

INSPECTION REPORT

BRACKENWOOD INFANT SCHOOL

Bebington

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 105021

Headteacher: Mrs. C. Green

Reporting inspector: Mr. R. Gill
4074

Dates of inspection: 30th April – 3rd May 2001

Inspection number: 194234

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:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Pulford Road Bebington Wirral
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr. E. Mahers
Date of previous inspection:	21 st April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
4074	Mr. R. Gill	Registered inspector	English, Foundation Stage, religious education, art and design, and music.	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
19369	Mrs. C. Wild	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with its parents?
3240	Mr. D. Wilkinson	Team inspector	Mathematics, science, information and communication technology, physical education and special educational needs.	How good are the curricular opportunities?
23698	Mrs. J. Schaffer	Team inspector	Design and technology, history, geography, English as an additional language and equal opportunities.	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Brackenwood Infant School is situated in the residential area of Bebington on the Wirral. Most of the school's 177 pupils, 88 of whom are boys and 89 girls, live locally, while others come from further afield. The school is not fully subscribed in reception and Year 1 as the birth rate is falling in the surrounding area. The school has recently opened a newly built classroom as part of a government initiative to reduce the number of children in reception classes. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible to receive free school meals (13 per cent) is about average. The school includes a special needs class with seven pupils in it, currently, drawn from around the Wirral – all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. Thus there is a higher proportion of pupils in the school with statements than would normally be found in most schools, but overall, the proportion of pupils with a special educational need is below the national average for this type of school. Very few pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds; none are learning English as an additional language. Most pupils attend a local pre-school playgroup before joining the reception class. The pupils' attainment when they start school is average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Brackenwood Infant School is a most effective school, with a warm and caring atmosphere which is very conducive for learning. Standards reached by pupils by the age of seven are often well above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics; they are the result of good and often very good teaching. The school is very well led by the headteacher, staff and governors who have a strong commitment to maintaining high standards and making improvements where necessary. Despite the relatively high cost of educating pupils at Brackenwood, the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The pupils achieve high standards by the end of Year 2 as a result of good and often very good teaching.
- The headteacher, key staff and governors provide very good leadership and manage the school very well.
- The pupils enjoy a very rich and varied curriculum.
- The school establishes very good behaviour and attitudes to work among the pupils.
- Teaching in the reception classes and the special needs class is consistently very good and sometimes excellent.

What could be improved

- The pupils who have potential for high attainment could do better in writing.
- The way test results and other assessment information is shared and used throughout the school to set targets for individual pupils.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

When it was inspected in April 1997 the school was judged to have many very good features. Since then it has maintained this high level of success and continued to improve at a good rate. The school has made some important improvements. For example, the quality of teaching has improved. There are now many more very good lessons being taught and even some excellent ones. The key issues contained in the previous report have been tackled well. For example, higher attainers in mathematics and physical education are making better

progress. More emphasis has been placed on specific skills in design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT), but more needs to be done in art and design. Since 1997 the staff have implemented a comprehensive system of assessing and recording pupils' progress in every subject, reviewed the effect of this system in practice and decided on another, potentially more helpful, system. This is a good example of how the school is continually evaluating its own progress and making improvements where necessary.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
Reading	A	A	A	A
Writing	A	A	D	D
Mathematics	C	A	B	B

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below E

average

Pupils attain standards that are often well above average. Standards in reading are consistently high, but in some years they vary in writing and mathematics. The 2000 results in writing and mathematics were lower than in 1999, but these scores do not give a true picture of the kind of achievements being made by pupils in Year 2. The school has a very effective special needs unit in which a specialist teacher teaches statemented children between the ages of five and seven. They make good progress but their performance, which is inevitably below the national average in some aspects of learning, is included in the results. Furthermore, in 2000 the number of seven year olds with a special educational need was much greater than is usually the case. Taken on their own, without those from the special needs class, the figures show that pupils, in 2000, attained well above the national average in reading and mathematics. Writing results were good, but did not quite match the others because not enough pupils reached the higher levels. Standards in science have been consistently high over the last three years.

By the age of five, children attain above expectations in all areas of learning except in physical development, where attainment is satisfactory, and in personal, social and emotional development where children reach very high standards. By the age of seven, pupils achieve higher standards than expected in all subjects except in ICT and in art and design. In these subjects attainment is as expected for the pupils' age.

Pupils with special educational needs and those who are capable of higher attainment achieve well, particularly in reading, mathematics and science, owing to the quality support they receive from teachers and classroom assistants. Overall, pupils' learning is good; they achieve well considering the average level of skills with which they enter the school. The school invariably meets its targets for attainment and sometimes exceeds them.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children are always enthusiastic and very keen to learn. From an early age, they learn to work independently and with confidence.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Children behave very well in class and around the school. Breaks and lunchtimes are invariably pleasant social occasions.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils learn from an early age how to get on well together. They form very good relationships with other pupils and with the adults.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance is about average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good on balance. Overall teaching and learning were satisfactory or better in all lessons. In 42 per cent of lessons teaching was very good and sometimes excellent. The good teaching throughout the school has a positive effect on pupils' learning as demonstrated by their achievements by the time that they are five and seven. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive and they concentrate hard on their lessons. The National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy have been implemented well by staff and are taught well. The emphasis on reading is great; in consequence the writing, particularly of those capable of higher attainment, tends to suffer slightly. The school is aware of this and is working hard to tackle the issue. The school largely succeeds in meeting the needs of all pupils including those capable of higher attainment and pupils with special educational needs, although pupils' rate of progress tends to slow a little in Year 1.

There are many strengths in the teaching and learning that takes place. The very well organised teaching in the reception classes helps children to develop independence and poise in their learning that stands them in good stead throughout the school. The influence of the thoughtful and sharply focused teaching in the special needs class is strong both for its own pupils and for those with special needs in the other classes. Much of the teaching is lively and captures the pupils' imaginations. Pupils learn at a reasonable rate in Year 1, which then quickens in Year 2, but many are capable of meeting more ambitious challenges in their writing.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The school offers pupils a broad range of high quality experiences
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils with special educational needs receive high quality support. These pupils are set programmes of work that are closely monitored. This enables them to learn well in small steps.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good. The strongest elements are the very successful cultivation of pupils' spiritual, social and moral development. Pupils' cultural developments are promoted satisfactorily. There is, however, too little emphasis on increasing pupils' understanding of the cultural and ethnic diversity in their own society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The needs and sensitivities of the pupils are understood well. The school assesses the attainment and progress of its pupils very well. It does not yet share or make sufficient use of this information to set targets for groups or individuals.

There are good relationships with parents, and parents are supportive of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher and key staff are most effective. The new headteacher and deputy headteacher both make sure that the school's aims are fulfilled very well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governors are all involved in the daily work of the school and, consequently, are most knowledgeable about its strengths and areas for development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school makes appropriate use of national data and local statistics to evaluate its performance: the headteacher has evaluated teaching well. The school's development plan is evaluated well by staff and governors.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school makes good use of its resources. The brand new computer room is already having a positive effect, but the two, large, open-plan work areas are not always used efficiently for learning.

There are enough teachers and support assistants. They are all very well deployed. The accommodation is good and maintained to a high standard. Resources for teaching and learning are good and used well, but the reception classes lack fixed and moveable resources for outside play. The governors take a vigorous interest in all aspects of school life. They seek information from all sources and they are continually finding ways in which to run the school more efficiently and effectively.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like the school. • The school has high expectations for its pupils. • Staff are approachable. • The teaching is good and children make good progress. • Children's personal development and good behaviour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework given. • The range of activities outside lessons.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive comments. The amount of homework given is about right for the age of the children. The school has decided to strike a sensible balance between homework in English and mathematics. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. In 2000, the school's results were not so good as in previous years; pupils' results in writing were below the national expectation. However, these scores are misleading and do not give a true picture of the kind of achievements being made by the pupils in Year 2. The school has a very effective special needs class in which seven pupils between the ages of five and seven are taught by a specialist teacher. These pupils are placed in Brackenwood from well outside the school's usual catchment area. The results of these pupils, which are invariably below the national average, are included in the school's published results. Results annually will be affected depending on the number of seven year olds in the special needs class. In 2000, for example, there was a greater proportion of seven year olds with special educational needs than is usually the case. The results for 2000, excluding those from the special needs class, placed pupils well above the national expectation in reading, mathematics and science. They were above it in writing.
2. These results came at the end of a five-year period during which the school's results were generally well above those of most schools nationally. The ongoing picture is similar to the one that was shown by the 2000 results. The overall result can be affected by the number of seven year olds in the special needs class, but in Year 2 classes alone, pupils have a tradition of doing much better than expected nationally. Boys and girls do equally well generally but, since there are often more boys than girls in the special needs class, it often appears statistically as if girls do better than boys. The pattern of attainment created by these results was confirmed during the inspection.
3. Initial assessments on entry to the reception classes show that most children are about average in literacy, mathematics and personal and social development. This is borne out by the findings of the inspection. Most children are on course to reach the nationally defined goals in early learning by the end of the reception classes and many will exceed them. This represents good achievement by the children in their first year at school. This level of achievement is replicated by the age of seven when the standards attained by pupils are generally well above the national expectation. The school's targets for pupils' attainment are often exceeded owing to the progress pupils make during the run up to the national tests. Pupils' rate of progress over the years between the ages of five and seven is intrinsically linked to the quality of teaching they receive. In reading, teaching is often very good throughout the school and pupils' achievements reflect this. In writing and mathematics, progress slows a little in Year 1 where teaching is more often at a satisfactory level. Pupils' rate of progress then increases again in Year 2, but often those capable of a higher level in writing have not got enough time to achieve as well as they could by the end of Year 2.
4. In English, pupils in Year 2 listen very well in class. They join in very well with discussions, often making very pertinent points that are appreciated by the rest of the class. Many pupils can read with very good expression: they are confident, for example, with the way speech is set out on the page. This results from the very good teaching they have received in literacy lessons and in individual reading time. Pupils' handwriting is well formed and spelling is generally accurate for common words. Writing is often composed of a series of well-considered sentences placed in a logical order, but even the best work lacks powerful description and an imaginative touch. Some pupils can inject power and imagination into their work, but the school

acknowledges that this is an area for development. For example, some pupils can write sentences like, 'Inside, the wolf is sly and greedy.' However, most stick close to plain description of what the wolf looked like.

5. In mathematics, pupils are confident in arithmetic and are reasonably quick to solve simple problems. The very good teaching of the multiplication tables enhances pupils' achievement. It enables most of them to remember the correct answer very quickly. This facility helps enormously with written calculations. Pupils can also use their knowledge of numbers very well in practical situations, for example, when reading the calibrations on the side of measuring jugs that are divided at 50ml intervals.
6. In science, many pupils have acquired a good level of scientific knowledge through an investigative approach to learning. This involvement in a wide range of first-hand experiences is a strength of provision that lies behind pupils' good achievements, particularly in Year 2. Their thinking develops well, because teachers know when to ask open-ended questions that require pupils to mull over what they learnt. For example, in lessons about electricity, teachers asked why electricity flows safely through wires at home. Pupils were able to use their knowledge of conductors and insulators to provide the answer.
7. Beyond English, mathematics and science, pupils' attainment is often above that typical of seven year olds. This is true for all subjects except ICT and art and design where standards are at a satisfactory level.
8. There are very good procedures in place that help the school to identify pupils who may be having difficulties in their learning. The school benefits greatly from being host to the special needs class. It means that the teacher in charge can influence strongly the work being done in other classes with pupils with special educational needs. Individual education plans are very thorough and are very helpful in enabling class teachers to provide programmes of work and lessons that help pupils to make good progress. Pupils with behavioural difficulties are well supported and they make satisfactory progress in lessons. Pupils in the special needs class achieve very well as a result of the very good teaching they receive.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. The school has maintained the very good attitudes to school identified in the last inspection report. Behaviour is very good throughout the school and, along with the very good relationships, contributes to the good standards the school achieves.
10. Parents agree that their children are happy to be at school. Pupils quickly settle to their tasks. The successful teaching ensures the pupils are motivated in their work. In the classroom, pupils are enthusiastic in their desire to pose and answer questions. They are attentive to the teachers and, when encouraged to do so, are willing to talk about what they are doing. Pupils, including the children in the reception classes, are able to sustain concentration. For example, when they were comparing the environment of a village to a town, they listened carefully to the teacher and offered sensible observations. Pupils in the special needs class are secure and confident within the stimulating environment created by the school.
11. In the classrooms, around the school and at play, behaviour is very good. The school's behaviour policy emphasises the necessity for responsibility and co-operation of all those involved with the education of the pupils. Recognition of effort and the use of praise, along with the expectation of very good behaviour, help to create a community

where respect and value of self and others are paramount. Within the special needs class pupils' behaviour is very good and, while some behaviour is of a very individual nature, it is well controlled. Movement around the school takes place in a quiet and orderly manner. Pupils form a queue in the classrooms and the playground as a matter of course. Parents are supportive of the school's behavioural policy and are appreciative of the school's success. Recognition of good behaviour is rewarded in achievement assemblies. Pupils readily recall the school rules. No oppressive behaviour or bullying was observed during the inspection week.

12. Personal development throughout the school is very good. Relationships throughout the school are very good which enables the pupils to feel valued. Pupils in the special needs class enjoy very good relationships with adults, most pupils are eager to participate in the lessons and the reluctant are encouraged to contribute in their own way. Throughout the school staff provide good role models. At lunchtime, minor disagreements are resolved successfully with pupils apologising to each other and shaking hands. Pupils are courteous and polite to each other and to adults. Three years of fund-raising for the children's hospice, Claire House, has encouraged consideration for others and awareness of those less fortunate than themselves. When given the opportunity to display initiative, for example returning registers to the administration office and tending plants, the pupils responded well. No instances of sexist or racist attitudes were displayed during the inspection.
13. Attendance of 94.5 per cent in the 1999/00 academic year was broadly in line with the national average. Unauthorised absence in the same year was below the national average. Although most pupils attend school regularly, there is a considerable number of pupils taking holidays in term time. Punctuality to school is good; the majority of pupils arrive at school on time. Registration complies with the statutory regulations; however, the codes used to denote absence are not consistent throughout the school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14. The quality of teaching is good overall and, as a result, the pupils learn well. However, there are variations between year groups. In the reception classes – the Foundation Stage – teaching is mostly very good and sometimes excellent. Teaching is mostly satisfactory in Year 1, good in Year 2 and always very good in the special needs class. There is scope for improvement in Year 1 to bring the teaching in line with the quality found elsewhere in the school.
15. The successful teaching found has a significant impact on pupils' achievements. In many cases, children have already exceeded expectations in their learning by the end of the reception year. The teaching of writing is not always sharp enough nor sufficiently clearly directed to helping pupils to make the specific progress needed. Teaching in Year 1 helps pupils to maintain their good progress in reading, but progress in writing slows slightly to a broadly satisfactory pace. This puts a pressure on teachers in Year 2 to advance pupils' learning in writing more quickly than they might otherwise have done. For example, in a Year 1 writing lesson, pupils found it hard to think of a story to write and incorporate five or six words ending in 'ed.' However, in Year 2 pupils' writing tasks are far more interesting and challenging.
16. The strength of the teaching in the reception classes is the way in which lessons really cater for the particular needs of individual children. Teachers and support staff know their classes very well and maintain useful records of achievement to help them judge the effect of their teaching. The rudiments of English and mathematics are well taught, using national guidance from the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy. An

overall strength of the teaching is the relationships created that inspire the children to speak out in confidence about their thinking. In one mathematics lesson, for example, a child noted in triumph, 'I looked at the number nine, added one more and knew it must be 10.' Running alongside, and contained within these subjects, is the school's well-founded regard for role-play as a vehicle for developing basic skills and nurturing the children's imaginations. Children in the greengrocer's shop, for example, often receive calls from imaginary shoppers who are enquiring about the cost of certain items. This causes a good dramatic rendering of the pricing issues, demonstrating a confidence with numbers in a play situation. The effect of this work on children's learning is very positive. They apply themselves wholeheartedly to the tasks and develop skills of concentration, communication and collaboration that stand them in good stead later on in their school career.

17. The overall quality of teaching represents an improvement since the time of the last inspection when only about a quarter of lessons were judged as being very good or excellent. Now over 40 per cent of lessons are in that category. The introduction of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy has played an important part in this improvement, as has the systematic monitoring of the teaching by the headteacher. In 1997 good teaching was characterised by the predictable ingredients of good subject knowledge, the ability of set work matched well to pupils' various abilities, and high standards of discipline. The very good teaching had the extra factors of high levels of enthusiasm and commitment designed to raise standards even higher. Now, in 2001, very good and excellent teaching is far more than just extra energy. It can be judged by its effect on pupils' learning. Many more pupils now reach higher standards in reading, mathematics and science. They have gained extra knowledge and the skills to use that knowledge when reading new texts or solving new problems. Very good teaching has been channelled by recent national guidance to design lively and effective lessons in English and mathematics, and in other subjects as well, for example, in Year 2 lessons devoted to letter writing assuming the character of Florence Nightingale in history, and the very good progress made by pupils in gymnastics when they are well trained in refining their movements to concentrate on effective stretches and balances. Furthermore, the successful teaching in the new computer room, where pupils have become familiar very quickly with a range of software, has also had a powerful effect on learning.
18. The teaching of reading is a strength of the school; it receives a high proportion of the time available for English. The school is now aware that standards in writing could be improved in respect of those pupils who are capable of the higher level, and that writing needs to be given more time. Moreover, it is often well developed in history, for example, but not in science where pupils do not write enough about what they have been learning.
19. A weakness at the time of the last inspection was found in lessons in which teachers spoke for too long and pupils did not have sufficient time to complete their work. This is not the case now. Lessons are generally sharply focused and pupils can finish their work. Any weaknesses in otherwise satisfactory teaching relate to the rate at which pupils make progress. This applies mainly to lessons in Year 1. Lessons sometimes lack pace because teachers have not set clear enough targets for pupils' to aim at. Lessons are taught satisfactorily, but those capable of higher attainment, for example, could do better if more demanding targets were set and the challenge to meet them was present. In a Year 1 mathematics lesson, for example, the question and answer sessions were not sufficiently quick and lively enough for all pupils to remain engaged throughout. The section at the end, reserved for a discussion about the lesson, was

limited by too few opportunities for pupils to talk about their own learning and a lack of reference to the original objectives for the lesson.

20. Beyond English, mathematics and science, good teaching overall in the majority subjects, in Years 1 and 2, helps pupils to achieve standards above those normally expected of seven year olds nationally. The exceptions are in art and design and ICT. The machines in the new computer room are too new for the pupils' standards to have been influenced, and the layout of the accommodation has a limiting effect on standards in art and design. Higher attaining pupils generally achieve well. They are often expected to complete additional work that represents a challenge for them. Good progress has been made in this provision since the last inspection. Occasionally, in mathematics, more could be done to stretch higher attainers, particularly in Year 1.
21. The quality of teaching in the special needs class is always very good. The main reason for this is the high level of expertise that the specialist teacher brings to the post. The teacher and classroom support assistant work very well together. They have created a lively and stimulating classroom for their pupils in which they feel emotionally secure. The very well presented displays of pupils' work help to raise self-esteem. The excellent relationships within the class together with the well-established routines add to the overall quality of this work. A literacy lesson was typical of this very good teaching. Pupils were enthralled by the story 'Whatever next', and the teacher made it come alive by having to hand a selection of the objects mentioned in the book. Pupils' understanding of the story was advanced significantly by being able to handle the objects and imagine themselves in the story. The specialist teaching in this class has a very positive impact throughout the rest of the school. Programmes for pupils, both in the special needs class and elsewhere in the school, are meticulously planned to meet individual and group needs. This ensures that pupils' learning is built up in small steps.

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

22. The school provides a very good range of activities for pupils and meets fully the National Curriculum requirements and those for religious education. Wherever possible, the school makes links between subjects so that pupils find their studies more interesting. For example, in ICT, pupils have created graphic designs to decorate the boxes they have made in design and technology. A satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities, together with good links with the parents, the community and local schools, enrich the formal curriculum. The school has successfully addressed most of the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. The quality and range of the curriculum is now a strong feature of the work of the school. This strength contributes significantly to the high standards attained.
23. Teachers plan the curriculum for the reception classes very well. It includes all the areas of learning defined nationally for the under fives, and places a well-chosen emphasis on the need to develop skills in language, literacy and mathematics. The curriculum provides interest and challenge in the way that it encourages children to think for themselves and play confidently and independently. Despite a full programme of activities to develop physical skills in the classroom, the school is unable to provide fully for the children's physical development, because there is no outside area dedicated to children in the reception classes. This has a limiting effect on their physical development overall.
24. Subjects receive enough time and the joint planning carried out by teachers, in each of the year groups, is of great benefit to pupils' learning. The plans that teachers make

are evaluated very well after they have been taught and relevant changes are made before they are taught again. This is a major strength of curricular provision and a very significant improvement on the previous inspection where there was a lack of organisation in curriculum planning. While teachers' planning often caters for the wide range of attainment of pupils in the class, in practice there are a few occasions when the work does not sufficiently stretch the more capable pupils.

25. The school makes very good provision for pupils with special educational needs. Prompt identification of problems takes place and individual educational plans contain clear targets for pupils together with suggested strategies to achieve them. These are regularly reviewed in the light of progress made. The special needs class gives an added dimension to the school. Its pupils take part in the full social life of the school to the mutual benefit of all, and some pupils join in lessons in Years 1 and 2 such as music and physical education as appropriate. All pupils with special educational needs play a full part in the life of the school.
26. The school has implemented the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy well. Reading receives relatively more time than writing. The school has already identified this weakness and there are plans to redress the balance of provision within these elements of the literacy programme. Opportunities to use and improve ICT skills in other subject areas, such as art, are improving rapidly. Pupils have created striking pictures in the style of the artist Mondrian while developing their knowledge of graphic software.
27. The school provides an interesting range of activities for pupils to enjoy outside of lesson time. Year 2 pupils are able to join in a well-run, weekly country-dance class. Over 50 per cent of the pupils subscribe to the monthly book club. There is a good programme of educational visits and visitors to the school. For example, pupils are able to visit Storeton Woods to study geographical and environmental issues. Pupils recently enjoyed a visit from a travelling theatre group and were able to take part in a drama workshop. About the right amount of homework is set. However, parents attending a meeting prior to the inspection expressed the view that numeracy did not feature as strongly as literacy in the homework. This is something the school is addressing and intends to have such a programme in place at the beginning of the next school year. Parents make a very significant contribution pupils' learning by regularly hearing them read at home which helps raise standards.
28. There is a weekly lesson for personal and social education. This programme of work includes very good arrangements for drugs and sex education. Teachers base their lessons on a very good agreed scheme of work that builds upon pupils' previous learning. Visiting speakers give added support to this programme, for example, the police service 'Stranger Danger' talks. This work is particularly successful in the special needs class where adults are constantly looking for ways of raising pupils' self-esteem.
29. There are good links with the community and the playgroup. Information and ideas are exchanged with the local junior school in order to facilitate a smooth transition at the age of seven.
30. Overall, the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school has improved on the good provision identified in the previous inspection report.

31. Assemblies, religious education and the planned programme of personal and social education represent the very good spiritual provision in the school. In assemblies the celebration of pupils' achievements, both inside and outside school, helps to foster pupils' appreciation of the gifts that they all have. Pupils write and read the prayers and are encouraged to listen carefully to, and reflect on, the music played. In religious education lessons, pupils gain knowledge and understanding of beliefs other than their own through the study of major world faiths.
32. Through the comprehensive personal and social education policy, many opportunities occur to contribute to the very good moral development of the pupils. Sensible links between subjects are encouraged where possible; for example in a Year 2 history lesson, when watching a video on the Crimean War, the teacher led the discussion to include how discrimination occurred because of gender or colour of a person's skin. Through the caring attitudes and guidance of the staff, reinforced by the school's rules, pupils learn how to consider others and to know right from wrong.
33. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. The school has improved this area of provision. Pupils take on responsibilities such as caring for plants and returning registers to the office. In religious education and personal and social education, themes such as friendships and the different ways they can act towards and care for each other, help the pupils to broaden their understanding. In assembly, Year 2 presented a performance featuring the heroic Grace Darling, who risked her life to save others. Pupils were captivated by the story of her unselfish deed for others.
34. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils learn about their own and other cultures through religious education, history, geography and art. Pupils visit areas of cultural interest, for example the church, sites of geographical interest and Liverpool museum. In the special educational needs class, a study of the Chinese New Year has resulted in a wall display that has enabled all pupils to understand more about other people's cultures. Pupils have visited a multi-cultural centre in the locality, but the school does not do enough to help pupils understand the different cultures of the society in which they live.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

35. Overall, the school provides a stimulating environment within which very good care is provided for its pupils. Staff have good knowledge of the pupils; very good relationships are a strength and help pupils to learn well. The standard of support and guidance has been maintained since the last inspection, except for the recording of absence and the monitoring of attendance which are satisfactory.
36. Procedures to promote pupils' well-being, health and safety are very good. A detailed personal, social and health education policy, along with planned lessons, assist in promoting the well-being of all pupils. Through the teaching of personal, social and health education, pupils are able to make informed choices. For example, in Year 2 pupils are taught to recognise and be aware of health hazards in the countryside. The governing body is diligent in carrying out termly safety reviews of the premises. Staff are fully trained in first aid and all staff are aware of the procedures to follow in case of injuries. Written notifications of bumps to the head are provided to parents. Fire procedures are adequate; regular testing of fire and electrical equipment takes place. The caretaker and cleaning staff have all received training in the safe use and storage of cleaning substances. The school makes good use of the local police and fire service who instruct the pupils in areas of personal safety and raise awareness of the

dangers of strangers and fire hazards. The support staff know the pupils very well and pupils are trusting and confident in their care.

37. The school has effective procedures for dealing with child protection. The designated person with responsibility and one other member of staff have received training and advice from the local area authority. The school follows the local area guidelines regarding child protection. Appropriate support is available if needed from outside agencies.
38. The school has very effective procedures for the monitoring and promoting of good behaviour. There is a good system of rewards and sanctions and pupils' good behaviour is celebrated well in assemblies. The expectations of the headteacher and staff, the moral guidance provided through assemblies and religious education, along with implementation of the policy, have a significant effect on the achievement of very good behaviour. Overall, parents agreed that standards of behaviour are very good and appreciate the school's achievements. Mid-day supervisory staff maintain good order and are able to provide stickers to reward good behaviour.
39. Procedures for monitoring and supporting of pupils' personal development are very good in the reception classes and the special educational needs class, and good in Years 1 and 2. Systematic monitoring of personal development by the class teachers ordinator takes place. Annual reports to parents in the reception classes often identify children's strengths and weaknesses and targets for improvement. This good practice is not consistently applied throughout the school: weaknesses are not always identified and targets are not always clear to the parents.
40. Procedures for monitoring attendance are satisfactory. Registers comply with the statutory requirements and registration takes place at the beginning of each morning and afternoon. Attendance at the school is broadly in line with the national average. Apart from a slight decline from the 1998/9 figures, attendance has been consistent with previous years. Unauthorised absence is below the national average. The school outlines the need to be informed of absences and parents respond well to the request. The school monitors individual absence if there is a concern.
41. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. Effective procedures are in place for the assessing children's achievements in the reception classes. Assessment is conducted well at the time of children's entry to the reception classes and parents meet with the teachers to discuss the results. Teachers administer Year 2 tests well and the results are analysed carefully so that the staff can plan more effectively in future. However, in Year 1, tests are not used to help plot pupils' progress through the school. The school is fully aware of this gap and already has plans to rectify this. Assessment procedures are very good in the special needs class. Pupils' individual educational plans are very helpfully written to give a clear insight into what small steps need to be made in lessons. This effective work spreads into other classes with the oversight of the special needs teacher. The marking of pupils' work is frequent and generally accurate, but it is not always helpful in explaining to pupils why their work is good or what needs to be done if it needs to be neater, for example. Pupils are left with few written indications about how to make progress. Pupils' reading is assessed well. Throughout the school, detailed information in reading diaries, from the class teacher and the parents, helps to build a comprehensive picture of pupils' capabilities.
42. The school makes good use of information gained from assessments to help plan the curriculum. For example, in the reception classes and in Year 2, teachers sometimes

revise the planned programme in English and mathematics after test results have been analysed. The staff discovered that their comprehensive system of assessing other subjects did not give them enough information to be able to amend their programmes, so they have wisely devised a new system. The information gained from assessments is not shared fully with all staff and it is not yet used to set annual targets for pupils, particularly in Year 1. The assessment co-ordinator, who works well in analysing assessment information, has recently produced some good guidance for staff to use when they are assessing pupils' written work. This has yet to be developed into a full system for setting targets for pupils and monitoring their progress towards them.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

43. The school has a good relationship with parents, which has a positive impact on the learning and achievement of the pupils. Parents feel that they can approach the headteacher and staff if they have any questions or problems. The previous inspection report identified the school's links with parents as being very effective. The school has maintained successfully the support of its parents. Overall, parents are happy with the school's provision for their children.
44. The information provided for parents is satisfactory. The quantity and quality of newsletters are good and provide a useful overview of the school's activities. Information about the curriculum, provided termly for each class, assists the parents in understanding the subjects that their children will be studying. The school's relationship with parents gets off to a very good start in the reception classes. There is a very well-produced welcome booklet that invites parents to tell the school about their child. Strong links are established with parents of pupils in the special educational needs class. Procedures include both formal and informal contacts; for example, parents are kept informed of the targets for improvement of those pupils who find learning more difficult. For pupils who travel from distant locations to the special educational needs class, a useful dialogue between parents, carers and teachers is created by the use of a notebook between home and school. In Years 1 and 2, there are two parents' evenings held annually and in the summer term an appointment may be made to discuss the annual report. In the reception classes, the reports celebrate children's achievements and also include targets for improvement. In Years 1 and 2, reports recognise pupils' achievements but are not consistent in identifying targets for future improvement.
45. The school recognises the important contribution parents can make in helping with their children's learning. For example, the school held a well-attended evening for parents to promote an understanding of how parents could help with their child's literacy and numeracy. The school has successfully trained approximately twelve parents in ICT. The course has enabled the school to use the help of volunteers constructively; two parents are now helping with the subject in the school. Time has been allocated for parents to practise their newly acquired skills. Although the school does not have an active parent teacher association, parents are supportive in assisting in fund-raising events. A monthly, school bookshop organised by parents is available for parents and pupils to purchase books.
46. Homework is provided in Year 2 classes and the school has plans to introduce homework in the lower classes. Reading diaries are used consistently throughout the school and are well maintained by staff and parents. The diaries are a contributory factor in the high reading standards throughout the school. Some parents are concerned about the lack of homework in numeracy, but the school has recently

reviewed its practice in this respect and there are plans to balance the tasks given between reading, writing and numeracy.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

47. Leadership in the school is most effective. Pupils generally achieve high standards by the age of seven. The school has a broadly average intake and adds a great deal of value to the pupils' education by the time they leave Year 2, because the headteacher, governors and staff all work well together in the job of maintaining and raising standards.
48. The last inspection report judged leadership and management to be very good; the newly appointed headteacher and deputy headteacher have maintained this high level of success. They both make sure that the school's aims are fulfilled very well day to day. The leadership and management of education for children in the reception classes are very good. Planning is thorough and takes account of the most recent national guidance for the three to five age range. This has a positive effect on children's learning. The school has many strengths and these are attributable to energetic teamwork and competent leadership.
49. Four years ago, when the school was last inspected, the standards achieved were well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. This level of performance has been successfully maintained despite seemingly being lowered in some years by the inclusion of scores from the special needs class. Much of this success in maintaining standards is due to the persistence and thoroughness of the headteacher and deputy headteacher who both taught at the school for some years before being promoted.
50. The teacher in charge of the special needs class provides strong leadership in the work for pupils with special educational needs throughout the school. The expertise, help and advice offered to colleagues are of high quality. Administration procedures in relation to maintaining accurate records for pupils are excellent. The style of leadership is positive and purposeful. It promotes a strong ethos for the social and educational inclusion of these pupils wherever it is possible. The theme of inclusion is a strong one running throughout the work of the school. However, despite the satisfactory work undertaken in relation to other cultures and their festivities, for example, Chinese New Year, the school could do even more to help pupils understand more about the multi-cultural society in which they live.
51. The school has a very good programme for checking the quality of teaching. The headteacher has carried out this work successfully over the last year. Teachers are given a very comprehensive appraisal of their lessons and pointers for improvement. Subject co-ordinators who have not yet had so many opportunities to monitor teaching, nevertheless carry out a rigorous evaluation of teachers' planning and collect pupils' work to demonstrate how productive lesson plans have been. The governors are aware of this process and how it fits in with their monitoring of standards in general. Co-ordinators regularly present their findings and plans for improvement to governors for inclusion in the school's development plan. All this contributes well to the good teaching and high standards that are achieved.
52. The governors are all involved in the daily work of the school and are consequently most knowledgeable about its strengths and areas for development. The governing body has made some good improvements to the school since the last inspection in the areas for development identified in the previous report. Most of the action plan has

been fully implemented except that, occasionally, higher attainers in mathematics could still receive yet more demanding work, and the teaching of skills in art and design could be further improved. The school did establish a comprehensive system of assessing pupils' progress across the curriculum, but has recently dropped this system in favour of a more helpful plan that is aligned to the new National Curriculum. There have been many national and local developments to which the school has responded very well since 1997, for example, the effective introduction of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy and the appointment of a new senior management team.

53. The school's development plan contains very good detail about what the school needs to do. Both the headteacher and deputy headteacher carry out successful evaluations of the various chapters contained within the school's development plan. These are clearly documented at the back of the plan. The governors have been closely involved in the plan's production and have linked its implementation well to the school's budget. This clear understanding of what the school is good at and what it needs to do to improve extends to all co-ordinators who consistently speak knowledgeably about their action plans and ways of monitoring the success of their work. This depth of leadership is a strength of the school.
54. There is an appropriate number of teachers who are deployed very effectively to form an enthusiastic and committed team. The strong band of classroom support assistants and special needs assistants works extremely well with the teachers and has a good impact on pupils' learning. The accommodation and resources for learning are generally good. The school's new computer room is used to good effect, after some initial teething problems. Volunteer parents have been very well trained to follow up work set by the teachers. The reception-aged children lack fixed, outside play facilities and climbing apparatus, but the staff have tried hard to make up for this by buying large equipment for the school hall. Furthermore, the governors already have plans for an outside play area for the two reception classes.
55. The school makes good use of available grants, including those for the special needs class. These grants are largely designated for specific purpose and have been put to good use. Funds available for ICT, for example, have had a positive effect on standards. Funds for special educational needs are used effectively, mostly to employ staff. Staff and governors closely monitor the benefit from these monies.
56. The headteacher and governors manage the school's finances very well. The school's secretary runs the school office very efficiently. A bursar works closely with the headteacher and governors to make sure that the budget is closely monitored throughout the year. The governors make sure that money is spent wisely by always researching how to spend it and choosing the goods and services that represent the best value for the school. The school has a sizeable balance, but this is all accounted for in relation to the outside play area and an expected downturn in pupil numbers.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

57. The headteacher, staff and governors, with support from the local education authority should:

1. Improve the proportion of pupils that reach the higher level in writing. To do this they should:
 - place more emphasis on shared writing in the literacy hour;
 - assess work more accurately to set targets for future improvement, particularly in Year 1;
 - mark work to show why work is good and what specifically needs to be improved; and
 - find ways of reminding pupils of their targets.
(Paragraphs 3, 4, 15, 26, 71, 75, 94)
2. Use information gained from tests and other forms of assessment more productively. To do this they should:
 - collate and share test results with all teachers so that individual targets can be set in each year group;
 - create a record for each year group that contains recorded levels and targets for improvement, for each child, up to the age of seven; and
 - maintain the momentum from the reception classes by introducing a test of achievement in Year 1 to measure continued progress.
(Paragraphs 19, 41, 42, 96)

Other areas for improvement identified during the inspection are:

- **(i)** targets for improvement in annual reports; (paragraph 44)
- **(ii)** preparation for life in a diverse society; (paragraph 34) and
- **(iii)** outside play facilities for reception-aged children (paragraphs 23, 68).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	48
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	16

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	38	40	18	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/A	177
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	22

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/A	9
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/A	27

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	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.4
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000	41	24	65

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	32	28	34
	Girls	23	23	24
	Total	55	51	58
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	85 (87)	78 (86)	89 (86)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	30	33	34
	Girls	24	24	24
	Total	54	57	58
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	83 ([84)	88 (86)	89 (91)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	119
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y2

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22
Average class size	22

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	148

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	N/A
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	N/A

Total number of education support staff	N/A
Total aggregate hours worked per week	N/A

Number of pupils per FTE adult	N/A
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	330135
Total expenditure	327889
Expenditure per pupil	1607
Balance brought forward from previous year	28569
Balance carried forward to next year	30815

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	177
Number of questionnaires returned	47

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	62	30	9	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	34	4	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	55	38	4	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	45	13	2	2
The teaching is good.	55	38	2	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	47	9	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	26	2	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	40	4	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	28	57	11	4	0
The school is well led and managed.	45	40	11	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	55	36	6	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	19	15	38	13	15

Other issues raised by parents

An unusually high proportion of parents was dissatisfied about the range of activities provided outside lessons.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

58. When the school was last inspected in April 1997, the report judged that children exceeded the expectations for their age in all areas of learning. These high levels of achievement have been maintained, and even improved upon, in the context of many changes having taken place in the past four years. For example, there is new national guidance for the children of this age and Brackenwood has been able to build a new classroom for one of its reception classes as a result of a government initiative.
59. All children start school and attend full or part-time in the September that follows their fourth birthdays. The younger children attend in the mornings only until Christmas. They are taught in two classes, which share many resources and facilities and, in many ways, work as one unit. The older children enjoy a spacious, new, self-contained room while the younger ones share a large work area with pupils in Year 1. When they start school, the children's levels of attainment are about average for their ages. Many children have experienced pre-school education in the adjacent playgroup and this has given them a good start.

Personal, social and emotional development

60. Most children are reasonably confident when they start school, and they quickly settle into the daily routines. Teachers and their assistants are very sensitive to the children's needs and this characterises the teaching, which is consistently very good. Many opportunities are provided for the children to work in groups, to enjoy a quiet moment with a book or to choose the work that they would like to do. These add further to their confidence. Children are very supportive of each other and they play and work together very well. The keynote to the children's development is the trust that is placed on them to work well when not being directly supervised by an adult. The staff train children rigorously to act independently on their own and in groups. For example, in the outdoor garden centre they happily assume the roles of staff and customers and take turns at serving barbecued food or buying plants. This, and other work, is so carefully planned that the children have learned to sustain their effort and concentration and can play productively for long periods. The achievement of the large majority is very good; they are on track to attain well above the standards set for children when they start in Year 1.

Communication, language and literacy

61. Work in this aspect of the children's learning pervades each lesson every day. It is very common for children to be practising their writing in the writing corner, enjoying books alone, in pairs or in small groups, and talking to each other while playing in the sand or water. At other times, the teacher, who is ably assisted by a classroom assistant, teaches the whole class. Children achieve very well under these circumstances. They are taught very well and their learning prospers very well as a result. A high proportion of children are likely to achieve the goals set nationally in this area of learning and many will exceed them.
62. The teaching methods that are used are very effective and demonstrate the importance the school places on speaking and listening as a means of communication in their own

right and for eventual proficiency in reading and writing. Many children are confident to speak out in front of the whole class. For example, one child suddenly spotted the teaching point sometime after the lesson had moved on and stated quite bravely and correctly, 'Those words look a little bit the same at the end and in the middle.' In the same lesson, children were commenting on the pattern made by the names on the jobs board and one child commented in a very enthusiastic fashion that, 'If the pattern went on it would be girl, boy, boy, boy. Then girl, boy, boy, boy again and so on.' In both cases, it was the safe and comfortable relationships that have been created by the teachers which gave children the confidence to speak out and air their thoughts.

63. The teaching of reading and writing is very good. Teachers are using well-tried and successful methods, based on the National Literacy Strategy. They are well versed in such methods and children are making quick progress. For example, teachers share books with large print and bold pictures with the children. They can teach the class how to read by demonstrating how an adult goes about the task of deciphering print. There are many good readers who can read simple sentences and pay attention to punctuation. Many can retell a story well and have even acquired a taste for what they like and dislike. One child said boldly, 'I would not choose Goldilocks as my favourite story.' All children understand that writing conveys its author's intention. Even the lowest attainers write strings of letters that stand for their story or list of items. Most children can write their names, compose a list of things to buy at the garden centre, for example, and many can write a few sentences to describe what makes them happy. One child wrote with very little assistance from the teacher, 'My mum and dad make me happy. They tickle me on my back.' Children's enthusiasm for writing and reading is widespread. They pay very close attention to what adults are saying and enjoy the process of getting things down on paper. One higher attaining child even placed, with a proud flourish, an exclamation mark at the end of her sentence.

Mathematical development

64. Children are learning very well in this aspect of their development; their attainment is anticipated to go beyond expectations by the end of the reception class. The teaching is very good and is making a strong impact on children's learning, particularly since teachers make learning fun; class lessons are linked well to play activities in the greengrocer's shop, for example. Children get so absorbed in their learning that they make all kinds of useful connections. One child uttered with amazement at the correct answer, 'I just knew it was going to be ten because that's my house number.' The strength of the teaching lies in the consistent building up of the basic skills of arithmetic and ensuring understanding by using games, songs and rhymes of all kinds. One lesson really came alive when the teacher introduced the 'count crab puppet' – one of the children's favourites. Counting is a daily feature and almost all the children can count to 20 quickly and accurately. Many children understand the principle of addition and, by singing counting songs with the teachers, they are learning well how to take one away from numbers up to five. A few children can even explain that when two children are away from a class of 30 there are 28 present.
65. Organisation of follow-up work after the class sessions is often excellent. Children play independently in the shop or café while the teacher, for example, gets children to count in twos by threading coloured beads onto a string. Other children use a computer program to reinforce their recognition of numbers and yet more count out ducks in the water tray. Learning is productive, brisk and greatly enjoyed by the children. Occasionally, teachers miss opportunities to get children to talk about their work and thereby reinforce even further the ideas being developed, but in general this is a real

strength. Very productive relationships inspire children to say what they are thinking about the mathematical ideas that they are working on.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

66. The children enjoy learning about the world around them. They are making very good progress in this area of their development as a result of good teaching. Most children are set to go beyond the expectations for their learning. Very good progress is possible because teachers manage the learning so well. One example demonstrates all that is so good about the work in this area of learning. An outdoor garden centre was set up in the playground comprising: plant stalls; a café; a vegetable counter; a plant potting table; and an ice cream stall. The most powerful part of the session lay in the teacher's ability to play in role with the children, thereby demonstrating what customers and sales assistant might be doing. This acted as a spur and a model for the children. In the process of playing, children learnt, among other things, about how to recognise plants from packets of seeds and what plants need to survive. The day before, children had enjoyed a visit from the local fire brigade who told them about their work and equipment. Teaching makes good provision for the children to use computers as a routine part of their work. Children are confident about using a mouse to click on the various pages of their electronic book, for example.

Physical development

67. The children are likely to reach the goals set for the end of their year in reception, but not go beyond them because the school does not have any outside facilities and resources to help the children develop fully. The school accepts this as a drawback in their provision and already has a plan to rectify the problem. Teaching is good overall, because teachers work hard to provide experiences for children to develop physical skills both in and out of the classrooms. Teachers are able to provide plenty of opportunities for the children to develop good control over pencils, crayons, paint brushes and other tools. For example, the children were able to make a very high tower out of wooden blocks by balancing pieces quite precariously and with much finesse. Children can cut well creating collages from paper and pieces of fabric. Many children use glue with great care. They have learnt to scrape unwanted glue from their spatulas before using them to spread and do not get covered in glue after it is applied.
68. The school's hall provides a good environment for the children to exercise their muscles. Children can use a range of new, soft-play equipment, such as large blocks, on which to climb and a fabric tunnel to crawl through, but the school does not have an outside area that is dedicated to the reception children. There are no wheeled toys or bikes and no fixed apparatus for the children to use. This represents a gap in an otherwise very good curriculum, as children are unable to exercise fully and to develop further their bodily control and confidence.

Creative development

69. The quality of teaching in this area of learning is very good: the children are likely to exceed the targets set for their attainment by the end of the reception year. Children can use a range of equipment to paint, draw and make collages, for example. They particularly enjoy making choices about the colours and textures to use. This prompted one child to announce, 'I got rough bits to stick onto my butterfly.' The quality of children's imaginative play is superb and children's achievements are very high, partly because the equipment they are provided with is of such a high standard. When playing in the make-believe garden, children can wear real gardening gloves and use

trowels and other hand tools as if they were actual gardeners. As a result, children become engrossed in their role-play. One child sat and dug soil with a trowel for a very long time showing complete concentration. Music is taught as an activity for the whole class, allowing teachers to make specific points. This works well. Children were involved in how to play instruments to accompany a story told by the teacher. The children learned how to play crescendos and diminuendos. They gasped with pleasure when the squirrel fell out of the tree and the music accompanied its fall.

70. Children are taught by two teachers and two support staff who work very well together as a team. The quality of teaching is very good overall for all children, including those with special educational needs. It ensures that the children get off to a really good start in the school and achieve very well in this earliest stage of their education. The provision has many strengths. The school provides a very broad and interesting curriculum and staff assess children's efforts well on a regular basis so that they know how to plan the next stages of the work. Parents are fully involved in their child's introduction to the school. The school produces a very helpful welcome pack for families and useful meetings are held for parents to learn about the reception class facilities. The very good teaching, high standards achieved and very good attitudes shown by the children make this area a strength of the school.

ENGLISH

71. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2 and overall standards are well above those expected by seven year olds nationally, particularly in reading. In writing, pupils achieve reasonably well, but could do even better. Standards have been consistently high over the past few years. In 2000, 14 per cent of the year group came from the special needs class. This resulted in a lower than average published result in writing when compared to the national average and similar schools. However, the school's result was similar to previous years if just the Year 2 results were included. Most pupils attain the nationally expected level 2, with many pupils above that level in reading. Some pupils achieve the higher level 3 in writing, but the school acknowledges that this is an area for improvement. These very good levels of achievement are largely due to the very good teaching, particularly in Year 2. All pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Children's achievements in reading increase consistently from Year 1 onwards, but in writing children experience a plateau of achievement in Year 1; they have to accelerate their progress in Year 2 in order to be sure of reaching the standard expected nationally. Current standards, as judged by the inspection, give a very similar picture. Standards are very high in reading and good in writing, but not enough pupils reach the higher levels.
72. The achievements made by pupils in the special needs class are very good. The teaching is very good: this results in pupils who are very keen to learn and who feel a great sense of achievement in all that they do. For example, when the class is studying their large sized book, the teacher's animated voice, the relevant and well-considered questions asked and the teacher's deep knowledge of the pupils' individual needs, make learning most productive. The classroom support assistant is very capable at helping individual pupils gain the most from the lessons. For example, the classroom support assistant used well-prepared pictures to teach the children the difference between 'on' and 'under'. The strong relationship between children and classroom assistant was a significant factor in the way that these pictures were used to promote learning.
73. Standards in speaking are good and in listening they are very good. The very good listening is connected to the very good discipline and high standards of behaviour

throughout the school. Pupils not only listen respectfully, but they are generally extremely interested in their lessons and keen to join in where possible. They show by their responses that they have followed the flow of the discussion, for example, and can make apt comments when relevant. One pupil, for example, asked a very pertinent and open-ended question after reading, with the class, the story about the boy who cried wolf, 'Miss. Do you think that the wolf was intelligent?' Pupils' ability to talk about the subject is good, but it is slightly restricted in two ways. Sometimes teachers do not leave enough time to ask pupils what they have thought about their learning – for example, what they found easy or hard and how they could improve their writing. More importantly, when pupils are working in the large work areas alongside the rest of their year group, teachers are less inclined to stop the lesson and ask for pupils' opinions. Therefore, it is only in the small bays, used for class teaching, that genuine conversation occurs with the whole class. These factors have a limiting effect on pupils' ability to talk well.

74. By the time pupils are seven years old, their achievements in reading are very good. At least 95 per cent of pupils achieve the nationally expected level, with many in advance of it. Pupils are very keen to read to adults and many read fluently and can talk about the meaning of words well. When necessary, they sound out the letters well to read an unknown word, showing that they have been taught well in this respect. This is an improvement even on the good standards achieved at the time of the last inspection. The National Literacy Strategy has been of distinct benefit in reading. It has provided a strong structure to the teaching in Years 1 and 2, giving teachers the confidence to teach the complexities of reading by using large books with the whole class. They have been able to point out textual features and show how to sound out words in a productive and time-saving way. Consequently, pupils read with very good expression and are confident about the way speech is laid out on the page, for example. Teaching is very good because it relies on a combination of methods, including those from the National Literacy Strategy, and also an individual programme for reading that is coupled with a system of reading at home. The whole school timetable is organised so that teachers can teach reading to individuals several times a week. This is of enormous benefit, particularly when linked to the hearing of reading at home by most parents. The book in which adult comments are written is a good testimony to the enthusiasm and insight shown by parents and teachers alike.
75. Pupils' attainment in writing is generally above the national expectation, but is not as good as attainment in reading. Improvement could be made and the school is aware of this. It is a prime feature in the school's current development plan. Pupils capable of higher attainment could do better; some lower attaining pupils could reach an average level with more specific guidance. Occasionally, not enough is expected of those pupils capable of higher attainment, but the main issue is an inconsistency in practice throughout the two year groups in how to help pupils achieve better writing. Some very good ideas are being put into practice, but only in a couple of classes. As a result, writing at the end of Year 2 is reasonably well constructed by the majority of pupils, but lacks imagination and powerful sentences. Handwriting is often clear and legible and spelling is generally accurate for common words. When writing stories, pupils can compose sentences that follow a sequence as a result of some good direct teaching about how to put ideas down on paper, particularly in Year 2. Higher attaining pupils can create more complicated compositions, but their work often lacks power and imagination. Much of the average writing is accurate and well formed, but lacks a sense of being written for a reader's pleasure. Pupils have spoken about this in their reading sessions, but have not yet incorporated this facet into their own writing. In Year 1, pupils also make progress in composing simple sentences that convey the writer's message. Work is often clearly written with words well spaced out, but there is

little imagination shown or, as in Year 2, evidence that many pupils are emulating some of the more interesting sentence construction that they have studied in their reading. Very good sentences are celebrated in the best teaching, as they tend to shine out like beacons from the pupils' writing. For example, one pupil in Year 2 wrote, 'I think the wolf is very funny, silly, posh and not so bad (for a wolf).' Another observed that, 'I get bored quick as a flash.' Some teachers use this type of sentence as an opportunity to teach the rest of the class about powerful word play, while others do not have the same lively approach.

76. The very good teaching that takes place has a direct influence on pupils' attitudes to their work, which are a definite strength of the subject. Pupils are frequently very positive about the class book that they are reading and then they settle to written work in the large work areas very quietly. Parents and visitors rightly comment that these areas are hives of industry. The very good teaching of reading is matched by the pupils' high achievement. The teaching of writing is slightly out of balance compared to the amount of time spent on reading. Not enough time is spent on the direct teaching of writing in the literacy hour as opposed to studying an author's text. The marking of pupils' writing does not give them enough clues about how to make improvements. Teachers are inclined to say, 'Make it longer please' or 'Neater please' without giving a specific target to achieve. One teacher gives the pupils individual target cards to place on their table that act as a constant reminder about what they need to do to make improvements in their writing, but this good idea is not replicated in other classes.
77. Management of the subject is good. The co-ordinators understand the strengths and areas for improvement and the school is well placed to make further improvements. There are already some plans to tackle the relative weakness in writing. The new computer room is beginning to be used well for word processing and conducting research on the Internet, but the library is currently under-used for such purposes: this adversely affects pupils' progress when conducting research.

MATHEMATICS

78. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2; overall, standards are well above those expected by seven year olds nationally. Standards have risen consistently over the past five years. In 2000, for example, standards were well above the national average if the results of the special needs class are not included. In this circumstance, results compare very favourably with similar schools. Current standards remain at this high level. The overwhelming majority of pupils attain the nationally expected level 2 with many pupils above that level. These levels of achievement are largely due to the very good teaching, particularly in Year 2, which helps pupils to build progressively upon their previous learning. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 with special educational needs make good progress, as do those in the special needs class. Both sets of pupils benefit from the extra support they receive and the individual work that teachers prepare for them. The special needs class follows a programme of work similar to other classes but thoroughly adapted in order to meet individual needs. The visual stimuli, with objects to count and shapes to compare, are a successful approach for these pupils.
79. The joint planning of weekly work, with the sharing of ideas between teachers and the systematic build up of skills day by day, are very successful. Early in the inspection week, pupils in Year 2 were looking at the inverse operation of addition and subtraction and later used this new learning to help understand multiplication and division equations. Teachers explain and illustrate new ideas well, often using objects so that pupils have a visual knowledge of number. In this instance, the teacher grouped 12 sweets among 3 pupils for 4 each, so that pupils could visualise 12 shared and 3 times

4. In this way, pupils' knowledge and understanding of number are very good. Teachers give pupils good opportunities to apply their knowledge of number into real-life problem-solving situations.
80. Many pupils in Year 2 can mentally add together two-digit numbers and recall parts of their multiplication tables, work usually associated with older pupils. Teachers provide a good balance to the curriculum but with an emphasis on mental recall of number bonds and a repertoire of ways of mental calculation. Consequently, by the age of seven, pupils have a good knowledge of number. Additionally, they are able to draw column graphs from data they have collected, accurately read the capacity of measuring jugs at 50 ml intervals, and identify lines of symmetry on two-dimensional shapes.
81. On balance, the quality of teaching is good. Teachers build on the good levels of attainment that pupils have by the time they start in Year 1. The better teaching is in Year 2, where there is greater pace to lessons, especially in the oral sessions when pupils are practising counting skills. Additionally, independent work is better matched to pupils' ability. Consequently, groups of pupils are able to get on with their work confidently while the teacher works with others.
82. Most lessons are rooted in good planning, good organisation and good behaviour management, hence lessons are purposeful and time is used well. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They are busy workers, careful with their presentation and eager to please. When working in the large, communal areas of school, shared by the whole year group, they do so with good regard for others.
83. Very good emphasis is given in all classes to encouraging pupils to consider a variety of approaches to mental calculation. When answering questions teachers ask pupils to explain how they have arrived at answers so that others can learn from them. Pupils extensively use their knowledge of doubles and rounding to ten in their mental arithmetic. Pupils find some unusual ways of arriving at answers; for example, one pupil, when asked to double 60, said it was the same as 2 hours or 120 minutes. This type of answer from pupils in Year 2 is not common and clearly demonstrates the quality of pupils' learning. Teachers do not see pupils' mistakes as a problem. In fact, they use them to make pertinent teaching points.
84. The co-operative planning between teachers is a strength of the teaching and specifically caters for the varying needs of groups of pupils. However, the more capable pupils occasionally lack challenge because their work is too similar to that planned for the average attainers.
85. All teachers insist on good presentation of work. This helps pupils to be accurate in their calculations. The care with which teachers mark and generally look after pupils' books sets a very good example to the pupils. However, the content of marking is generally limited to a tick and the occasional remark. Seldom is there a comment that would either challenge pupils to do more or to acknowledge an improvement in their work.
86. The National Numeracy Strategy is taught well. The school chose to move to this style of teaching before the introduction of the national initiative. Consequently, many aspects of recommended teaching are well established. Good questioning at the end of lessons helps teachers identify how well pupils have learned and what needs to be reinforced. Teachers use a good range of mathematical language; this results in pupils being able to explain their answers using the correct terminology.

87. Pupils with special educational needs are well catered for with work that has been adapted well to suit their current level of achievement. Teaching in the special needs class is very good. Individually prepared work, with good levels of support, leads to good progress. The teacher in this class has considerable expertise and experience with these pupils and has developed an efficient way of working. The teacher is ably supported by a support assistant who responds extremely well to children's individual needs as they arise.
88. There is a comprehensive, but cumbersome, system of testing in place that gives a picture of what pupils have achieved and what level they have reached. However, it does not efficiently provide the school with the kind of information it needs in order to set future targets for groups and individual pupils in order to raise standards further. The school's development plan clearly identifies that these procedures are to be reviewed.
89. The school makes sound use of ICT to develop pupils' mathematical understanding. Teachers give pupils time to reinforce their number bonds through computer software which captures their attention. Pupils collect data and learn to make graphs from the information. This allows pupils, for example, to study pie charts, which would be very difficult for them to produce by themselves.
90. Leadership of the subject is very good. The co-ordinator has a great deal of expertise that is used well to support colleagues. Since taking over the role some five years ago, standards have consistently risen. There is a clear vision about future developments including the introduction of more regular homework for Years 1 and 2. Parents themselves raised concerns about the imbalance of homework between literacy and numeracy at the parents' meeting. The school has identified this as a relative weakness and plans to redress the balance.

SCIENCE

91. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2; overall, standards are well above those expected by seven year olds nationally. Standards have risen consistently over the past three years and are much better than they were at the time of the last inspection. In 2000, for example, standards were above the national average if the results of the special needs class are not included. They are now even higher in the current Year 2 classes. The overwhelming majority of pupils attain the nationally expected level 2 with many pupils above that level. These good levels of achievement are largely due to the good teaching that helps pupils develop their understanding of science through a wide variety of good, first-hand learning experiences. All pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The special needs class follows a similar but thoroughly adapted programme of work in order to meet individual needs.
92. Investigative work features prominently in the teaching and promotes good attitudes to science in the pupils. In the work on electricity in Year 2, teachers encouraged pupils to explore for themselves what materials would conduct electricity. They were able to do this because teachers planned the work in small, manageable steps. Pupils used their knowledge of circuits, gained the previous week, to devise a simple test. They knew where to place the test material within the circuit to see if a bulb would light up. By the end of the lesson, pupils knew the difference between insulators and conductors. They then applied this knowledge to reason why electricity cables in the house are able to carry current, but do not electrocute those who live there.

93. Teachers are good at developing skills of observation. In Year 1, pupils were thrilled to see their seeds growing after one week and kept a diary of their growth. They saw for themselves how the seed shell remained attached to the first shoot of growth. With the help of the teacher, pupils undertook a controlled experiment to see how well cress seeds grew. Through the good questioning of the teacher pupils explained what might happen when the seeds were denied light. Such experiments are challenging pupils' scientific curiosity. One pupil predicted that there might even be nocturnal plants.
94. Pupils make good progress and achieve well from the very good start they are given in the reception class. Pupils present their work well in a variety of styles including drawings, charts and tables. Teachers pay good attention to ensuring that pupils are able to relate the work they do to the world around them. Teachers use displays of pupils' work to good effect to support the topics covered and celebrate the work of pupils, all of which reinforces their learning. Information books often form part of these displays, but higher attaining pupils seldom use them. They often lack the opportunity to look up information in books.
95. The quality of teaching is good and ensures that pupils learn well and have very good attitudes in lessons. The teachers plan together in year groups and share ideas about what works well. Planning is rooted in a two-year cycle of topics, which builds on pupils' previous learning. Teachers give good explanations, often in the form of analogies, to help explain difficult scientific concepts. For example, in one class a teacher said, 'an electric circuit is like a circle because it is a complete ring'. Lessons follow a common structure in school and often finish with the question, 'What did we learn?' In this way, teachers are able to check how well pupils have learned and what may need reinforcing.
96. There are good procedures in place to chart pupils' progress, but this information is not used sufficiently well to map out targets for improvement for groups and individual pupils. Similarly in marking, teachers fail to make sufficient comments on pupils' work for them to know how they might improve or why the work is successful.
97. Teaching in the special needs class is very good because work is so successfully prepared. Pupils often record their investigations in drawings or by writing, with the support of the teacher. The enjoyable, first-hand experiences, which form a major part of the work, are particularly beneficial to these pupils because they help pupils understand the scientific ideas being taught.
98. Co-ordination of the subject is good. The review of the success of half-termly topics by the year group teachers enables the co-ordinator to focus on the quality of the curriculum. The monitoring of pupils' books further sharpens this focus, which enables the co-ordinator to give colleagues any necessary support. Teachers' planning, together with the amount of time pupils have to investigate things for themselves, have both improved since the last inspection.

ART AND DESIGN

99. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school and, by the time they are seven, standards are at an appropriate level. These sound achievements are sometimes bettered by the pupils in the special needs class who produce some fresh and original artwork – for example, pencil drawings of flowers with bold, confident and expressive lines. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

100. Occasionally, the older pupils, in Year 2, produce high standards of work. Seven year olds, for example, have painted some very imaginative woodland scenes. They have used perspective and colour well to create a feeling of depth and mystery. These studies, in green, make the viewer feel mesmerised by the illusion of light falling through the leaves.
101. Generally, standards are as expected because teaching, while being basically satisfactory, is variable throughout the school. The design of the building itself has an important influence on lessons. There are small, wet areas for art at the end of each wing in which a group of pupils can work with a parent volunteer. At the same time the class teacher works with the rest of the class in an adjacent, carpeted area. This arrangement tends to limit the amount of any direct teaching possible thereby limiting pupils' learning. Sometimes, the whole class can do art together because they do not need to use the wet area; learning is then more successful.
102. The amount of discussion that takes place between teachers and pupils is a significant factor in lessons. In one Year 2 lesson, where learning was satisfactory, pupils drew and printed proficiently and used computers to produce Mondrian-type designs in bold primary colours divided by strong black lines, but had little opportunity to talk about what they had done and how they felt about their work. In another Year 2 class, learning was enlivened by very good discussion that helped pupils consolidate their knowledge of Mondrian's work and the pupils' own understanding of colour, line and form.
103. An important determinant of good teaching is the degree to which the teacher can teach skills that are an advance on anything acquired before. Some teachers use their own knowledge of the subject to guide them in this, but others rely on written guidance of which there is too little in school. There is some guidance for teachers, but this could be used more effectively. There is, however, a lack of guidance on how the various skills, such as paint mixing, should be built up over time.
104. Teachers make sure that pupils' attitudes are very positive. Pupils know a lot about individual artists and their work and enjoy talking about them in class and in the bi-weekly assembly devoted to pupils' artwork. On these occasions, pupils' art gallery exhibits are shown to the whole school. Pupils also enjoy using the World Wide Web to find out interesting facts about artists' lives. This level of provision and encouragement is most effective. One pupil, for example, commented that a painting had, 'a similarity with cubism.'
105. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning well and usefully collects pupils' work to exemplify standards achieved. The school acknowledges that a systemic approach to the building up of skills is an area for development. Teachers currently keep a detailed record of what skills pupils have worked on, but there is no indication of how well they have done. This assessment strategy, which was established after the last inspection, is being replaced by a system that is more closely linked to how well pupils have done, following a review by the co-ordinator and the staff.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

106. The standard of work of seven year olds at the end of Year 2 is above the national expectation. Pupils make good progress through each year group. Those in the special needs class make good progress compared to their knowledge and understanding at the start of their time in the infants. They particularly enjoy making models, showing very good attitudes and behaviour; the standards they achieve in their work match the national expectation. The co-ordinator has focused the attention of staff very well on

the need to maintain the breadth of study outlined in the National Curriculum; as a result standards have improved since the school's last inspection.

107. In Year 1, teachers establish good skills such as cutting, folding and scoring paper and card, and mixing and measuring ingredients for food preparation. As a result, pupils in Year 2 are able to work on ambitious projects. For example, in a topic on food, seven year old pupils produced good evaluations of the quality of cereals available on the market, and combined ingredients to produce a cereal range of their own. They enjoyed this work greatly. They worked with enthusiasm on related tasks such as making a cereal box, creating an eye-catching design for the front, back and sides of the box and evaluating their own work. All pupils made cereal packets, which securely closed and opened, were of uniform shape and size, and were finished to a high standard. The quality of the finished products and their initial plans and evaluations were of a standard normally expected by the end of Year 3.
108. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory, and is usually good. In a good lesson in Year 2, pupils worked hard to solve a problem set by their teacher. Pupils were able to use their knowledge of an electrical circuit in responding to the challenge set them. Working in threes and fours they were asked to produce a model of a lighthouse with a working light at the top. Good organisation at the start of the lesson gave the pupils enough support to solve the problems they would face but left them with a number of difficulties to overcome through trial and error. Nearly all groups produced a good working model. A brisk session at the end of the lesson gave them all an opportunity to evaluate their models and point to areas for improvement. In a satisfactory lesson in Year 1, which was the start of a topic on vehicles, the pupils made good gains in learning the names of working parts of vehicles, such as the axle and chassis. They did not make as good progress in their drawings of their model vehicles because the teacher did not help them sufficiently to decide on which viewpoint they should take, and to identify, before they started to draw, exactly what they could see. As a consequence some drawings showed all the vehicles' wheels on one side.
109. The subject is very well led. A good emphasis on health and safety has been a current focus. Pupils' interest and enthusiasm are generated very well because of the carefully considered range of materials and topics. The co-ordinator has organised resources very effectively so that teachers' plans are well supported. A good action plan indicates the way forward for assessment, but does not identify improving teachers' knowledge of how to develop drawing in design and technology which would help move the subject forward even further.

GEOGRAPHY

110. The standard of work for seven year olds at the end of Year 2 is above the national expectation. Pupils make good progress in all classes. Those who learn more slowly, and those in the special needs class, make good progress compared to their knowledge and understanding at the start of their time in the infants because work is planned well to meet their needs. The co-ordinator has planned a very good programme of work for the whole school, which systematically develops pupils' skills, such as map reading and weather observations. Standards and pupils' achievements have improved since the school's last inspection.
111. The quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good. Lessons are often planned successfully around investigating the immediate locality. In the case of the younger pupils and those in the special needs class this starts with learning to record

information on a plan of the classroom. Teachers are skilful in helping pupils to understand that maps are drawn from an overhead viewpoint; as a result, a pupil from the special needs class could explain why a table in a classroom plan looked like a rectangle and the legs could not be seen. Pupils in Year 1 produce maps and plans of an imaginary 'Treasure Island'. Their work is of a standard expected by the end of Year 2. They draw the maps with care and already show an understanding of symbols and of how to use colouring to provide further information. In Year 2, a visit to a farming district 30 miles away gave pupils a good opportunity to compare features of a built-up area to that of a rural area. Good teaching meant that they could identify benefits and drawbacks to life in both localities using words such as 'isolated' accurately to describe life in a rural district. They noted that it would take a long time to get to school, but that children would have the benefit of larger spaces to explore in the rural area.

112. Teachers use a very good range of strategies to teach geographical knowledge and develop geographical skills and understanding when other learning is taking place. For instance, in Year 2, pupils visited the local church in religious education and the teacher marked the route they would follow on a map of the local area. An understanding of places around the world is developed well through an area in the classrooms being designated a 'Travel Agency'. In this area pupils choose their own activities and, as they do so, they familiarise themselves with the names, features, including the weather and position on the world map, of their 'holiday' destination. A visit to Storeton Woods, a local area of natural beauty, resulted in good learning in science, history and geography. High expectations of pupils' interest and enthusiasm are fundamental to the good teaching; pupils respond by listening attentively in lessons and working hard to produce maps, drawings and written work of a high standard.
113. The subject is very well led; this contributes significantly to the achievements of pupils. The teaching of pupils who learn more slowly and those in the special needs class is well thought-out and matches their needs. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and has gathered some very useful resources, including school-made big books to use during literacy lessons, which are word processed to a high standard, and relate to the local areas visited by the pupils. Careful monitoring of planning and pupils' work contributes to maintaining high standards.

HISTORY

114. The standard of work for seven year olds at the end of Year 2 is above the national expectation. Pupils make good progress in all classes. Those who learn more slowly and those in the special needs class make good progress compared to their knowledge and understanding at the start of their time in school. A very good programme of work for the whole school has been planned by the co-ordinator; this helps teachers provide interesting lessons that are well matched to pupils' levels of interest and attainment. This is a significant factor in ensuring that pupils make good progress. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.
115. Seven year old pupils have a good understanding of how to place events in order of when they occurred. This is because in the younger classes pupils are taught to use the vocabulary they need to do this and to understand the relevance of terms such as 'a short while ago' and 'a long time ago'. By the time they are seven years old, pupils can place events and features of everyday life into an historical framework. They can, for instance, when learning about writing implements, make a chart to show that a pen dipped in an inkwell would have been used 100 years ago, a fountain pen 50 years ago and roller ball pen in the present day. Teachers encourage pupils to express their opinions. One pupil made a very mature comment on life today: 'When the ink runs out

we throw the whole thing away.’ Teaching in the special needs class is very good. As a result, seven year olds in this class can record, in clear drawings and simple sentences, features of life in two periods of time. For example, they can show that a tin bath by the fire was used by many 100 years ago and today homes have a bath with hot and cold running water.

116. The quality of teaching is good overall and some lessons are very good. Pictures, artefacts, visits, visitors, videos, books, pictures and the Internet are all used effectively and contribute to pupils’ very good attitudes to their work and their keenness to answer questions or put forward their own ideas. Teachers provide pupils with good opportunities to record their work by writing, drawing or labelling a chart. This emphasis on recording helps pupils to improve the quality of their work. By the time they are seven years old, pupils who learn quickly can include aspects of their historical knowledge as they write imaginatively. In a very good lesson, a pupil, inspired by the teachers’ description of the squalor found in the hospitals at the time of the Crimea war, was able to write a letter, imagining that he was Florence Nightingale writing home to England. He wrote, ‘The place is like a chamber pot. It is disgusting.’ The pupil had remembered, from work done during a previous topic, the fact that sanitation had been quite different in Victorian times. This standard of writing is at a level expected by the end of Year 3.
117. The subject is very well led; this contributes significantly to the achievements of pupils. The co-ordinator has a love of the subject, which is communicated well to others. Resources are good and used effectively in high quality displays of pupils’ work, and through historical artefacts that teachers use to make lessons interesting. Planning is monitored well, and all staff work together to evaluate activities and the quality of pupils’ work in order to make improvements when needed. This review of work helps to improve pupils’ learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

118. The standards attained by pupils at the age of seven are broadly typical of those expected for their age. Teaching is good. The regular upgrading of resources, especially the new computer room, is giving pupils broader learning experiences with modern equipment. This represents a significant improvement in resources since the previous inspection. New resources have helped teachers provide better lessons, but it is too early to see an improvement in standards. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.
119. Teachers provide a variety of good activities for pupils, often by linking the activities to other subjects. For example, in Year 2, using computer software, pupils have created graphic designs to decorate the cereal boxes they have made in design and technology. In geography, Year 1 pupils have produced street plans of their locality, which enables them to draw roads, and ‘drag and drop in’ images of local buildings such as houses and shops. Throughout this work, pupils build up their skills of mouse control and icon selection, and confidence grows quickly.
120. In certain strands of the work, such as word processing, teachers introduce pupils to skills usually taught to older pupils. Pupils have a good knowledge of how to choose the style and size of font and use the scroll bars in drop down menus. More advanced skills are taught – for example, in Year 2 pupils have used the digital camera and, with help, are able to combine text and a photograph. Pupils enter information into the computer and print off a variety of graphs, thus enhancing their work in mathematics.

121. Parts of the curriculum need better balance. For example, teachers give insufficient regular attention to control technology to ensure that pupils build up their skills in small steps of learning. Pupils do not have the opportunity to build on their early experiences of using a programmable toy. However, all classes do have tape recorders to listen to and pupils are familiar with their controls.
122. The best learning occurs in Year 2, especially when pupils work in the computer room. Pupils have quickly learned how to log on, access software, maximise windows and prepare the computer screen. Parent helpers who have recently had training in the use of this resource are proving very effective in supporting pupils' learning. The new computer room provides the opportunity for pupils to access the Internet. Some pupils have had their first few experiences of logging on and accessing, for example, information about famous people.
123. There is better teaching in Year 2 than in Year 1 because teachers have more expertise and pupils use the new room. Recent training has improved teachers' expertise, but there is some way to go if pupils are to gain maximum benefit from the new resources.
124. In the one full lesson observed in the computer room, using graphic software, the teaching was very good. The teacher showed very good knowledge of the software and was therefore prepared for any pitfalls. Pupils were given very clear instructions such as how to use the 'go back' facility as a means of rubbing out. By the end of the session, pupils had produced some successful artwork, using a variety of toolbar skills, in the style of the artist Mondrian.
125. Pupils enjoy using the computers. They treat the equipment with respect. Even when they are not directly supervised, pupils work well. They try to resolve for themselves any problems they meet. Behaviour is very good. When working in pairs, they show good levels of co-operation and this has a positive effect on their learning.
126. Pupils in the special educational needs class make good use of the two computers. They are able to enter data to produce a graph and are adept at using graphic software to draw pictures. They often use specially designed software to improve their basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Teachers successfully use similar software, suitably adjusted to an appropriate level of difficulty, with pupils in Years 1 and 2. All pupils with special educational needs make good progress. On occasion teachers use the computers well for pupils with emotional problems who sometimes find refuge at the keyboard.
127. The co-ordinator, who has significant expertise in this area, gives good leadership to the subject's development. Good guidelines, outlining the programme of work and skill development, help teachers provide good lessons.

MUSIC

128. Pupils' attainment is now higher than it was at the time of the last report. It was satisfactory then, but as a result of a reorganisation in the arrangements for teaching, standards now exceed the national expectation in Year 2. In 1997, teaching was mainly conducted by the co-ordinator; the rest of the staff took little part. Now, there is a variety of approaches, but staff generally work in teams, planning together and taking turns to teach the lessons. In most cases classes are taught together in the school hall. This has the advantage of making the best use of the school building, the resources for music and staff expertise. As a result, pupils are proficient in basic musical skills and they work together well. For example, in Year 1, both classes work

very well with the special needs class. This is a very successful arrangement in which children who experience difficulties in learning are fully integrated with their peers.

129. A joint lesson in Year 2 demonstrated just how well the teamwork approach is working. Their respective teachers, a classroom support assistant and a volunteer parent, taught the two classes together effectively. Good teaching ensured that pupils were able to distinguish between the different groups of instruments according to how they might be played, for example strikers and shakers. The pupils exercised great self-discipline in not touching the instruments while the two teachers introduced a variety of well-chosen musical games to develop the pupils' appreciation of steady rhythm. The real strength of the lesson was the easy interplay between the two teachers. They held the pupils' attention very well from the start. The degree of self-discipline and control shown by 43 six and seven year olds, all of whom were playing different percussion instruments at the same time, was also a strong point.
130. Teaching is generally good; this has a positive effect on pupils' learning, their attitudes and the standards they achieve. By the age of seven most pupils know about the three main musical families to which percussion instruments belong. They can play them with confidence and a sense of rhythm. Their singing, in lessons and in assemblies, is tuneful and well pitched. Minor weaknesses in teaching that restrict learning are related to a lack of musical vocabulary being shared with the pupils and limited evaluation of singing in lessons. This sometimes prevents singing from being improved as the lesson proceeds. These, however, are relative drawbacks in otherwise successful lessons.
131. The school uses a published scheme of work that provides a good structure for the lessons. However, the co-ordinator knows that this scheme is weak in the way that it changes focus too quickly, thereby undervaluing the sequential build up of pupils' skill and knowledge. This prevents pupils' achievements being even higher. The co-ordinator acknowledges the problem and has already started to look at other material to supplement it. A good review of the subject's assessment procedures has taken place with a new, improved system having been decided upon.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

132. By the time pupils reach the age of seven, they have attained standards above the national expectation. The quality and control of pupils' movements are higher than is normally found at this age. Pupils receive a well-balanced programme of work including gymnastics, games and dance. This has a positive influence in pupils' learning and the standards they reach.
133. Teaching is generally good, largely due to the good knowledge of the subject that teachers possess. Teachers follow an agreed scheme of activities that challenges pupils both intellectually and physically. Lessons generally build well on the previous week's learning. Teachers pay close attention to health and safety issues and pupils have a good understanding of the need to gently exercise their muscles before and after vigorous activities. Teachers manage their pupils well; the overwhelming majority of pupils has very good attitudes to their work, and learn well.
134. Teachers often lead lively warm-up activities and model sequences of movements for pupils to follow. This ensures pupils warm up their bodies systematically and are learning a repertoire of exercise for themselves. Teachers use the resources well. A tambourine was used, to enable pupils to respond in an appropriate way to a high or

low note for example. The more complex resources, such as the large apparatus, develop pupils' skills of balance and control in a more challenging environment.

135. Teachers give pupils plenty of help and encouragement. They move around the activities making positive comments, which encourage pupils to try even harder. Teaching is even more effective when pupils are called upon to demonstrate to others and the teacher analyses the quality of the sequence to indicate what works well. Because of this, pupils learn good levels of co-ordination and control. They use their imagination to create patterns of movement that are pleasing to the eye – symmetrical star jumps from the tall apparatus, for example. However, far too few opportunities are taken to develop in pupils themselves the ability to act as 'critical friend' in order to raise standards even further.
136. Generally, pupils with special educational needs work well and there is no marked difference in their levels of performance compared to others. Pupils in the special needs class thoroughly enjoy their activities. The teacher also uses physical education lessons to reinforce work in literacy, number, teamwork and self-esteem. Pupils capable of more demanding work are included in lessons for Year 1 pupils.
137. This has a positive effect on their self-esteem.
138. The co-ordinator offers good leadership. The weaknesses raised at the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. The substantial amount of training for teachers has had a beneficial effect on the quality of movement. The school provides a country-dance club for the pupils, which adds an extra dimension to the subject.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

139. By the time they are seven years old, pupils achieve standards that are higher than expected for their age because the teaching they receive provides such a good balance of learning in knowledge about religions and opportunities to discover what pupils actually feel about the world. This represents an improvement from the time of the last inspection when standards were satisfactory. The improvement has been brought about by the introduction of a style of teaching that promotes reflection by the pupils about the world in which they live. For example, pupils in the special needs class were asked to think very carefully about a flower while listening to some contemplative music. This prompted one pupil to write afterwards, 'My flower is red. It is beautiful. It makes me happy.' Another pupil concluded, 'The flower gives us peace.' The sense of achievement gained by these children was enormous. They were rightly thrilled by their efforts.
140. The curriculum is well planned to include teaching about the major religions of Christianity and Hinduism. These topics are sometimes enhanced by wider opportunities. For example, when studying Hinduism, pupils learned some of the traditional Indian dances in their physical education lessons. The teaching is lively, full of challenge and linked well to the programme for personal, social, emotional and health. For example, in a Year 2 lesson devoted to the complexity of family relationships, the teaching successfully helped pupils to achieve a good understanding of the sister-in-law and brother-in-law relationships as well as discussing the way families speak to each other. Pupils' attitudes to this lesson were typically of other lessons in the school. They were caught up in the discussion and concentrated very well throughout.

141. Some lessons in Year 1 are more successful when teaching the factual elements of stories of Moses or Palm Sunday, for example, but contain minor weaknesses when promoting reflection for the first time. In one lesson, there were teething problems relating to the way that the girls did most of the talking and boys were not prompted to contribute enough. This limited the achievement of boys, overall.
142. The subject is very well managed in a way that has a direct influence in the way that lessons are planned. Consequently, lessons stick closely to the locally agreed syllabus, but are made very relevant for the pupils. The co-ordinator keeps examples of pupils' work to help teachers evaluate how well lessons have been taught and make improvements next time. This is a good system of checking the quality of pupils' learning. The assessment of pupils' understanding has been the subject of a useful review and a new system has been introduced that is designed to give teachers a much better picture of pupils' achievements over the year.