quality of the teaching and the good progress and the behaviour of the pupils, the school gives good value for money.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The high standards of care</li><li>• The way they can approach the school</li><li>• The standards that their children reach</li><li>• The good behaviour in the school</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There were no significant areas identified</li></ul>

The inspection findings confirm the high standards of care shown to the pupils, the very good levels of behaviour and the good partnership between the parents and the school. The standards that the pupils attain is broadly average in many subjects, except in art and design where higher standards are reached. In mathematics, the pupils' achievements are sound and, although they do not attain the standards expected nationally, they make good progress in gaining skills from their low starting point when they enter the school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The school's results in the national tests have fallen each year since 1999 in reading and mathematics and are now well below average compared to all schools. In reading, the results have declined from above average in 1998, to well below average in the latest tests. In writing, the results have declined from well above average in 1999. In the latest tests, the results are in line with national averages, which is similar to last year. In mathematics, the results have fallen from above average in 1998, to well below average last year. The results the pupils attained did improve slightly this year, but not enough to alter the grade used to compare schools' results. The school has focused on stopping the decline in the pupils' writing, and is now focusing upon mathematics. An analysis of the mathematics results for the last three years shows that, overall, the performance of both boys and girls fell below the national average, but the decline in the girls' performance was greater than that of the boys. The reduced amount of written work does not help the pupils make the necessary links between key concepts, to reinforce what they already know, and gaining skills. The school's own action planning highlights mathematics as a focus for development. In the latest test results, the pupils have improved slightly from last year.
2. When compared to similar schools, the picture is more positive in writing where the pupils attain above average results. In reading, the school attains results that are similar to others, but in mathematics, the school achieves less well than similar schools. The attainment of the pupils, measured by the school when they enter the nursery and reception, is low compared to the county averages, particularly in their mathematical abilities. The achievement of the pupils is nevertheless good because they make good progress from a relatively low starting point. Therefore, despite the results attained compared to all schools, the pupils can be said to have done well.
3. In the latest teachers' assessments of science, ninety per cent of the pupils reached the expected standard by the time they left the school, and seventeen per cent reached the higher Level 3. This was just below the national average, but compares well to the standards reached in similar schools. It is a similar picture to the findings of the last inspection.
4. In the reception class, nearly all the children make good progress in developing their skills in the areas of learning such as language and literacy, personal and social development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development; by the time they enter Year 1, most have achieved the early learning goals. Their speaking and mathematical skills do not yet reach the expected levels for this stage of the year, even though they have made good progress in gaining these skills from their lower than average starting point. Their mathematical and communication skills develop steadily, but do not match the progress they make in the other areas. The good teaching continues in the reception class and the pupils consolidate the progress they make from the nursery.
5. In Years 1 and 2, in English, science, history, information and communication technology, physical education and music, the pupils attain those standards expected nationally. No judgements were possible in design and technology and geography. The pupils attain better than the expected levels in their art and design work. In religious education, the pupils attain standards that are in line with those expected in the locally agreed syllabus. The standards

have been maintained in all subject areas since the last inspection, except in mathematics where they have fallen.

6. Writing is now a strength of the school, although the increased focus on this aspect, such as the monthly writing assessments, has reduced the progress in other areas. The pupils' listening skills develop well and are particularly good in assemblies, for example. Across the school, the National Literacy Strategy has had a positive effect upon raising standards of writing, but the limited time given to reading skills within these lessons reduces the pupils' progress in gaining these fluently. The school is focusing upon improving the reading standards this year.
7. In mathematics, the overall standards that the pupils attain are below those expected, which is lower than the position reported in the last inspection. **(This is a key issue for action)** The school recognises this within its own evaluations and is taking action. For example, it has highlighted improvements to the teachers' expertise, a wider use of resources, and in giving the pupils more test experience. The school is now making efforts to improve the attainment of the girls and improve the pupils' attainment generally. Their abilities in mental work develop effectively, although some are quite slow. The oldest pupils count accurately, recognise multiplication patterns, and subtract simple numbers below ten. The implementation of the numeracy strategy has had a positive effect upon the day-to-day standards, but it has not yet influenced fully the results of the national tests. 8. In science, the inspection evidence indicates that pupils meet the expected levels overall. They attain particularly well in their knowledge of materials and living things. For instance, their work on identifying differences between people and the way they grow and develop is particularly good. The pupils' artistic skills develop well, along with their knowledge of famous artists. The school takes account of and analyses the performance of different groups of the pupils, and the pupils with special educational needs make particularly good progress, benefiting from smaller groups and specialist teaching. There are no pupils who are from ethnic minorities or who have English as an additional language.

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

8. The pupils' attitudes and enthusiasm, their personal development and their relationships within the school are very good. Their behaviour is consistently good within lessons and informally. The teaching and non-teaching staff, and the majority of pupils themselves, have high expectations of the standards of behaviour that are acceptable in the school. The vast majority of the parents believe that the school maintains high standards of behaviour, and that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible.
9. The pupils' enthusiasm and their attitudes to the school are very good. There is very little lateness and most of the pupils arrive early, eager to start work. The majority of the pupils consistently demonstrate positive attitudes to their work. They are interested in their lessons and are fully involved in the classroom activities. Most are motivated, enthusiastic and keen to learn. They listen carefully to their teachers, willingly ask and answer questions, and freely offer their own ideas and opinions. They quickly settle down in class, maintain high levels of concentration, and stay on task.
10. Overall, standards of behaviour are good. The majority of the pupils behave well and act in a mature and responsible way. Their behaviour in the classrooms is consistently good and there is very little or no disruption to learning caused by misconduct. On the rare occasion when there is inappropriate behaviour, it is very well managed by the teaching and non-teaching

staff. The pupils move around the school site quietly and their demeanour at breaks and lunchtime is good. In the year before the inspection, two pupils were excluded on four occasions for a fixed term, but none in the current academic year.

11. Relationships in the school are very good. The pupils relate very well to their teachers, to other adults whom they meet, and to one another. They are polite, courteous and welcoming to visitors. For example, the pupils in Years 1 and 2 treated members of a visiting theatre group with great respect. The majority of the pupils collaborate well, share resources, take turns, and listen to each other. Boys and girls mix and play well together at breaks and lunchtime. The vast majority of the pupils consistently show respect for each other and for the school environment. They also respect each other's feelings, values and beliefs. During assemblies, the pupils show appropriate respect for the occasion, willingly join in hymn singing, and bow their heads reverently during prayers.
12. The pupils' personal development is very good. They are acquiring a broad range of social skills that is helping them to develop into well-rounded individuals. They support local and national charities and are learning to be aware of others less fortunate than they are. They take part in an appropriate range of out-of-school visits and various visitors come into the school. The pupils respond well to opportunities for taking responsibility for their own work in the classrooms and, in some lessons, when not taught directly, they work independently with a minimum of supervision. The Year 2 pupils, as members of the pupil council, have opportunities to contribute to the running of the school. The pupils generally enjoy their formal responsibilities around the school, for example returning registers to the school office, and they act in a mature and sensible manner. They enjoy being nominated as 'table of the week' in the dining hall, which also develops their sense of responsibility.
13. The attendance rate has improved significantly and is currently above the national average. The rate of unauthorised absence is broadly in line with the national average. There is a low level of recorded lateness. The high standards maintained in pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development have a positive effect on the teaching and learning and are strength of the school.

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

14. The teaching is consistently good across most of the curriculum. There are very good features within the teaching of writing, religious education, music, art and design, physical education and information and communication technology. Overall, 12% of the teaching seen was either very good or excellent, 56% was good and 30% was satisfactory. One lesson (2%) was judged to be excellent. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. The strong teaching reported at the time of the previous inspection has been maintained. This includes the teaching of the pupils with special educational needs, who make good progress because the teachers are highly committed to ensuring that they experience all relevant areas of learning. As a result of consistently good teaching, the pupils develop positive attitudes to work and make good progress in many important areas by the time they leave the school.
15. The youngest children achieve well. The teachers are acquiring a good understanding of the foundation curriculum. This is giving them increasing confidence to evaluate how effectively the learning in the nursery relates to that in the reception classes. Consequently, the children get a good start to their learning and, over time, their attainment is raised from below average. The adults in the nursery and reception classes manage the children and their activities effectively. The children settle quickly to routines and have a positive approach to most

activities. The school promotes the pupils' social skills well so that they learn to listen and co-operate with each other and with the adults. The staff make sure that the children receive a good variety of teaching, for example to foster their writing skills. This is balanced by activities in which the children engage independently in a range of other purposeful activities such as construction and painting.

16. The teachers manage their pupils effectively. The staff, including those who supervise lunchtime activities, adopt a common approach to promoting good manners and to ensuring that the children are aware of the effect of their actions on each other. There are clearly established routines for work in the classrooms and for outdoor play. For instance, the pupils are taught to respect the fact that various areas of the playground are designated for particular activities. The teachers reward the children for their efforts to behave appropriately. The very good relationships that exist have a positive effect on the children's willingness to learn.
17. The teachers plan their lessons well and set out clearly what they want the pupils to learn. They make certain that the pupils understand the aims of each lesson, and remind them of these at appropriate points. For instance, during a music lesson in Year 2, the teacher consistently reminded the pupils to listen carefully to the sound of various instruments and to watch the conductor when they were performing. A few children find it difficult to concentrate on their work, but the teaching assistants support and guide them well. The pupils with low literacy skills are supported effectively and, by working in a small group, their confidence and self-esteem are raised considerably. The writing skills of children have developed well because the planning and the chosen teaching methods are effective. The development of the pupils' reading skills through whole-class reading at the beginning of literacy hour is adequate, but insufficient time is planned for the guided group reading sessions. Consequently, this slows the development of the pupils' reading skills. The teachers' planning for mathematics lessons is generally good, but they do not consistently allow the pupils sufficient opportunities to record their work. This restricts the opportunities for day-to-day assessment of the pupils' work in order to provide a record of their progress over time.
18. The pace of lessons and the level of challenge within the activities are mostly good. In one lesson in physical education, for instance, a range of activities to improve the children's ball skills was managed at an appropriately brisk pace. As a result, the children applied themselves very well and sustained their efforts to improve. The teachers also plan appropriate extension activities. For example, in a lesson in Year 1 about the Jewish festival of Hanukkah, an excellent variety of activities held the pupils' interest for almost an hour. However, in a small minority of lessons, the materials planned for the pupils were insufficient and did not fully extend them. For example, the use of computers during a English lesson tended to dominate over the teaching of the literacy skills that were the main focus of the session.
19. The teachers make good use of the assessment information they gain from a range of sources. For example, the assessments made when the children join the nursery and when they move into the reception classes provide useful early information that enables the teachers to pitch the activities at an appropriate level. In addition, the children's progress in writing is carefully tracked through monthly assessments of their written work. Appropriate individual targets are set as a result of these assessments. Other work, for example in art and design, religious education and music, is assessed in specific activities at various times of the year. Some aspects of group reading are quite rigorously assessed but, because the sessions are so brief, there is insufficient time to make clear to children what they need to do to improve.



20. Good planning and teamwork are particularly evident in the teaching of literacy and numeracy where the lessons, although complex, are consistently laid out. The new computer suite is opening up exciting opportunities for teaching and learning. All members of the staff have conscientiously grasped opportunities to develop their own professional competence in order to make full and appropriate use of the resources available. The teachers' marking of the pupils' written work in English is very consistent. In a small number of instances, excellent marking gives a very full picture of what the pupils need to do in order to progress further. However, the recorded work in mathematics is limited, and this reduces the opportunities for the teachers to write similar helpful comments.
21. A satisfactory level of homework is set, for example spelling and reading, but the quality of comments by teachers in the home-school reading record gives few clues about how children are progressing and where they need to improve further.

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

22. The school has a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. The statutory requirements are met in all areas including religious education, which is taught in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus. The school ensures equal access to the curriculum for all its pupils including those with special educational needs. The framework and planning for the Foundation Stage curriculum are good and provide experiences that are based on the nationally recommended early learning goals.
23. The school has successfully introduced both the literacy and numeracy strategies. The detailed subject documentation for these areas of the curriculum is good, but in others, such as some foundation subjects, it is still being adapted to meet the needs of the pupils. In certain subjects, such as physical education, the recently implemented schemes of work are being evaluated for their effectiveness. The staff in each year group plan together and meet regularly to discuss activities for the following week. There are co-ordinators for each subject whose role is to ensure that appropriate planning takes place and to lead discussions about topics.
24. Literacy skills are being developed in other subjects and the pupils use them effectively. There are good opportunities for the pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills in a variety of situations. For example, in a history lesson the pupils were interviewing their class teacher about the toys she played with as a child and, during 'circle time' the pupils talked about themselves and their opinions. There is some evidence of mathematics being used in other areas of the curriculum but it is limited.
25. The provision for the pupils' personal, social and health education is satisfactory. There is no written policy at present, but the school has made the production of a document a priority. The pupils discuss sex and drugs issues when appropriate, and learn about healthy eating and other health related topics. 'Circle time' gives the pupils the opportunity to discuss moral as well as personal issues.
26. The school's provision for the pupils with special educational needs is good and supports the learning targets identified in their individual learning plans. These plans are very general for pupils on the lowest stages, but contain more detail for those on the higher levels. The pupils with difficulties are usually identified no later than the end of their reception year. The placing of the pupils in small groups according to their ability in literacy and numeracy ensures that

they benefit from greater support. The learning support assistants liaise closely with the class teachers and special needs co-ordinator. Effective routines promote the learning of these pupils and often enable them to become sufficiently competent to be removed from the register.

27. There is a good range of extracurricular activities such as recorder club, choir and sports. The pupils participate in a number of visits to places of interest that enhance their learning and give them some first-hand experiences, such as the field study day at Ditcheat.
28. The school has successful links with the community. The school nurse visits regularly, not just for medical checks but also to talk to the pupils about a variety of topics, such as health and hygiene. A visiting midwife provides information about feeding a baby. There are links with the local supermarket and shops, some of which sponsor events in the school. Close links with both the junior school, where the majority of pupils go at the age of seven, and the secondary school help to ease the transfer process. Some of the pupils use the secondary school facilities for technology and sports. The school works closely with the other infant school in the area and is part of an 'Effective Learning Project'. Other visitors include the librarian, musicians, a local historian and an artist. Live theatre groups present a range of stories for the pupils to enjoy. The nursery teacher visits the homes of every new entrant for an initial assessment and talk with the parents. There is a good induction programme for children entering the nursery and the reception classes before they start full-time schooling.
29. The overall provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. This is an improved picture since the last inspection where provision was generally good, except for cultural development where it was satisfactory.
30. Provision for the pupils' spiritual development through school assemblies is planned well, with appropriate content and time for reflective prayer. In the assemblies held during the inspection period, the theme of the week was 'Light'. The lighting of the candles symbolised the reverence felt by the children during that time together. The pupils are also encouraged to think about how they treat others, and how to be kind and caring. 'Circle time' also gives pupils the opportunity to explore their feelings and thoughts and to listen to those of the other children in their class. In religious education, the teachers provide the pupils with information about their own and other world religions so that they can begin to understand the importance of religion in people's lives. The pupils also have appropriate opportunities in other areas of the curriculum such as art and design to appreciate the wonders of the world around them.
31. Moral education is promoted well through stories in assembly, class rules devised by each class and displayed in a prominent position, and the underlying ethos of the school. A system of rewards encourages the pupils to be kind and thoughtful towards others and to work hard to achieve success. Each class has a 'Golden Book' where the children who have done something special have their names recorded. All the staff can apply the rewards system, so the pupils' achievements can be recognised by teachers, lunchtime supervisors and the secretary. A celebration assembly is held weekly where stickers and certificates are presented. 'Circle time' is also used to discuss moral issues with the pupils. All adults in the school provide good role models and take every opportunity to teach the principles of right and wrong.
32. The pupils look after their school and care for the environment. They work together and help each other by sharing ideas and resources. Each class has monitors or 'special children', chosen daily, who are responsible for carrying out a variety of tasks, such as taking the

register to the office or giving out the lunchboxes. The Year 2 pupils have additional responsibilities, such as looking after the younger children in the playground, and helping set up and clear the dining hall. The recently established school council meets regularly to discuss problems, and members of the council have special duties in the playground to look after anyone that is either hurt or looks lonely. The pupils have the opportunity to perform in assemblies, Christmas productions both in and out of school, and to sing with other schools. Each year the school supports specific charities, and last year the children raised over £3,000. Should the pupils wish to organise a fund raising event, the staff will give them every support and encouragement in their venture.

33. The provision for the pupils' multicultural development is good. Their understanding of other countries and cultures is promoted effectively in geography lessons and through religious education. For example, during a 'multicultural week', the pupils listened to music from around the world such as African drummers and music from India and China. They have also studied non-western art, such as African masks, which provided a stimulus for the pupils to make their own designs, and they read stories from around the world. For instance, after listening to an Australian tale they produced a whole-school sculpture to represent the main character in the story. A local historian visits the school and the studies of the surrounding area help the pupils appreciate their own heritage and culture. Attractive displays in school depict the Diwali festival with divas and a couple celebrating a Hindu marriage. The school is making a positive effort to promote the understanding of other faiths and cultures to be found in this country.

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

34. The school supports its pupils very effectively and the staff work hard to promote their welfare. The headteacher places a very high priority on pastoral care and provides very good leadership in this aspect. All staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are caring, dedicated and committed, and provide very good support for the pupils. They have a very good understanding of the school's pastoral and welfare procedures, and implement them consistently and conscientiously. Very good provision is made for medical and first aid requirements, and the arrangements for dealing with routine matters such as minor injuries are also very good. Conscientious staff supervise pupils very well at breaks and lunchtimes and their standard of care is very high.
35. The school makes good use of relevant external support agencies and of its learning support staff. The non-teaching staff are used well to support the pupils and teachers. The support for pupils with special educational needs in Years 1 and 2 is good; it has a positive impact on their attainment and on the progress they are making. Support for the children with special educational needs in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Child protection procedures are securely in place and there is a very good awareness of the relevant issues throughout the school. There are also very good procedures for health and safety that are well known by all staff, who consistently demonstrate safe practice in lessons. The governing body and the headteacher take their health and safety responsibilities seriously and regularly carry out all the required inspections and checks, including risk assessments.
36. The school has developed very effective procedures for promoting and monitoring discipline and good behaviour. These are securely in place and have a positive effect on the high standards of behaviour that are maintained throughout the school. The school's behaviour policy includes school, class and playground rules that the children have helped to devise. The school reminds the pupils about good behaviour during assemblies and 'circle time'. All staff

consistently implement the behaviour policy, and the teachers' very good class control prevents any significant disruption to learning. The school does everything possible to promote good attendance and punctuality. This has resulted in a significant improvement in attendance over the last few years.

37. The headteacher, class teachers and the support staff know the pupils extremely well and have a very good understanding of their individual personal needs. Overall, the procedures for supporting and monitoring the pupils' academic progress and personal development are good. The class teachers regularly mark and evaluate their pupils' work. They maintain comprehensive but manageable records, both on individuals and groups of pupils. All the pupils have individual records of achievement and there are opportunities for them to make self-assessments in their half-term books. The use of a monthly writing assessment has helped to raise the pupils' performance in this aspect of their work. The assessment records are used to monitor academic progress, set targets for improvement, and allocate appropriate support. However, the pupils' written work in subjects such as mathematics is quite limited, and therefore makes day-to-day assessment more difficult and less effective than it should be. Moreover, the reading records tend to be simply lists of books read, and contain little in the way of evaluative comment in order to point out weaknesses or successes.

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

38. The relationships between the school and the parents are good. Almost all of the parents express a very high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the school and have no areas that they would like to see improved. The school enjoys the active support of some parents who help in the classrooms and accompany the children on out-of-school trips. Others regularly help with making equipment, in redecorating areas or in making curtains. The 'Friends of Shepton Mallet Infant School' is organised by a small number of committed parents, who raise funds and help around the school. They have raised a considerable amount of money and provided useful resources for the school. The school is welcoming and the headteacher and her staff are very approachable; some parents take the opportunity to talk informally to the class teachers at the start and end of the school day.
39. Communication between the school and home is very good. The school sends out weekly, informative newsletters, the 'Thursday Notes', and frequent notices about specific events and activities. It publishes a comprehensive and informative prospectus that includes all the statutorily required information. The governors hold an annual meeting with parents and publish a useful annual report in accordance with the statutory requirements. However, it is rather brief in some areas, for example in giving details of the professional development undertaken by the teaching staff. Parents are given an informative annual progress report and are offered the opportunity to attend appropriate consultation meetings to discuss their children's work and progress with their teachers. The pupils' home-school reading records, while helpful, include few comments from either the teachers or parents. The nursery reports give good information about the children's progress towards the early learning goals of the Foundation Stage. The reports of the pupils in Years 1 and 2 clearly indicate what the children know and understand, what they can and cannot do and the progress they have made. They also set targets for improvement. The reports are comprehensive for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science but tend to be brief and a little too general in the other subjects of the curriculum. The parents of children with special educational needs are well informed of their children's progress and fully involved in their education.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

40. Overall, the leadership and management provided by the headteacher and governing body are good. The present headteacher took charge temporarily while the previous headteacher was seconded to another school, and was appointed in March this year. The deputy headteacher, who was then seconded to this school, has been appointed permanently from next term. A number of the class teachers are also comparatively new. These changes have been managed well by the headteacher, who has maintained stability, and provided strong leadership. This has continued the effective management identified in the last report.
41. The school improvement planning clearly identifies areas for development, and usefully includes the views of the staff and governors. The priorities are appropriate and include, for example, the improvement of the pupils' mathematical abilities. The co-ordinators evaluate their own subjects with the headteacher, and then develop annual action plans. The headteacher's own regular, effective monitoring has contributed to the school's plans for action and to the strengthening of areas of weakness found within the teaching. The school's performance in comparison to others is analysed effectively, and areas for further improvement are identified, such as mathematics and the use of the school's reading scheme. The subject co-ordinators have clear briefs for the development of their subjects, which include checking the teachers' planning and reviewing the schemes of work. As some co-ordinators are relatively new to the school and have double responsibilities, their scope for raising the pupils' attainment, particularly in the foundation subjects, is constrained. There are clear exceptions such as mathematics, where the downward trend in national test results has been recognised as a priority and in writing, where clear, direct action has helped to improve the pupils' abilities.
42. The governors, many of whom are new, are well informed about the different aspects of the school's work. The structures allow for an effective flow of information and for different issues to be discussed and addressed effectively. The governors' concern for the school is reflected in the minutes of their meetings. This was evident, for example, in their discussions of necessary improvements to the buildings and of measures to ensure the safety of the children at the beginning and end of the day. Individual governors hold watching briefs for different subjects of the curriculum and the provision for special educational needs. As some governors are comparatively new, their roles in monitoring the work of the school are neither as well established nor as effective as they need to be. However, they have a clear and apparent concern for the school. One governor, for example, has supported the school for fourteen years. The chair of the governing body, although relatively new, gives the school high levels of support. She not only meets regularly with the headteacher, but also helps informally on a regular basis. Overall, the governors have worked diligently and successfully to improve the areas of weakness identified in the last report. They fulfil all of their statutory duties effectively. Both the governors and headteacher make the raising of standards a priority, and they clearly outline their aims within the school's improvement plans. Overall, the governors strike a good balance between their two roles as supporters and 'critical friends' of the school.
43. The financial decisions are well thought out and relate closely to the specifically identified priorities. For example, the financial implications of the new computer suite were clearly well thought out, and improvements to the buildings are being investigated and costed. The co-ordinators also have clear budgets to help them develop their subjects. Computers are used to control the budget, and the day-to-day finance is administered very well. There are clear systems for the monitoring of expenditure by the headteacher and the finance governor. The school applies the principles of 'best value' well, and has developed a statement of principles

tailored to its own circumstances. The requirement for competitive tendering is well met by the use of various suppliers of goods, equipment and services. Other funds, such as those for teacher training, are carefully targeted to get maximum benefit. The points raised in the recent auditors' report and the local authority financial health check have been addressed. The costs per pupils are high. However, the rise in the standard of the pupils' writing, the good progress they make from a low starting point, the consistently good teaching, the high standards of behaviour and care of the pupils all indicate that the school provides good value for money.

44. The co-ordination and support for the pupils with special educational needs are good overall. The special educational needs co-ordinator manages the provision well, and liaises effectively with the governors and her colleagues. She was also successful in gaining greater support from the local authority for individual pupils. Issues of inclusion have been addressed effectively and the school has recently had pupils with severe special needs in the school. A governor liaises closely with the co-ordinator, and offers a high level of commitment and support.
45. Overall, the school has a suitable level of staffing for its size. The recent appointment of key staff, such as the deputy headteacher and permanent class teachers, now provides a secure base for further improvements to be made. The teaching staff is ably supported by a range of assistants, who are well deployed in different classes. Their low profile approach is effective in helping pupils in nearly all classes, and the additional support they give in the computer suite, for example, is very effective. The mid-day supervisors are also very helpful to the pupils and provide well co-ordinated care that gives the pupils a good sense of security.
46. The accommodation is satisfactory overall, but varies from classroom to classroom according to age and condition. The building provides few spare spaces, and the hall and reception classes are in generally poor condition. The use of larger apparatus for physical education lessons in the hall is restricted, for example, and the reception pupils have no easy access to outside play areas. The recently opened computer suite has considerably improved the provision for information and communication technology, but the library is somewhat cramped for space. The level of resources is satisfactory overall, but the quantity and variety of books available in the library are barely adequate. The lack of an outside activity area also restricts the progress of the pupils in the Foundation Stage, including the nursery, where the internal space available is also severely limited. **(This is a key issue for action.)**

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

47. In order to improve the school further, the headteacher, staff and governors should take action to:
- (1) **Improve attainment in reading by: (paragraph 65)**
    - a. allowing more time for the pupils to read within lessons;
    - b. developing more support material to supplement the existing reading schemes;
    - c. extending the use of the library.
  
  - (2) **Improve the pupils' attainment in mathematics by: (paragraph s 7 and 69)**
    - a. raising the teachers' expectations of the highest attaining pupils;
    - b. increasing the amount of written work that the pupils are required to complete;
    - c. developing further guidance and materials for both staff and pupils to support the activities in the numeracy hour and other mathematical work.
  
  - (3) **Improve aspects of the accommodation by: (paragraph 46)**
    - a. improving the condition of the school hall and the outside classrooms;
    - b. enhancing the playground facilities;
    - c. increasing the size of the outside play area of the nursery.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	43
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
2	12	56	30	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons. **Forty-three lessons were observed, and this means that one lesson equals approximately two percentage points.**

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	17	170
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	35

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	3	39

#### English as an additional language

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

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

%
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#### Unauthorised absence

%
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School data	5.5
National comparative data	5.2

School data	0.6
National comparative data	0.5

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

***Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1***

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	29	30	59

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	24	25	26
	Girls	23	28	25
	Total	47	53	51
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	80 (89)	90 (91)	86 (89)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	26	25	26
	Girls	27	23	27
	Total	53	48	53
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (93)	81 (89)	90 (91)
	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	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	114
Any other minority ethnic group	0

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

**Teachers and classes****Qualified teachers and classes: Y R – Y 2**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16:1
Average class size	29

**Education support staff: Y R – Y 2**

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	150

**Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	32.5

Number of pupils per FTE adult	16
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**Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	4	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

**Financial information**

Financial year	2000/1
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	£
Total income	434447
Total expenditure	475336
Expenditure per pupil	2377
Balance brought forward from previous year	69852
Balance carried forward to next year	28963

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	186
Number of questionnaires returned	78

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	69	31	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	56	40	0	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	51	2	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	46	5	0	13
The teaching is good.	73	24	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	51	39	6	0	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	83	17	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	28	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	64	35	1	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	67	32	0	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	69	29	1	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	28	8	1	29

### **Summary of parents' and carers' responses**

The parents are supportive of the school, which is reflected in both the questionnaires returned and at the parents meeting. They particularly like the way in which the school cares for their children, the approachability of the staff and the way they are kept informed of events taking place.

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

48. The school is careful to see that all the pupils, regardless of ability are included in all aspects of the curriculum. Any subsequent reference to 'all pupils' in the various subjects will automatically include these children. Any variation or addition will be clearly shown.

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

49. There is good provision for pupils in the reception classes and particularly in the nursery. In all lessons seen, the quality of teaching was at least satisfactory with nearly three-quarters being either good or better. The quality of teaching in reception ranges from satisfactory to very good. In the nursery, the teaching seen was usually good and sometimes very good. This consistently good teaching is having a positive effect on children's learning and enabling them to make good progress towards the early learning goals.
51. The class teachers' thorough grasp of the development and educational needs of young children under five years of age makes a significant contribution to the quality of the teaching and learning. The classroom assistants and the nursery nurse ably support the class teachers. They regularly assess the children and discuss any problems they have experienced whilst working with them in order to modify their subsequent planning of activities. Within the classroom, the children are encouraged to be independent, to choose activities and to complete their tasks with little adult intervention.

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

51. The teaching is good and many children are likely to achieve the expected standards by the time they leave the reception classes. They enjoy school, are enthusiastic about learning and are well behaved at all times. Their gradually developing independence and confidence reflect the skilful teaching and encouragement by the staff. The children are beginning to display an understanding and empathy towards the needs of others, particularly in their play and group activities. This was evident when the children were engaged in role-play in the 'school office' and were answering the 'phone' and talking in an 'adult' way. The adults provide good role models in the way that they treat the children and each other with courtesy and respect. Consequently, the children know they are valued and are beginning to develop self-reliance and responsibility for their own actions. This is evident, for example, in the reception classes when they are undressing and dressing for physical activities and tidying up. The children are encouraged to share, to take turns, help each other and to wait patiently. For instance, there were good examples of the children taking turns with the larger construction kits, playing in the home corner and sharing felt-tip pens when colouring in their work. 'Circle time' encourages the children to speak only in turn and extends their use of language. The teachers make every effort to ensure that there is a range of exciting and challenging activities and, as a result, the children have positive attitudes towards learning.

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

52. The children broaden and consolidate their use of literacy skills, and their attainment in reading and writing is in line with expectations. In both cases they will achieve the early learning goals, but not in their speaking skills, which remain below average. In the nursery class, the range of speaking skills is great, and a few children make little effort to communicate. Some have very limited ability to express themselves, but others are developing into clear, articulate and confident speakers. The teachers plan well-organised lessons and present the children with tasks pitched at an appropriate level. Communication skills are constantly encouraged in many of the classroom activities. For example, the teachers provide time for the children to share their experiences and feelings with their peers during circle time' and when they gather together before break and lunchtime to talk about what they have achieved. Usually the children listen and respond appropriately to their teachers' questions and to the contributions of other pupils, but occasionally they forget and speak out of turn. In the nursery, the children enjoy stories and fairytales, and the reception children listen to some humorous poems about food. The nursery children enjoy sharing books with adults and have particular favourites, such as 'Bob the Builder' and 'Thomas the Tank Engine'. They know that books tell a story and handle them with care. A few children are just beginning to recognise their names. In the reception class, a good start is made with reading and both the higher and average attainers know some words. They sound out unfamiliar words, but cannot always put the individual sounds together successfully. They all retell a fairy story with confidence and some detail. The lowest attaining pupils know that words tell a story, and although they do not recognise any words they can point to letters that are found in their names. These children are unable to retell a fairy story, but can recite a well-known nursery rhyme. Nearly all of the children are enthusiastic about books.
53. In the nursery, the children are developing the skills of writing as a form of communication. Most are making marks on the paper as if to write a story, but are unable to write many letters correctly. A few can copy accurately from the board, but none are writing their own sentences. Their letter formation is improving and many can produce recognisable copies under the teacher's writing. The majority of children can write their own name.

### **Mathematical development**

54. The teaching of mathematics is good, with a good provision of activities to encourage the learning of number. By the end of the reception year, the children will not have achieved the expected levels, but will have made good progress from a well below average starting point. Their mathematical knowledge and understanding are effectively promoted through frequent use of number games and rhymes, which the children enjoy. The children show an interest in counting and, although many in the reception can count confidently to 20, a few struggle to count accurately to seven. Most can repeat a sequence by threading beads of two different colours and shapes onto a stick. They are also learning about symmetry by using a pegboard with coloured pegs and by printing symmetrical pictures with plasticine shapes. Two-dimensional shapes such as circle, square and triangle are recognised by most children. They are also learning about three-dimensional shapes and beginning to discriminate between three similar shapes of different sizes, for example three cubes or three spheres. All children can confidently order various objects by size. The children in the nursery recognise numbers to 13, but do not fully understand what they mean. The teacher takes every opportunity to talk about number using the correct vocabulary, for instance when cutting up fruit for the children's break. In this and many other ways, the class teachers provide a range of activities to enable the children to gain an understanding of important early mathematical concepts.

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

55. The teaching is satisfactory and by the time the children leave the reception year many attain the expected level. The children show curiosity in their surroundings and explore, investigate and ask questions. They are given opportunities to walk around the school and recently visited the local park to look for signs of autumn. A display of leaves gathered from this walk is set up in the classroom. One of the themes for this half of term is 'My Body'. The purpose of the lesson observed was to introduce the children to the idea of change, especially change in themselves. The children discuss things a baby needs and decide how they have changed since they were babies. In the nursery, the children learn about animals that hibernate and their habitats. They are beginning to understand a little about animal life. They also enjoy the sensation of bubbles in the water tray and the challenge of trying to put small shiny stars into plastic bottles.
56. The computer in the nursery is often switched on, but no child was seen using it. However, the children in the reception class use theirs more frequently. In one session, for instance, the children used it in an attempt to match letters of the alphabet.

### **Physical development**

57. The quality of the teaching is good. By the time the children leave the reception classes most will be attaining in line with expectations. The children have good opportunities to develop their manipulative skills. For example, children in the nursery learn how to use scissors to cut out a variety of things and by the time they are in the reception class they are confident and accurate in this skill.
58. The nursery children are beginning to develop pencil control but many are not ready to learn to form letters and are not able to colour-in shapes carefully. A very small number can write a few letters. In the reception class, children demonstrate better pencil control by writing letters that are recognisable and colouring more carefully inside the lines. The nursery children can put their coats on for play, but many struggle to do up their buttons. In the playground, they steer their bikes carefully around the area, but this is too small for extended activities. In physical education lessons in the reception class, the children demonstrate good body control by stopping and moving at different speeds. They use the apparatus with confidence, jumping off the boxes and moving along the benches in a variety of ways, including hopping, jumping and sliding. They have a good sense of personal space. They can dance to the music with appropriate movements. The teachers take the opportunity to talk about the way that the heart beats faster when exercise is carried out.

### **Creative development**

59. The teaching is good and the children are on course to reach the expected standards in this area. The provision and range of activities are good. For example, the children experiment with colour mixing using different media such as oils, pastels, chalk and paint in a variety of techniques like collage and printing with different objects. The role-play areas are appropriately used and are presently equipped as a 'home corner' in the nursery and as 'offices' in the reception classes. The children in both the nursery and reception classes enjoy singing games, action songs and rhymes, and interpreting music through movement. In the nursery, the children are very enthusiastic about using the untuned percussion instruments. They play them carefully and most can keep the beat going when accompanying a song— quite an achievement for such young children.



60. Overall the teaching in the Foundation Stage is good. Where the lessons are only satisfactory, there is a lack of pace and children lose some of their impetus to learn. The staff have good knowledge of the needs of children in the early years and of the curriculum to meet those needs. The teachers are enthusiastic and have good relationships with their classes. This means that children are confident to respond to questions even if they are unsure of the answer. The lessons are well planned with a range of activities designed to extend the children's learning and to develop their spoken language. All adults involved within this age group strive to stimulate the children to speak and develop appropriate language skills. Questioning is used effectively to extend children's knowledge and understanding. The nursery teacher, nursery nurse, reception teachers and their support staff work well as a team and children benefit from this consistent approach to their learning. There is good emphasis on activities that will promote speaking and listening skills, for example, during 'discussion times' and story time. The planning is good and includes appropriate references to the early learning goals. The children respond well to the staff's high expectations concerning their behaviour. Assessment is carried out daily and the resulting information is used in the planning of subsequent activities to ensure that they match the children's needs and abilities as closely as possible.
61. Although the teachers in the Foundation Stage plan together, there is a need for a more coherent approach to ensure that topics are not repeated and that the learning of skills is continuous and systematic. The co-ordinator's monitoring role also needs further development to allow time for visits to the reception classes to check on continuity.
62. Since the last inspection, there has been some improvement in standards and provision. For example, the last report stated that few children could write their names, now many of the children in the reception classes can do this accurately.

## **ENGLISH**

63. The standard the pupils reach in writing is improving and is now above average. However, standards in reading have declined and are slightly below expectations. The pupils have above average listening skills, but their speaking skills are broadly average overall. The school has been very successful in raising attainment in writing because the teachers have focused their efforts and agreed a consistent approach to developing the pupils' skills. Very informative marking of written work and rigorous assessment procedures have also played a key role in raising the attainment of all pupils, including those with special literacy needs. However, this strong emphasis on writing has slowed the development of the pupils' reading skills. The teachers have a secure knowledge of how to teach both reading and writing, but the time given to activities and the range of extra resources available that extend the pupils' reading skills are insufficient. Therefore, the progress they make is too slow.
64. The children begin school with below average speaking skills, but these are consistently developed in all classes thereby raising attainment. However, a few are still reluctant speakers despite the fact that the teachers are skilful at organising a range of opportunities for discussion. All the adults provide very good support to enhance the pupils' confidence and encourage them to respond with longer statements. This is a consistently applied approach that is evident, for example, when the teachers are questioning the pupils about their work in science or asking for their response to music. The very good relationships in all classrooms ensure that the children listen carefully to their teachers and pay polite attention when their classmates speak.

65. The school recognises the urgency of raising standards in reading to be nearer to those in writing. A thorough review of the book resources is under way to ensure that at all levels the children encounter a good range of fiction and non-fiction books. The pupils have very secure methods for attempting less familiar words because letter and word sounds are very thoroughly taught during the literacy lessons. However, the short period for group reading that follows the literacy hour does not allow either the teachers or the classroom support staff to help the children develop sufficient fluency and expression. The time is also too short to permit teachers to provide the necessary role models for expressive reading. **(This is a key issue for action.)**
66. The pupils approach writing tasks with interest and enthusiasm. They experience success and develop a range of writing skills. Each child is given a clear writing target that is often reflected in the way that the teachers mark the written work. For example, the comments not only praise the pupils for their efforts, but also point out how the work can be further improved. A scrutiny of recorded work in Year 2 provided strong evidence of how many pupils progress from writing two or three sentences to producing more organised stories and imaginative descriptions. The pupils are given story openings such as ‘Once there lived a toy...’ and then asked to produce a lively story complete with appropriate conclusion. One pupil, for example, wrote a highly interesting description of a creature lurking at the bottom of a pond. They have good opportunities to write at length for the once-a-month assessment tasks. The good teaching of letter sounds is reflected in spelling levels that have improved steadily during the last school year. A range of accurate punctuation also features in the work of higher-attaining pupils. The pupils with special educational needs are given very systematic help to develop their writing skills. This is reflected in their well-formed, appropriately spaced handwriting and in their ability to record simple sentences that have full stops and capital letters and are easily understood by the reader. These pupils learn well, make sound progress in all aspects of their work and are included in all the planned activities.
67. Consistent planning for much of the work in literacy promotes good progress in areas like writing and spelling. The aims of all lessons are made clear to the pupils so that they understand what they are going to learn. Most of the whole-class sessions are effective in that they review the intended learning. In the best lessons, the conclusion of the lesson extends the learning by hinting at the next stage of the work. The regular teaching of letter sounds has a positive effect on the pupils’ spelling and on their ability to work out how to read words that are unknown but have sound blends that they recognise. The teachers are conscientiously giving the pupils the opportunity to use computers to support their work in English.
68. There is a high level of commitment to continuing to raise standards in all areas of literacy. The action plan has identified key areas for development and the teachers are already tackling them with enthusiasm. An example is the review and reorganisation of the library, which is regarded as a key factor in improving the book culture in the school. The teachers would also welcome more parental contributions to the home-school reading diary. They value the help given by parents, but would like to encourage them to make more evaluative comments about how the children read at home. The subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.

## MATHEMATICS

69. The inspection evidence indicates that standards the pupils attain by the time they are seven are below those expected for the pupils of this age. **(This is a key issue for action.)** However, there are also signs of improving standards as the school focuses more effort onto developing the pupils' abilities.
70. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has been successful, with teachers having clear ideas of the most effective ways of teaching the various elements. The benefits of the systematic development of mathematical knowledge and understanding and the enhancement of mental recall are seen in the pupils' approach to the subject. The guidance provided by the strategy has enabled the teachers to produce more detailed lesson plans with clearer objectives. In Year 1, the pupils can count on ten more and a few are beginning to appreciate the difference between tens and units. All pupils confidently add one more to a number and most can add two numbers up to 20. The higher attainers add on two more using numbers to thirty and can work out the missing number in an addition sum, such as  $3+?=8$ . Many can also subtract two numbers up to ten, using cubes to help in the calculation and develop their understanding of the concept. Most pupils sequence the days of the week and a few recall the months. They have also experienced measuring using non-standard units such as a cubit.
71. In Year 2, the pupils recognise multiples of two and successfully put them on a number line. Most pupils confidently count in twos up to twenty, but only the higher attainers can count back in twos from twenty to zero. Others struggle to do so. The pupils are also beginning to understand that multiplication is repeated addition, but many find it difficult to translate this into actual recording. They did not fully appreciate the need to have the same number of 'dots' in each row. The pupils add numbers to fifty, often using three digits, and a few are confident with numbers to 100. Throughout the year, other topics are covered including measuring in centimetres, time, two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes and money.
72. Because there is little written recording, it is hard to gauge the progress the pupils make over time, although the assessment sheets give a good indication of the areas taught and the pupils' abilities at that point. The lack of recording means that there is inadequate reinforcement of the pupils' learning and the teachers have no immediate indication of their pupils' problems and misconceptions. Consequently, there is also little evidence of marking to highlight what the pupil needs to do to improve.
73. Although there was little written work by which to ascertain the pupils' progress over time, it was clear that in some lessons they make good gains in their learning. This was evident, for example, in one lesson where the pupils realised that the easiest way to add two numbers together is to start with the larger number. When the children enter the school, their mathematical ability is well below average. However, they make good progress from class to class and, by the end of Year 2, many have made sufficient gains to achieve the national average.
74. The pupils enjoy the challenge of the quick-fire mental questions. Most confidently apply their skills to a range of practical activities, for example adding up the spots on dominoes and completing a grid of possible answers. They listen carefully and are keen to increase their knowledge by answering the teachers' questions. They work especially well when receiving either little or no adult supervision. They share resources and most remain on task for the duration of the lesson. However, their interest wanes and they become a little restless when there is a lack of challenge in the work. The pupils with special educational needs are included in all the planned activities; they learn well and make sound progress.

75. The teaching in this subject is generally satisfactory, and a small proportion is good. Where the teaching is good, an enthusiastic approach motivates the pupils well. The pace is brisk and the pupils contribute well to the initial part of the lesson. The tasks set usually match the pupils' needs and the class teacher reinforces the use of appropriate mathematical vocabulary. Where the lessons are only satisfactory, the pace often drags and the pupils lose their interest and momentum. The time for group work is comparatively short (15-20 minutes) and does not allow sufficient time for the pupils to complete their tasks. Relationships are good and the pupils respond confidently to the teachers' questions, even if they are unsure of the correct answer. The learning support staff are used effectively to the benefit of the pupils. The assessment information that is gathered through regular testing is used to set targets for the pupils.
76. The subject is managed effectively. The co-ordinator has been responsible for the training and implementation of the numeracy strategy and has been able to monitor planning and observe lessons. However, a new co-ordinator is taking over the role. At present, no additional teaching materials support the activities planned for the pupils. Although the teachers are more confident to deliver the mathematics curriculum, further resources would give them additional ideas to enhance their teaching. Since the last inspection, standards have declined partly due to the variation in the ability of each group of pupils taking the tests, the pupils' mobility, and the low starting point on entry to the school. The subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.

## **SCIENCE**

77. The inspection evidence indicates that the pupils are reaching standards that are broadly even across all the attainment targets and are typical for their age. This is a similar picture to the last inspection.
78. The pupils undertake appropriate experiments, although opportunities to extend their skills in these activities appear relatively few. In the one lesson seen, for example, the activities motivated the pupils to some extent but failed to develop their interest. Discussion with the pupils and a scrutiny of their past work indicate that the standards attained are secure in nearly all areas. Over the year, the work improves in quality, with the work being recorded either individually or as a class on sheets that are taken home when completed. The regular assessment of the pupils' knowledge is good, and enables the teachers to make on-going modifications to their planning. However, a more extensive portfolio of the pupils' work would help to give a fuller summary of their efforts over a period of time. The pupils know which materials are magnetic, and how some substances can change, such as water, eggs and chocolate. Other work, such as investigations of the life cycles of animals and plants, shows that the pupils have sound understanding of the ideas of growth and change. The pupils enthusiastically recall their work on electrical circuits; they are able to describe how to make a circuit by the use of a bulb, a switch and a battery. In the lesson seen, the pupils responded well generally, listening to the class teacher attentively and then settling down to their activities quickly. General discussion with them reveals their knowledge of natural and man-made light sources and their ability to investigate or to ask questions. This was not universal however. Few could recall how they worked out a problem, for example, or record what they did.

Overall, the pupils learn appropriately and make sound gains in their knowledge in nearly all of the attainment targets.

79. The pupils with special educational needs make good gains in their learning overall, and the school is aware of the need to include pupils of all abilities in all activities. Accordingly, the teachers' planning and the chosen activities take this aspect fully into account. The co-ordinator is relatively new to the school, and also manages another subject. She has good subject knowledge, monitors the teachers' planning well and is enthusiastic. A revision of the scheme of work is being carried out this academic year, based partly on more recent guidance and frameworks. This will be helpful in providing clearer and more innovative activities for the pupils to follow. The level of resources is satisfactory overall, and the subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.

## **ART AND DESIGN AND DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

80. Standards in art and design are above average. They have been maintained at this level since the previous inspection. Only two lessons were seen, but there was a good range of work on display around the school and in the developing art portfolio. In Year 1, the pupils acquire a good sense of the effects that can be produced by various media such as paint, graphic pencils, dry pastels and watercolours. They experiment with thick and thin lines and blend a range of colours to produce striking self-portraits, having first studied portraits by famous painters such as Degas. They also develop an awareness of tone by using chalk and pastels to create landscapes in imitation of the style of Turner.
81. In Year 2, good teaching develops the pupils' observation skills and fosters an awareness of design. For instance, the pupils attached a piece of fabric to paper onto which they then successfully extended the pattern. Specialist help during a multicultural project gave the children the opportunity to observe and recreate Aboriginal and Indian patterns and to design an African mask. The children's work is imaginative and reflects their enthusiasm for the subject. The adults brief them well about their tasks and give them good support as they work. They question the children about their work and encourage them to evaluate their own and each other's work.
82. The resources available for work in art are of a good range and quality. The co-ordinator is very enthusiastic about the subject and encourages and supports other staff to recognise the importance of fostering the pupils' aesthetic awareness. A good effort is now being made to include more three-dimensional work in the art and design curriculum.
83. Only one lesson in design and technology was seen during the inspection, and no examples of past work were available. The limited discussions with the pupils indicate that they enjoy the subject and that they know the properties of materials and how to make designs. Consequently, there is insufficient evidence to make a secure overall judgement about the standards that the pupils attain. In the last inspection the standards were judged to be better than those expected.
84. In the one lesson seen, the pupils knew the benefits of making designs and, although some were over ambitious, they knew that modifications could be made. The pupils' skills in making and joining developed well during the lesson, although few actually finished their model. The activities were well organised, and the teaching encouraged independent working. The school makes appropriate arrangements to plan activities that include pupils of all abilities, and as a result the pupils with special educational needs attain well. The co-ordination of the subject is

sound overall, although the co-ordinator is also responsible for another subject. A scheme of work with appropriate guidance for the teachers is in place, but is due for revision next year. The pupils' achievements are assessed well and the pupils' own self-assessments are good. The available resources are sufficient and both subjects meet the requirements of the National Curriculum.

## **GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY**

85. Geography and history are taught at different times during the term, and only history was in progress during the inspection week. Therefore, the following judgements about standards in geography are based on the teachers' planning, interviews with the co-ordinator and scrutiny of the pupils' previous work. The teaching of history was observed in Years 1 and 2. It is clear that the standards the pupils attain in history are in line with what is expected for their age, but it is not possible to give a judgement about their attainment in geography.
86. The pupils in Year 1 are beginning to appreciate the difference between old and new in relationship to toys, and to understand that older toys did not run on batteries, but had to be wound up. In Year 2, the pupils know what it means to be famous and have learned some basic facts about Florence Nightingale. For instance, they know that 'she was a nurse' and 'she lived a long time ago', but some also made erroneous statements, such as 'she liked parties' when in fact she did not. The pupils develop inquiry skills well as they use secondary sources for information.
87. In geography, the pupils have already drawn route maps to show how they get to school, and produced a graph indicating that they travel either on foot, by car or by other forms of transport. The maps include various landmarks they pass on the way, although the pupils draw them as pictures rather than symbols. For example, they draw a building with a roof, windows and doors, rather than as a small square or rectangle. The pupils in Year 2 have visited a small village nearby in order to compare it with their own town. This was a successful visit and the pupils are beginning to understand the differences and similarities between the two localities. Later they will compare the town with another location, Tocuaro, a place where life is very different. The topic about the seaside will link closely to a similar topic in history.
88. The pupils enjoy their history sessions and are interested and enthusiastic, especially where they have genuine artefacts to handle, for example the old toys that belonged to members of staff. They listen with interest, are well behaved and keen to respond to the teachers' questions. They co-operate well and complete their work quickly. In the Year 1 lesson, the pupils enjoyed and were excited by the tape of the teacher's parents talking about the toys they had in their childhood. Progress in history is satisfactory as the pupils develop their inquiry skills and their understanding of the differences between past and present.
89. The teaching of history is satisfactory overall, and some good teaching was seen. In some lessons, however, the pace is a little slow, and the tasks are over-dependent on the use of worksheets. In these lessons, the pupils were not so well motivated and the resources used lacked imagination. In the lesson where the teacher's parents talked on a tape about their childhood toys, the teaching was good and genuine artefacts were provided as a stimulus. The pupils with special educational needs make sound progress in all activities, learn well, and all the pupils are included within the activities planned. The teachers use questioning effectively and have good relationships with their classes. No geography lessons were seen during the inspection, so it is not possible to comment on the quality of the teaching in this subject.

90. The co-ordinator for both geography and history has only recently taken on the role and so will need time to consolidate all the information received. The policies for both subjects are in place and published documentation is being used to guide the planning. A variety of visits gives the pupils first-hand experiences of local history and geography. Since the last inspection, the standard that the pupils attain in history has been maintained at a similar level, but it is not possible to comment fully about the standards attained in geography.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

91. The pupils attain standards that are similar to those expected nationally for pupils of this age. At the last inspection, the standards of attainment were in line with national expectations. The rate of progress has been satisfactory, but a new computer suite has dramatically improved the level of resources as well as the access to them.
92. The oldest pupils know how computers can be used in appliances, and in discussion can say how different forms of technology, such as in telephones, video recorders and other domestic appliances, can be used. They know the main features of the computer such as the mouse, keyboard and screen, and can load a CD-ROM. In discussion, the pupils accurately describe the different parts of the computer such as the screen and keyboard, and most know that the mouse helps to control actions on the screen. A whole-class lesson was observed in the new computer suite during which the majority of the pupils were able to change the size and colour and style of text. The teacher planned and managed the lesson well, giving the pupils good guidance, but allowing them to practise their skills. The pupils enjoyed their activities, and concentrated hard when listening to the teacher's comments and instructions. In a Year 2 lesson, the teacher's clear explanation of how to use an art program helped the pupils to move on to the next stage of the activity later in the day. They were very excited by seeing the work of a real artist. In another Year 2 lesson, focused on literacy, the use of the computers was less successful as the pupils struggled to edit the text. The pupils' past work indicates that they use simple word processing and art programs effectively. Some have also compiled simple graphs that effectively show their favourite sweets, and photographic evidence shows others using a 'Roamer' to carry out simple programming.
93. Overall, the pupils, including those with special educational needs, learn satisfactorily as they gain knowledge about how computers and technology are used. However, their progress through the school is modest due to the relatively short time they have had to use the new computer suite. The use of computers in other subjects, such as geography and music, is developing appropriately.
94. The co-ordinator gives sound direction to the subject, which she has taken on this term. The policy is clear and there is a suitable scheme of work based upon national guidance. The level of resources in the computer suite is very good and a lot of effort is being made to ensure that the computers are used effectively. This is enhancing the pupils' experience and skills significantly and, over time, should help them attain even higher standards. The subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.

## **MUSIC**

95. The pupils attain the standards expected of them in music. This is because the teachers plan the lessons carefully and the activities are well managed. They make good use of recently published guidelines to provide an interesting and relevant range of musical experiences.

Many of the pupils sing tunefully and enjoy performing together, both in school and with other local schools elsewhere.

96. The good range of percussion instruments available provides the pupils with opportunities to develop their understanding of how these are used and the variety of sounds they make. The pupils in Year 2 produce a range of effective scraping, banging, tapping and shaken sounds that they combine to produce a class composition. They recognise that sounds can have different qualities, such as loud and quiet, and that individual notes can be either long or short. They can reproduce these sounds in response to a visual cue, such as flashcards. The programme of work is well balanced to include performance and listening to music. Opportunities for listening are enriched by the variety of music that is played as children join and leave school worship. The teachers are alert to the need to encourage appropriate handling of instruments to ensure that they vibrate freely. For example, they were seen reminding children how to hold beaters with a loose wrist in order to avoid producing a heavy sound. Music teaching is also used productively to develop the pupils' vocabulary as they respond to music using a range of descriptive words. A child in Year 1 was heard to say that a particular musical excerpt reminded her of 'rainbows and clouds and a bit stormy'. The pupils' behaviour is very well managed so that the objectives of lessons are well met. The children enjoy their work in music and participate well. The school recognises that learning music makes a valuable contribution to their aesthetic development. The headteacher is the coordinator, and supports the subject well with additional lunchtime clubs.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

97. Only indoor activities were planned during the inspection. The standard the pupils attain in these activities, such as gymnastics and indoor games, is what is expected for pupils of this age. In one lesson, the pupils attained high standards. The last inspection found that standards were in line with those expected, and they have been maintained since then.
98. The pupils in Year 1 demonstrate different skills in throwing, aiming, bouncing and catching a ball. They are usually accurate as they increase the distance of their throw, and some are good at inventing different games they can play. The teaching was particularly good at extending the pupils' skills. For example, when the pupils had accomplished the skill of hitting accurately, the teacher had several additional activities ready for them. This motivated the pupils to improve their skills still further. In another Year 1 lesson, when similar skills were being taught, the teacher quickly modified her approach when some pupils found the activity too difficult with the resources they had chosen. This approach by the teachers is typical and often leads to the pupils' making good progress within lessons and on occasions attaining higher than average standards. The pupils approach their activities with enthusiasm, and share the equipment well. They collaborate well, for example when asked to practise their skills in pairs. They participate well and their learning is further enhanced through good involvement in various activities. In Year 2, for example, the pupils developed their skills in running and skipping, often moving at different levels with increasing control when stopping and balancing. The teacher motivated the pupils well with lots of well-directed praise, and gave them time to show their efforts to their fellow pupils. At the start and end of the lesson, the children walk quietly to and from the hall. They wear appropriate clothing and use equipment safely.
99. The curriculum is broad, balanced and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. It covers gymnastics, dance and games. The subject is co-ordinated satisfactorily, although the co-ordinator has taken over only this term. The policy document and the scheme of work



were reviewed last term. The school hall is generally inadequate both in size and overall condition, which makes it difficult to use larger apparatus. Otherwise, the resources are generally good, particularly in the range and quantity of small apparatus. This allows for a good range of activities to be planned.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

100. The standards that the pupils attain are satisfactory by the time they leave the school. The expectations of the locally agreed syllabus are met. The evidence from the lessons seen indicates that the pupils are beginning to make better gains in their learning. This represents some improvement on the standards seen at the previous inspection. It is happening because the teachers have recently increased their knowledge and understanding of various topics within the syllabus. They are becoming more confident in ensuring, for example, that the children develop an appropriate understanding of aspects not only of Christianity, but also of other major world faiths.
101. With this increased knowledge, the teachers are devising more varied and interesting approaches to learning. The children in Year 1 recall well the story of Judah Maccabee and understand the significance of Hanukkah to the Jewish people. With little prompting, they recall the fact that the Hindu festival of Diwali is also associated with light. This is because the activities had captured their interest and engagement. The artefacts used to enliven the narratives associated with various festivals provided the children with tangible symbols of celebration. They remembered, for example, making diva lamps for Diwali and compared this with the Jewish people lighting Hanukkah candles. After a visit to the local church, they were also able to observe that candles are important symbols in Christian church services.
102. This good teaching is not only extending the pupils' religious knowledge, but also successfully fostering their spiritual and moral development. The lighting of candles during a lesson on Judaism provided an excellent, well managed opportunity to reflect quietly on how the Jewish people coped with the destruction of their temple. The story of Jonah satisfactorily conveyed to the pupils in Year 2 the bravery and selflessness behind his jumping into the sea. In both cases, questioning skills were used well to develop the pupils' understanding. The sensitivity with which the activities are conducted is crucial in successfully fostering the children's respect for the beliefs and practices of believers of different faiths. They know that the Bible is a very special book for Christians and that the Torah must be handled in a very special way that shows respect for its significance to adherents of Judaism. The subject is co-ordinated very well. Consequently, the staff are committed to continuing to raise standards by organising interesting activities, supported by resources of good quality.