

INSPECTION REPORT

THISTLY MEADOW PRIMARY SCHOOL

Blaby

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 119956

Headteacher: Mr Mike Prideaux

Reporting inspector: Dr Mike Williams
19388

Dates of inspection: 21 – 24 May 2001

Inspection number: 194398

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary school
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Hospital Lane Blaby Leicestershire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr David Brewin
Date of previous inspection:	18 - 21 November 1996

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9712	Jan Barber	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and behaviour How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
15236	Morag Thorpe	Team inspector	Art Design and technology Religious education Foundation stage Equal opportunities English as an additional language	
3687	Godfrey Bancroft	Team inspector	Mathematics Information technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
10391	Val du Plergny	Team inspector	English Geography Music Special educational needs	How well are pupils taught?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Thistly Meadow is a mixed primary school in the village of Blaby on the outskirts of Leicester. There are 237 pupils on roll: 130 boys and 107 girls. About 60 per cent of the pupils come from the immediate locality and the rest from the surrounding communities, on the basis of parental choice. The school serves an area of mixed housing; its intake represents a wide range of contrasting backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of pupils on the special needs register is similar to that found in most schools. Children from ethnic minority groups make up a very small number of the school's roll, as do the children who speak English as an additional language. Attainment on entry is wide-ranging, with the majority of children entering the school with below average language and number skills.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Thistly Meadow is an increasingly effective school. It promotes very high standards in pupils' behaviour, attitudes to learning and personal development generally. Parents view the school very positively. By the time pupils leave the school, at age 11, educational standards, except in science, now match national expectations, and in some subjects exceed this level. High standards of teaching, sound educational provision, and a dedicated team of staff, provide the cornerstones for this achievement. As a result, the inconsistencies in academic standards evident in previous years have been greatly reduced. Apart from standards in science, and the occasional lack of suitable challenge for some of the older, more able pupils, pupils are now enabled to make good progress and achieve well. Pupils, like their parents, feel positively towards the school. Attendance rates are good. The headteacher's personal leadership has been an important factor in securing this good progress. However, if the school is to build further on this success, it will need to strengthen some aspects of its management. At present, the school provides sound value for money.

What the school does well

- Attainment in art and physical education throughout the school, and in history and music amongst the older pupils is good.
- Very high standards of learning are achieved by the reception children.
- A highly committed team of staff provide a lot of good and very good teaching.
- A climate is established in which children enjoy coming to school, feel secure and well supported.
- A strong and effective partnership with parents is in place.
- Very good attitudes, behaviour and relationships amongst pupils, have been achieved.
- The range of extra-curricular activities provided, and links with the local community, are very good.

What could be improved

- Standards of attainment are not high enough in science amongst the older pupils.
- A small number of the more able pupils at the top end of the school occasionally do not do as well as they should.
- The school's development planning tends to be too short-term and ignore longer-term thinking, and strategies, to raise standards.
- The assessment, monitoring and evaluation arrangements, including the roles performed by subject co-ordinators in these processes, are inconsistently implemented.
- Delegation of responsibilities to senior staff is not always effective in ensuring that key school priorities can be addressed appropriately and efficiently.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall, the school has made good progress since the last inspection, in November 1996. However, rates of improvement have been inconsistent, the best progress being made in the last two years. Strong features from the previous inspection, notably the school's very good support for, and response from, its pupils, have continued to prosper as a result of purposeful school policies and leadership. On the other hand, weaker features last time; standards of attainment in writing and mathematics, standards of teaching, and the arrangements for planning, assessment, monitoring and evaluation, have not enjoyed the same consistency of progress. Only since 2000 have the older

pupils begun to achieve standards of attainment in English and mathematics that consistently match national standards, as well as their own abilities. For the younger pupils, this improvement has been even more recent. The school's determination to raise standards provides part of the explanation for this progress. The impact of the government's national literacy and numeracy initiatives, together with the appointment of a completely new team of teachers to the lower half of the school, provide a further explanation. The quality of teaching is now consistently strong; no unsatisfactory lessons were observed during this inspection. The provision in English and mathematics is sound, and the assessment and monitoring arrangements are better, though still not consistent, or effective, enough across the school's provision as a whole. There is a continuing need to improve the school's management arrangements to ensure that they are consistently implemented and provide an effective means of evaluating the school's performance.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	All schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
English	D	E	B	A	well above average A above average B Average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	E	C	B	B	
Science	E	E	C	C	

The table above shows that standards improved significantly in the 2000 national tests in English, mathematics and science, particularly when compared to schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. Although the school performed less well in previous years in relation to schools nationally, in fact the number of its pupils reaching the national standard for 11 year olds steadily increased. However, the proportion of pupils doing better than the national standard remained consistently below the national average until 2000. Provisional indications from teachers' assessments for this year's (2001) national tests for Year 6 pupils show that last year's standards have been broadly maintained in English and mathematics, but not in science. Inspectors' findings reveal a similar picture. Their findings also show a fall in standards in science, which are below average. In the remaining subjects, standards are consistently sound or better; in physical education, art, music and history they are good. Most pupils achieve well, including those with special educational needs and pupils with English as an additional language.

Inspectors find standards by the end of Key Stage 1 (by age seven) to be sound, a finding endorsed by the teachers' provisional gradings for this year's Year 2 national assessments. This is a vast improvement since last year when the school's results were well below national averages. Similar levels of improvement are evident in the standards achieved in Year 1 and the reception classes. By age five, reception children exceed the standards expected for their age and make an exceptionally good start to their school lives.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good. Pupils are polite, respectful and considerate.

Personal development and relationships	Pupils' relationships, with each other and with adults, are very good. Pupils accept and discharge responsibility with diligence and maturity.
Attendance	The school has good levels of attendance.

Pupils are highly motivated and enjoy school, as evidenced in the school's good attendance rates. They behave well as a matter of principle not of sanction. Eagerness to learn is a hallmark of the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	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.

Four out of every five lessons seen during the inspection were good or better. A third of these lessons were very good or excellent (four lessons). This compares very favourably with other schools. A major strength of the teaching is the effective management of pupils. Pupils are expected to listen and to work hard, and they respond accordingly. In the most successful lessons, teachers are very precise about what pupils are to learn and the standards to be achieved. Planning is of high quality, with pupils of all abilities suitably stimulated and challenged, enabling them to make good progress. Throughout the school the teaching of English is at least sound and often good. In mathematics it is good overall. The teaching and learning of basic skills have benefited considerably from the implementation of the national literacy and numeracy initiatives. Most of the teaching in other subjects is good. The sound teaching would benefit from more targeted planning and assessment to ensure that all pupils are fully challenged and make appropriate progress. Occasionally, a few of the more able pupils do not achieve to their full potential.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Sound overall. The literacy and numeracy hours have been effectively implemented. Provision for the rest of the curriculum is at various stages of development, with planning for some subjects needing further attention. Extra-curricular provision is very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Individual education plans are well prepared and enable pupils to make good progress. Pupils are well supported by teachers and support staff.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Sound. Provision for the small number of pupils with English as an additional language is appropriate.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good provision for pupils' moral and social development; good provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development. The emphasis placed on pupils' all-round development, both as individuals and as members of a community, is very effective.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school possesses a strong caring ethos based on knowing its pupils well. Its assessment arrangements, for monitoring pupils' academic progress, are well developed in some subjects, and classes, but under-developed in others.

Parents play a significant part in the life of the school both educationally and financially. Both the home and the school place great value on these links, working hard, and successfully, to foster

children's learning. The school is equally successful in providing a wide range of sporting, cultural and other opportunities that significantly enrich pupils' educational and personal development. Good links with the community also help to foster and extend these activities. The school's arrangements for monitoring of pupils' academic progress are sound in English and mathematics. In most other subjects, a lack of consistency in practice from class to class makes it difficult to use assessment as a guide for establishing the overall standards achieved across the school, or to help future curriculum planning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Sound overall. The school is well led and administered on an everyday basis. Longer-term thinking and planning, though, is weak. Staff support each other well and work hard. Delegation of responsibilities to key staff is not always appropriate in ensuring that postholders can carry out their duties effectively and efficiently.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Soundly. Governors meet all their statutory responsibilities. They have good relations with the school and are effectively involved in its life and work. They, too, operate without a clear vision of the school's longer-term plans.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Variable. Pockets of good practice exist; for instance, in English and mathematics. Otherwise, arrangements for evaluating the school's performance are not effective enough.
The strategic use of resources	Sound. Principles of best value are effectively practised. The quality of learning resources is sound. A lot of the accommodation is good, but limited by an overall lack of space. Staff are suitably qualified and soundly deployed.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoy school and are well supported and cared for. • The school's policy of providing children with an "all round" education, and the rich range of extra-curricular activities and events. • The commitment of the teachers and headteacher. • The good quality of the teaching. • The high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work. • The value that the school places on its links with parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small number of the parents of younger pupils feel that the school does not provide enough activities outside lessons. • Some parents with pupils at the top end of the school feel that the classes are too large. • A few parents feel that their children do not get enough homework to do.

Inspectors endorse parents' very positive views of the school's commitment to its children and the strength of its caring and supportive culture. These are rightly seen as the trademarks of the school. Historically, class sizes have been on the high side in Year 6 as a result of pupil transfers into the school at this stage. This is largely outside the control of the school, though there are strategies that could be explored for lessening its impact which are within the school's control. Inspection evidence suggests that the amount of homework set is appropriate, but that this is unlikely to find agreement with all parents. Likewise, the school does its best within its available resources to provide pupils with a sufficient range of activities outside lessons.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. At the time of the last inspection, standards of attainment were reported as being broadly in line with national expectations. There were some exceptions. Standards were high in music, but below average in writing and mathematics throughout the school. Pupils' progress was largely satisfactory. At that time, children entered the school with broadly average levels of attainment.
2. The picture now is somewhat different. On the evidence of baseline assessments, a majority of children enter the school with below average language, number and social skills. Standards on exit from the school, on the other hand, were above average in English and mathematics, and average in science, on the basis of the school's test results for the most recent reporting year (2000). The simple equation, that standards have risen significantly since 1996, does not tell the whole story. The 2000 results represent a high point in the school's performance since the last inspection. They are not typical of the standards achieved between 1996 and 2000, albeit that these were steadily improving. A significant difference lies in the achievements of pupils capable of higher attainment. In the three years following the last inspection, the school consistently achieved at below national average levels for the proportion of pupils exceeding the national standard, despite having an academically average intake at entry to the school. This picture changed sharply last year with levels of higher attainment exceeding national averages in both English and mathematics. In science they were average.
3. Inspection findings for this year's Year 6 class, confirm the school's improvement at Key Stage 2 since 1996, but not quite at the high levels achieved last year, particularly in science. In both the 2000 and the provisional 2001 results, standards in science continue to lag behind those in English and mathematics.
4. Inspection judgements for standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 are:
 - average for English and mathematics;
 - below average for science;
 - good for physical education, history, art and music;
 - satisfactory for all other subjects.
5. Considerable improvements have been achieved in writing and mathematics, the weak areas last time. Pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills are now appropriate for their age, while their oracy skills remain good. They read to a sound standard, have a genuine love of books and make use of these effectively to research information for their work in lessons. Their writing is also of a sound standard, though too little use is made of the plentiful opportunities for extended writing arising in other subject areas. Standards in science are, as we have seen, not at the level they ought to be given pupils' achievements elsewhere. The lack of higher attainment in science is a significant weakness. In other subjects in Key Stage 2, standards are consistently sound or better. Again this shows an improvement since the last inspection. Music in particular has maintained its prominence in the school, now being further strengthened by an impressive range of extra musical activities and events. Indeed, high standards in the expressive arts are becoming an increasingly noteworthy feature of the school's performance. Much of this is due to the interest, expertise and energies of individual teachers, well supported and encouraged by their colleagues. A similar determination to raise standards in information technology through effective development planning has paid off. Pupils possess sound skills and use these appropriately to support their work in other subjects.
6. Further down the school, standards of attainment follow a similar pattern. Indifferent, and often inconsistent, levels of performance since 1996 have been replaced by recent improvement. However, in contrast to Key Stage 2, these improvements have been more recent, more consistent and more dramatic. The reason is easy to pinpoint; a newly appointed team of very effective teachers for both the Key Stage 1 classes, and reception. In the year prior to their arrival (2000), the school's Key Stage 1 national assessment results were:
 - well below average in reading;

- well below average in writing (previous years had been average or better);
 - below average in mathematics;
 - above average in science (on the basis of teachers' assessments).
7. Inspectors find much higher standards now. These are:
- slightly above average in reading;
 - average in writing;
 - average in mathematics;
 - average in science.
8. This improvement is confirmed by the provisional results achieved by Year 2 pupils in the recent national tests and assessments. Bearing in mind these pupils' lower than average attainment on entry, this represents good progress, as well as endorsing the very good quality of teaching and learning witnessed during the inspection. In reading, writing and number, pupils demonstrate sound skills and increasing confidence. A good proportion of the pupils are already well ahead, including pupils in Year 1. The ability of pupils throughout the key stage to use these basic skills to help their learning across the entire curriculum is both noticeable and encouraging, including the use of information technology skills. Attainment is good in art and physical education and sound in all other non-core subjects at Key Stage 1.
9. Standards of attainment in the reception classes are also much improved. Judged to be generally sound in 1996, they are now better than this. Current inspection evidence indicates that children exceed the nationally expected standards for children of their age. They now make a very good start to their school life, thanks to the high quality of provision and teaching they receive.
10. In line with other pupils, those with special educational needs and the small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language, make good progress. Greater attention to the progress of specific groups of pupils has also enabled the boys to improve their performance in English. For several years, the school's national test results showed significant levels of underachievement by boys, with no successful intervention being made by the school to halt this trend. This has now been rectified.
11. In summary, the school's progress over the last four years has been mixed, and somewhat inconsistent, despite the overall evidence of improvement. The school's national test results for pupils at age 11 in 2000, and those provisionally indicated for 2001, show that pupils are capable of high attainment. In English and mathematics the school's statutory targets were very comfortably met in 2000 and are likely to be so again this year. Yet the target agreed for English in 2000 ultimately proved to be lower than the average achievement for schools nationally. This and other evidence suggests that standards have not always been as high as they could have been.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. The pastoral care is a strength of the school. Pupils are keen to come to school. Most pupils apply themselves well to their work and answer questions readily. They participate willingly in discussions and other forms of co-operative working. In many cases they clearly enjoy what they do and teachers rarely need to urge individuals to pay attention. Pupils show interest in ideas which are new to them and demonstrate a good degree of tolerance towards the expression of views they do not share.
13. Visitors are greeted with courtesy and pupils exhibit a friendly, welcoming attitude. Whether inside or outside the school building, pupils almost always behave in a sensible and polite manner and give evidence of very good relationships with other pupils and adults. These relationships are exemplified by pupils' enthusiasm for their classmates' successes.
14. Pupils respond positively to the system of rewards. Certificates to commend effort throughout the week are awarded to a number of pupils each Friday in assembly. Pupils respond well to the wide range of opportunities to take responsibility within the school community. These range from advising on issues of significance for pupils through a school council, working with the school animals, selling the eggs, taking part in fund-raising events and raising money for charity. The animals are particularly well cared for by the Year 6 pupils who take their

responsibilities very seriously. The cafeteria system for meals at lunchtime involves pupils paying cash on a daily basis. Even the youngest pupils take responsibility for their own money. Opportunities for taking responsibility and showing initiative for their own learning and self-improvement are being developed by the use of individual targets. These are agreed in consultation with parents, teachers and the pupils themselves.

15. The school's policy of developing the whole person is effective in providing opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own feelings and experiences and appreciate those of others. This is particularly helped by class discussions (Circle Time). As a result, relationships at all levels are warm and friendly and high standards of behaviour are consistently maintained. Pupils know right from wrong, are respectful of others and have a strong sense of community. There have been no incidences of exclusion from the school in the last year.
16. Attendance, at over 95 per cent, is good. There is minimal unauthorised absence. Every effort is made by the staff to ensure pupils attend regularly. Pupils are punctual and the registration time is well used, allowing for administration tasks while pupils settle down to do the work set. Registers are completed efficiently and in accordance with statutory requirements. The good levels of attendance and punctuality help all pupils to have full access to the curriculum and contributes to their attainment and progress.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

17. Teaching in the school is good overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. Approximately one-third of the lessons seen were very good or excellent which is a high proportion by national standards. The strongest teaching was found in the reception classes and Key Stage 1. All but one of the lessons in the reception classes were very good or better; the other was good. Only one lesson seen in Key Stage 1 was less than good, with nearly half the lessons judged to be very good, and in one case excellent. In Key Stage 2 the teaching is good overall. However, most of the satisfactory lessons, as opposed to good or better lessons, were found in this key stage. The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, is in line with the teaching of the rest of the pupils.
18. This is an immense improvement on the standards of teaching observed at the time of the last inspection when virtually one-quarter of all lessons seen were judged to be unsatisfactory. The weaknesses then; low expectations, unclear learning objectives, weak subject knowledge in some subjects and poor use of assessment to inform future planning have all disappeared from the stronger teaching. On the other hand, where teaching is only satisfactory there is still room for improvement in the use of assessment and in the formulation of learning objectives that meet the full range of learning needs in the class and challenge all pupils. This sharp improvement in the school's teaching standards clearly owes much to the appointment, at the beginning of the year, of a completely new team of staff in the reception classes and Key Stage 1. Two are newly qualified teachers. Nonetheless, teaching has also improved in Key Stage 2 since 1996. It is now far more consistently effective than it was then.
19. Good subject knowledge informs virtually all lessons. Teachers introduce new topics confidently, thoroughly, and in the best lessons, very clearly. This is particularly the case in English, mathematics, music and physical education. Teachers' knowledge has also improved in information and communication technology since the last inspection, as it has, too, in gymnastics and science – all weak areas of teachers' knowledge in 1996. The new national guidance for all subjects, and in some cases, national training initiatives, have widened teachers' knowledge and understanding.
20. Basic skills are well taught for most pupils, especially in the reception and Key Stage 1 classes. Good use of both the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies builds effectively on these. The best lesson plans are very clear about the learning to be achieved by all pupils, as for example, in a Year 1 science session which was meticulous in drawing on pupils' prior attainment and learning. Organised and planned on the basis of different ability groups, it included fieldwork, previously learned skills from geography and numeracy lessons, the recording of investigation findings, and a practical demonstration of how the computer could be used to present the same information. Consistently high expectations ensured that pupils made good progress and achieved well. In contrast, there are still traces in some lessons, notably in Key Stage 2, of the higher attaining pupils being under-challenged. The pace and

demand in a small number of lessons lacks the kind of sharpness and urgency that is now evident in so much of the school's teaching. A tendency to rely on the more able pupils to perform tasks set for the whole class, at a more advanced level, is not always successful.

21. A real strength of the teaching throughout the school is the management of pupils. Teachers are firm but fair. They have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and co-operation. They constantly indicate that they value pupils' views and contributions, and treat them with respect. As a result, pupils are well-motivated and discipline is not an issue. Examples of exemplary concentration and respect for class routines were plentiful throughout the inspection. A physical education lesson observed in Year 5 stands out in this respect.
22. Standards of teaching of pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language is in line with rest of the teaching in the school. These pupils are well supported. Individual education plans are effectively used by teachers when planning their lessons. Pupils' learning is well focused and the contributions of the support staff are good. Indeed, the partnership between teachers and support staff throughout the school is effective and adds positively to the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. Careful assessment and review of pupils' progress are strong features of the teaching of both of these groups of pupils. It is also a strong feature of the best teaching in the school where it is effectively used to inform the planning of future lessons. Again, this is more consistently evident in the teaching of the younger pupils. The quality of teachers' marking is good in all classes, with careful attention paid to raising expectations and extending pupils' learning.
23. Homework is used well to support pupils' learning. Pupils in both key stages are actively encouraged to take books home and do so with enthusiasm. Most subjects benefit from the allocation of homework tasks, with pupils frequently bringing in work which they have done at home that has not been set as homework.

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

24. At the 1996 inspection, the school's curriculum was judged to be sound. Stronger elements were the range of extra-curricular activities and the provision for pupils' social, moral and cultural education. Weaker elements were some aspects of planning and the provision for pupils' spiritual development. The stronger elements remain strong. Provision for pupils' spiritual development has improved significantly. However, curriculum planning, though sound overall, still has features that are in need of attention.
25. The quality of the school's provision, on the evidence of the current inspection, is:
 - very good for the reception children;
 - sound overall at Key Stage 1 and 2;
 - sound overall in English, mathematics and science, but with some unsatisfactory elements in science at Key Stage 2;
 - sound overall in the remaining subjects;
 - good for pupils with special educational needs;
 - sound for pupils for whom English is an additional language;
 - very good for pupils' personal development.
26. The school's curriculum remains broad and balanced. It is relevant and accessible for all pupils apart from a small group of higher-attaining pupils, for whom the provision occasionally fails to take due account of their prior attainment. Statutory requirements are met in all subjects and in sex and health education. The provision for religious education meets the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus.
27. Overall, the time allocated to the various subjects is appropriate. The strong focus on literacy and numeracy has not deterred the school from maintaining its commitment to the non-core subjects, especially the expressive arts. The provision for the latter is impressive in range and scale and has become a prominent feature in the school's reputation amongst parents and within the local community. Concerts, and other performances, put on in conjunction with the local family of schools and the community, significantly enhance the quality of the school's curriculum, as well as acting as a spur to pupils' outside interests and personal enrichment. The school's extra-curricular provision and its programme of educational visits also play a

similar role in this respect. Extra sport is well provided for. Visits to places of educational interest are directly linked to the curriculum and pupils' learning; for example, the visits to a synagogue and mosque to support work in religious education, and the numerous visits to places of historical interest to support the history curriculum. Residential visits to Shropshire and Norfolk play an equally valuable role in supporting the work pupils do in lessons; for example, the latter focuses on problem-solving and enhancing pupils' information and communication technology skills.

28. The curriculum for the reception children is highly effective in meeting the needs of young children. All areas of learning prescribed within the recently implemented national guidelines are impressively incorporated into teachers' planning. The very rapid progress children make, in many cases from a low base, highlights the impact of this provision, as well as the high quality of the teaching. A particular strength is the manner in which assessment is linked into the planning to enable teachers to make swift adjustments to the curriculum as and when they are needed. Links with Key Stage 1 are strong; for example, in relation to the literacy and numeracy strategies, thereby providing a firm base on which to build further learning when children transfer to Key Stage 1.
29. The curriculum in Key Stage 1 also benefits from effective planning. The provision for teaching the basic skills is good. Good teamwork, at both the long and medium-term planning stages, ensures that these skills are built up progressively and are then appropriately incorporated into all areas of pupils' learning. Where a topic approach is adopted, as in the planning for science, history and geography, the benefits of this teamwork are especially evident. The Year 1 science lesson that included carefully planned dependence upon, and extensions to, pupils' previous work and attainment in geography, mathematics, English and information technology provided an excellent example of impressive curriculum planning. Again, arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are effectively used to inform curriculum planning.
30. The quality of planning, though sound, does not quite reach these standards in Key Stage 2. Basic skills continue to be given high priority through the literacy and numeracy hours, but are not so consistently incorporated into other areas of pupils' learning; for example, opportunities for developing pupils' creative writing skills are often missed. Nor are all teachers adept at presenting pupils with opportunities to evaluate their own progress. Plenary sessions in numeracy and literacy lessons are sometimes planned as occasions to tell pupils what they have learned rather than invite pupils to consider this for themselves. Nonetheless, there are lots of examples of very effective planning where content and skills are carefully harmonised to enhance learning across a range of different subjects; for example, in design and technology, art, history and religious education. However, there is a tendency for this good practice to be centred around individual teachers, or groups of classes, rather than extend consistently across the key stage.
31. All planning in the non-core subjects in Key Stage 2 is based on nationally produced schemes of work. The best planning, as noted above, has effectively adapted the scheme's content to meet the specific needs of Thistly Meadow. In some subjects this has not been so successfully achieved, notably in science. Although the national scheme is duly followed, the guidance for ensuring that the content and skills to be covered in each class addresses the full range of pupils' needs is not working properly. Inadequate assessment arrangements in science do not enable teachers, or the subject co-ordinator, to obtain the information needed to address this shortcoming. Where this happens in other subjects, its full effects are frequently masked by the particular interests, and strong teaching, of individual teachers; as for instance in history where the planning and teaching reveal some fairly sharp contrasts in approach to this subject.
32. There is good curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs. Appropriate procedures are in place for identifying and assessing the needs of these pupils. Carefully constructed individual education plans have been drawn up for all pupils on the register. Specific and achievable targets are identified to help teachers and learning support staff plan for their needs and assist them in their learning. Support for pupils for whom English is an additional language is appropriate and meets their needs effectively.
33. The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is good, both as a component of the school's curriculum and as an aspect of the school's guidance and support systems. For example, science lessons provide a strong basis for teaching health-related issues. This provision is well linked into the school's broader curriculum for promoting pupils' personal

development. At the time of the last inspection, the school was already doing this well in terms of pupils' moral, social and cultural education. This remains the case. Each of these areas continues to be a strong and effective feature of the school's aim to provide pupils with a good "all round" education. Such innovations as the introduction of a school council have served to strengthen pupils' awareness of their social responsibilities. Likewise, the very good attention paid in religious education lessons to other faiths, with direct reference to local minority cultures, extends significantly pupils' awareness of, and attitudes towards, the diverse society in which they live. In contrast, provision for pupils' spiritual education was identified as a weakness at the last inspection. This is no longer the case. The provision is now good. Assemblies play a valuable role in promoting pupils' spiritual awareness and growth, as do the religious education lessons.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

34. Overall, the school provides effective support and guidance for its pupils. However, the formal monitoring of pupils' progress varies in quality and effectiveness. Pupils' behaviour and attendance are well monitored, as is the progress of pupils with special educational needs. Their records are thorough and enable them to make good progress. Similar attention is paid to monitoring and supporting the learning and progress of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Such effective record-keeping is less consistently in place for the rest of the pupils, but is compensated for by the very good knowledge that the school has of all its pupils.
35. The school works hard, and very successfully, to promote a secure and caring learning environment where all children are valued as individuals and where their needs are met. Staff are accessible to pupils, with whom they have good supportive relationships. Staff know their pupils well and have a clear understanding of their emotional and social strengths, and their needs. The latter are dealt with informally and effectively by class teachers or support staff when necessary. Class teachers provide very good role models. Liaison with support agencies is also good; regular visits are made by the school nurse and other agencies. The nurse's availability on a regular basis to meet parents to discuss matters of concern is much appreciated by the parents.
36. The working environment is safe and pupils are well supervised at work and at play. At lunchtimes the school midday supervisors organise a rota system so that they get to know all pupils well and the older pupils look after the younger ones. The school acts sensitively in enabling any pupils receiving free school meals go to pay in the same way as the others. The procedure is carried out discreetly. The school's 'Living Together Code' ensures that every opportunity is taken to promote respect for each other, the building and the surrounding environment and to ensure safety. A copy of this code is sent to all parents at the start of each academic year.
37. The thriving after-school and lunchtime clubs include chess, various sports, choir and orchestra. The pupils are very enthusiastic and several members of staff not only take the clubs but join in as well. When the necessary expertise is not available within the school community the school employs someone from outside.
38. The headteacher is the named member of staff to undertake the liaison required by legislation for child protection. He is trained in this area and well informed. There is the necessary documentation on policy and guidance for staff which is brought to their attention annually and updated when necessary. All the staff are aware of their responsibilities in this area. Any incident is managed in accordance with county child protection procedures.
39. As noted earlier, the arrangements for monitoring of pupils' academic performance are of variable quality. This was an area for development identified at the last inspection. Some progress has been made. There is good practice in English and mathematics where the procedures recommended by the national strategies for these subjects have provided clear structures for teachers to use. The use of similar structures, as part of the nationally recommended schemes of work for the remaining subjects, is at an earlier stage of development. At present, the evidence used for monitoring pupils' progress over time in many of the subjects taught is too imprecise and uncoordinated to be effective. The school is in the process of developing a tracking system that will provide much clearer information about individual pupils' performance and progress as they move through the school.. The

introduction of this system was identified as a priority in the school's development plan two years ago.

40. Shortcomings in the overall arrangements for assessment also limit the scope of most subject co-ordinators to use assessment information to guide curricular planning. Teachers assess pupils, keep records and present parents with confident reports about their children's progress. However, for subject development purposes, and for evaluating achievement at a school rather than individual pupil level, these assessments are frequently unmanageable and relatively inaccessible. Again, the new tracking system will take care of this shortcoming. In the meantime, the school's arrangements for linking assessment and curriculum planning are inadequate in many subjects.
41. The effects upon target setting are similar. As noted above, targets are set for pupils. However, these are recorded in the children's work books and no consolidated school or class record is kept of them. Inspectors were unable to find evidence of how the achievement of pupil targets are monitored so that teachers, and the school, are able to assess strengths and weaknesses systematically and incrementally as pupils move from reception to Year 6. Again teachers compensate for these deficiencies by knowing their pupils very well and through discussions with other teachers. Though an invaluable means of trading information, too great a dependence on verbal communication for such purposes is very wasteful of teachers' hard-pressed time.
42. In summary, therefore, the school's support and guidance procedures reflect the school's considerable strengths, but also its least effective aspect. Pupils' achievement is unquestionably assisted by the very high expectations that the school has of pupils' attitudes towards learning. This is evident in all classrooms and in the immense pleasure that pupils derive from school. On the other hand, the lack of more systematic arrangements for identifying strengths and weaknesses limits the school's capacity to capitalise fully on this achievement. Where such arrangements are being implemented more successfully, as for example, with the younger pupils, the standards of attainment and quality of learning are significantly improved.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

43. The school's partnership with its parents was a strength in 1996; it remains so. The part parents play in the life and work of the school continues to make a significant contribution to pupils' progress and attainment.
44. The school's "open door" policy is rooted in a genuine desire to encourage parents to become fully involved in the life and work of the school. The headteacher, in particular, is proactive in this regard. As a result, a number of parent helpers provide valuable support to teachers both inside and outside the classroom, especially with reading. The school consistently signals its commitment to parents; for example, through the quality of the prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents. Both are informative and well presented. Parents of new pupils are all sent a prospectus. Other effective links are provided through regular newsletters, as well as a regular column in a local community magazine.
45. Equally effective are the opportunities provided for parents to become involved in supporting their children's learning at home. Formal open meetings are held every Monday when a few parents meet the teachers to discuss their child's progress; others may come if there is a need to. These along with detailed and informative annual progress reports are much appreciated by parents. The school has also held parents' evenings to introduce aspects of the curriculum; for example, the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Parents are provided with information about what pupils will be taught during the year. This is again found helpful by parents who are, as a result, able to support their children with their studies. The frequency with which pupils bring work to school that they have done, or researched, at home is evidence of the benefits of the partnership.
46. Induction procedures for pupils first attending school are well established and effective. Two detailed, user-friendly documents about starting school are particularly helpful to ensure a smooth transition. The effects are highlighted in the way children in the reception classes quickly settle into school. At age 11, almost all pupils transfer to Leysland High School. This transfer is helped by strong ties between the two schools. The headteacher and senior

members of staff of Thistly Meadow hold regular meetings with their counterparts at the senior school and with other members of their cluster of schools.

47. The thriving School Association raises considerable funds for the school, enabling extra equipment to be bought for the school. Not only have parents raised the money for the Millennium Garden, but many have actively given their time and effort to do the hard work involved in the project. Pupils gain considerably from these contributions. The Millennium Garden, for example, is used for musical events.
48. A small minority of parents feel that the school does not provide enough activities outside lessons for their children. Inspectors do not share this view. The school offers a very wide range of extra-curricular activities for a school of its size. The fact that the bulk of these activities are provided mainly for the older pupils may explain the source of this concern. However, the school has only a limited resource for this purpose. A small number of parents also feel that there is too little homework set for their children. Again, on the evidence available, inspectors feel that the school's provision is appropriate, that its homework policy is consistently implemented and is effective in supporting pupils' studies in lessons. Inspectors also realise that this policy is unlikely to satisfy all parents.
49. The school sets great store by its commitment to parents. This commitment is much valued by parents, who in turn greatly value the school's commitment to their children.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

50. Overall, leadership and management in the school are sound. The previous inspection report judged leadership to be clear and purposeful, and management of the school on a day-to-day basis to be good. However, weaknesses were found in a number of aspects, notably in strategic planning, in the systems for monitoring and evaluating performance and in development planning generally. The school is still well led and managed on an everyday basis. This is a strength. However, inspectors do not currently find leadership to be clear and purposeful in respect of its strategic functions and responsibilities. All of the weaknesses listed above persist, to a greater or lesser extent.
51. The strongest aspect of management is undoubtedly its effectiveness in establishing the very positive environment for learning that exists in the school. Most of the credit for this must go to the headteacher who involves himself in all aspects of the life of the school. In this, he is well supported by the deputy headteacher and a team of professional and committed staff. Between them they have produced a strong sense of partnership with parents, governors and the local community. The distinctive ethos of the school, so much appreciated by parents, is the result of highly effective management practice and good personal leadership. The school's goals in respect of this aim are clear, well articulated through the school's policies and implemented through carefully considered strategies involving the entire school community, including the pupils.
52. The least successful aspects of management are still development planning, and assessment, monitoring and evaluation. Some progress has been made; for example, in reducing the amount of priorities in the annual development plans in order to be clearer about the school's principal development targets. Even so, the processes by which the school's strengths and weakness are identified, acted upon, monitored and subsequently reviewed, continue to be too fragmented and unsystematic. When the objectives to be pursued are clear and supported by external guidance, action and progress are appropriate and effective; for example, in responding to the need to strengthen the school's information and communication technology provision, or to implement the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. In other instances, particularly when external guidance is not provided, the school's development planning is less decisive. For example, monitoring and evaluation issues have appeared as priorities, in one form or another, in each of the school's action plans since the last inspection. Progress is not regularly and formally reviewed in published form. When it is, as in the preface to the 2000/01 annual plan, it focuses on what has been done rather than the impact on standards.
53. This situation is not assisted by the continued lack of strategic thinking to inform the school's shorter-term planning and to provide a framework for evaluating progress towards the achievement of longer-term goals. There is still no free-standing strategic plan which identifies the school's vision for improving performance over the next three or four years, based on the

school's own particular circumstances and educational context. Development planning tends to be reactive and piecemeal in approach, and not sufficiently linked into a coherent set of strategies that anticipate future goals.

54. The effects of this approach are also reflected in the functioning of the senior management team and the subject co-ordinators. They provide a hardworking and committed team, but not a consistently effective one. In too many instances key staff are not in a position to discharge their functions adequately. For example, the deputy headteacher, as well as teaching a class full-time, has a huge range of responsibilities many of which could easily be delegated to other staff; for example, mentoring the new teachers and producing the school's timetable. The result is that he has insufficient time to focus on a major responsibility, namely to assist in managing the school's curriculum, which is in a state of extensive review at the present time. A lack of effective assessment systems in many of the subjects further limits his capacity to evaluate the overall quality of the curriculum.
55. Similar tensions are to be found in the subject co-ordinator role. Some co-ordinators are given time to monitor teaching in their subjects, others are not. Models of good practice, for example, in English and mathematics, are not extended to all subject areas; nonetheless, each subject co-ordinator is expected to monitor and evaluate standards in their subject. Insufficient progress has been made to rectify this deficiency since the last inspection, albeit that the implementation of the government's new performance management requirements should take care of this. The headteacher has for some years undertaken regular monitoring of teaching. This responsibility will now be spread more widely amongst senior staff as part of the school's performance management arrangements. Similarly, more comprehensive and manageable systems for tracking pupils' progress are in the process of being implemented. This should enable senior managers and subject co-ordinators to discharge their quality assurance responsibilities more efficiently and effectively in the future. At the moment, however, this area of the school's management is unsatisfactory.
56. Governors continue to play an active part in the life and management of the school. Although many are new to the governing body, they have been quickly and effectively integrated into the various committees that underpin the work of the full governing body. They meet all of their statutory responsibilities and give good support to the headteacher and staff. Governors play an increasing role in monitoring standards and in helping to formulate the school's annual development plan and associated budget. Financial planning is good. However, their role as partners in shaping the direction of the school suffers from the absence of a long-term plan for the school. Likewise their capacity to evaluate the school's performance across the full range of its academic provision is weakened by the school's own deficiencies in this area. Within these constraints, governors carry out their duties responsibly and efficiently.
57. The school has an income and expenditure per pupil that is in line with that found in most schools. Principles of best value for money are effectively adopted. Specific grants are appropriately targeted; for example, the funds for supporting the school's special educational needs provision and the grants received for enhancing the school's information technology provision. Administration within the school is thorough and efficient. The school office is well run and provides a welcoming and positive interface for visitors. Increasing use is made of new technologies to keep records and accounts, and to track pupils' progress. Financial administration is sound.
58. Overall, the school has a sufficient number of teachers to match the number of pupils on roll. Year 6 has traditionally had a larger number of pupils on roll than other classes due to the transfer of pupils into the school at this point in order to transfer to the local secondary school at age 11, rather than at age 10, as is the case with some nearby High Schools. Though some parents register their unease about the effect of this bulge on standards, there is no compelling evidence to suggest that this is the case. Consideration of alternative methods of organising the teaching for these pupils in order to reduce the size of the group, for some lessons/subjects, has not been undertaken by the senior management team. Teachers are appropriately qualified and provided with opportunities to identify their own professional needs. The newly qualified teachers have been well supported. The quality and sufficiency of ancillary staff are satisfactory. Unlike at the time of the last inspection, support staff in classrooms are well deployed and their contributions add significantly to the effectiveness of pupils' learning. All members of the school community are especially well supported by the headteacher.

59. The quality of the school's accommodation is satisfactory overall. There are good features, not least the attractive and spacious school grounds. In some instances classroom space is rather cramped. It includes the use of two demountable classrooms neither of which is comfortable in times of extreme weather conditions. Storage room is minimal. On the whole, the school is adept at making the most of its limited space. The library accommodation is adequate, as is the accommodation for information technology, though this tests the school's ingenuity in creative planning to the limit. Less satisfactory is the science room, housed in one of the demountable classrooms, which is drab and does not convey positive messages about the subject. The outside play area for the reception children is also in need of development. In contrast, the Millennium Garden, constructed in the school grounds, is a particularly attractive feature and conveys very strong messages about the school's concern for the environment. Similar concern is reflected in the care taken by the caretaker and cleaning staff to keep the school clean, tidy and welcoming.
60. The sufficiency and quality of the school's learning resources are sound overall. There are good aspects; for example, in the resource provision for music and for physical education. In contrast, the provision of wheeled toys for the reception children is unsatisfactory. The library stock, considered inadequate at the last inspection, is now sound, though there are still too few non-fiction books for the older pupils. Upgrading and strengthening of the school's computing capacity since 1996 has been impressive. Well directed targeting of the school's budget has enabled this to occur.
61. The school now gives very sound value for money. It receives an average income per pupil. Attainment of children on entry to the school is below average overall. At exit from the school, attainment is average compared to similar schools. Pupils demonstrate high standards of personal development and very positive attitudes to learning. They now experience good levels of teaching and a sound curriculum.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

62. In order to extend further the good progress made in raising educational standards in the school, governors, headteacher and staff should:
1. Improve attainment in science in Key Stage 2, by:
 - identifying more precisely for teachers how the scheme of work for science is to be implemented in order to ensure that teachers' planning builds successfully on pupils' prior attainment, knowledge and skills, as they move from class to class;
 - responding effectively to the key issues for action listed below.

(paras. 3, 4, 5, 31, 109, 110, 111 and 112)
 2. Improve the quality of the school's development planning, and its arrangements for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing its performance, by:
 - producing a three year strategic plan to serve as the basis for governors and the school to provide a clear annual analysis and review of the school's achievement of its longer and shorter-term development plans;
 - implementing whole-school assessment arrangements, based on current good practice in the school, to provide the capacity to monitor and evaluate performance accurately and efficiently in all areas of academic provision;
 - establishing record-keeping arrangements that make better use of the school's assessment information for the specific purposes of:
 - setting achievement targets for individual pupils, groups of pupils and the school as a whole;
 - guiding individual teachers' planning on the basis that they have clear and manageable information about their pupils' prior attainment and progress through the school;
 - enabling the school to evaluate its overall strengths and weaknesses against precise targets, and evidence of progress over time.

(paras. 18, 31, 39, 40, 41, 42, 52, 53, 55, 56, 96, 102, 104, 112, 119, 124, 125, 135, and 160)

3. Improve the functioning of the senior management team and key staff, by:

- ensuring that the workloads and delegated responsibilities of the school's senior managers are appropriate and manageable in order for them to function effectively and efficiently;
- enabling all subject co-ordinators to carry out the full range of monitoring responsibilities assigned to them in their job specifications;
- extending the range of senior management discussions to include consideration of longer-term strategies for raising standards in the school, for consultation with governors and the school staff;
- clarifying the part played by the senior management team in translating the findings from monitoring reports, and other data-analysis sources, into whole-school policy and action.

(paras. 31, 50, 54, 55, 112, 119, 135 and 160)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	72
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	65

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6	29	48	16	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	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	237
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	21

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	48

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.2
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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	18	11	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	13	16
	Girls	8	10	10
	Total	21	23	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	72 (88)	79 (85)	90 (90)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	14	18
	Girls	9	9	11
	Total	23	23	29
at NC level 2 or above	School	79 (83)	79 (88)	100 (88)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	20	19	39

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	14	17
	Girls	17	15	16
	Total	33	29	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	85 (64)	77 (67)	87 (72)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	14	17
	Girls	16	16	16
	Total	32	30	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	82 (61)	79 (69)	87 (69)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	236

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.8
Average class size	26.3

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	115

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-01
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	£
Total income	403,336
Total expenditure	410,413
Expenditure per pupil	1711
Balance brought forward from previous year	24,231
Balance carried forward to next year	17,154

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	237
Number of questionnaires returned	110

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	72	27	0	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	65	32	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	69	30	0	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	42	48	6	4	0
The teaching is good.	68	32	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	65	29	6	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	71	25	4	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	74	23	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	55	45	5	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	64	35	1	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	60	35	2	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	48	34	12	0	6

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

63. There have been significant improvements in the standards of work seen, the quality of teaching and the quality of learning, for the school's reception children since the last inspection. Parents are highly appreciative of the high standards now achieved, and rightly so; this is an area of considerable strength in the school.
64. Children under five are currently organised in two reception classes. The majority of children have attended a pre-school playgroup. On admission to the reception classes, the majority of children attain standards which are slightly below average. By the end of the year they are likely to be achieving standards above those expected for their age.
65. Nearly all aspects of the provision for reception children are very good with some excellent features. Strengths are in the very good teaching, challenging expectations, the enriching curriculum and the good use of on-going assessment. The rigorous planning, caring environment, excellent teamwork and very high quality relationships between teachers, support staff, children and parents, all make a strong impact on the motivation of the children and lead to very good rates of progress. All groups of children are effectively catered for, including those with special educational needs, those capable of higher attainment and those for whom English is an additional language.
66. Children benefit from the very effective procedures established at the beginning and ends of the school day. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to share in the day's activities with their children before registration. Likewise, teachers' caring attitudes, as they converse with parents at the end of the day, coupled with the excellent use of the home/school reading record book to enhance home/school links, all help to make the children feel secure. Children respond extremely well to the friendly, caring and well-structured learning environment. They greatly enjoy school.
67. The curriculum is broad, balanced and enriching, and is firmly rooted in the nationally prescribed guidelines for reception-aged children. The very effective assessment systems, together with the recording of the context in which children have attained particular levels, are excellent feature of the provision. They have a direct impact on the curriculum provided for each child and for the different groupings of children.
68. Teachers have benefited from good mentoring from the deputy headteacher, attendance at professional training events and the support of staff generally. They are a well co-ordinated team with strong and effective links with Key Stage 1 staff. Overall, the teaching is of consistently high quality and has made a significant impact on the standards now achieved with the reception children. Both teachers are newly qualified. They are well supported by the classroom assistants. As a team, they provide a stimulating and exciting environment for young children.
69. The only areas of provision that are not currently satisfactory relate to aspects of the accommodation and resources. Although children benefit from fixed apparatus and a safety play surface underneath it, the slabs on the other play surface are uneven. The space available in the secure area becomes too congested at lunchtimes when all the children are playing together. There are insufficient wheeled toys for use either during physical activities or at lunchtime, and insufficient storage space for the resources which are required for children of this age. Other needs include, more activities for small groups, clothes for dressing up and role-play, and dolls representing different cultures and faiths.

Personal and social and emotional development

70. Attainment in personal, social and emotional development exceeds nationally expected standards. The teaching of personal and social development is very good. Specific attention is paid to enhancing children's learning and attitudes in lessons, as well as enhancing it through the many activities and responsibilities provided outside lesson times. Teachers are highly supportive and encouraging at all times. Routines are well established. As a result, children develop very high levels of awareness of good behaviour in all situations and they invariably

work and play alongside each other in a friendly and co-operative manner. The only occasions when pockets of restlessness exist, and minor accidents occur, is at lunchtimes owing to the congestion in the play area. In contrast, in physical education, children dress and undress independently and are very alert to safety issues.

71. Children are very polite and respectful to adults and to each other. They are given a wide range of tasks to do which they perform with enthusiasm and care. For example, before lessons, the dinner monitors have responsibility for counting how many children have ordered cooked lunches, those who have sandwiches and then calculate the differences. They discuss achievements with their teachers and understand the need to do the best they can while being considerate to the efforts of others. Children maintain high levels of concentration for long periods which significantly aids their learning.
72. Children are very well prepared for living in contemporary British society. They are involved in school assemblies and know about a wide range of Christian festivals and also festivals and customs associated with other religions. Examples of this provision include the display of the Hindu festival – Raksha Banda, the setting out of the role-play area as a Chinese restaurant and the inclusion of buying samosas in a mathematics lesson.

Communication, language and literacy

73. By age five, children are likely to exceed the standards expected in the national guidelines. Most are confident, articulate speakers who respond well to the teachers' and other adult helpers' questions. During register and beginning-of-the-day activities they recall activities accurately, sequencing events and speak with expression.
74. Children enjoy books and handle them carefully. They listen with high levels of concentration to stories, understand the sequence of a story and recognise humour and rhyming words. A very large majority read well and most achieve standards which are above those expected for their age. They read sentences confidently, using a wide range of reading skills and many do not have to rely on picture clues. These children read accurately, fluently and with understanding. Many accurately predict what will happen next in the stories and understand the difference between fiction, reference and poetry books. Parents contribute positively to their children's reading and this is reflected in the detailed responses from home. Teachers make detailed assessments of children's reading skills and the regularity with which children are heard to read. Support staff are very well integrated into the planning and implementation of lessons.
75. Children recount simple familiar stories such as Cinderella and the Gingerbread Man, and when telling stories they use a wide range of beginnings such as 'Once upon a time', 'In a forest'. They remember familiar stories so well that they can recite them quickly incorporating descriptions. Children are able to use sounds to build regular, familiar words, both verbally and in writing. They link sounds to letters. They know many of the more frequently used words and recognise familiar notices around the room.
76. Children know the letters of the alphabet. The large group of more able children write fluently in sentences and use capital letters and full stops, spelling most frequently used words correctly. Most children are able to form letters accurately and write their names. Their writing is consistent in size, legible and well formed. They have very good vocabulary, especially when using language from a book during literacy activities. They use accurate terminology in all other areas of learning.

Mathematical development

77. By age five, children are likely to exceed the standards expected in the national guidelines. Children count in tens to 100 and back in tens from 100 to zero. The more able children understand place value over 100. Most children know many addition facts to 10 and apply this knowledge well to money; for example, when engaging in games of buying and selling. They understand and describe quantities using terms such as 'more than', 'less than' and 'fewer' and repeat patterns of shapes, colours and numbers. They recognise quantities such as 'full', 'half-full' and 'empty'. Their development of mathematical skills and vocabulary is very good. They know a wide range of counting number rhymes and songs which they enjoy. They confidently name two-dimensional shapes such as circles, squares and triangles, and explain very clearly

why and how they differ. Children recognise and make symmetrical patterns and also recognise symmetry in nature; for example, the wings of a butterfly.

78. The teaching is very good. The impact of very well planned activities taught at a good pace add to the children's very good rates of progress. Teachers' awareness of the rate of children's progress is a strong feature of the teaching. Very effective assessment and record-keeping enable teachers to extend and develop the children's learning in small but well organised and purposeful steps.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

79. By age five, most children are likely to exceed the nationally recommended standards for their age in all aspects of knowledge and understanding of the world. Children are given a rich range of activities which enables them to learn about and appreciate the world in which they live. The scientific aspect of this learning is a particular strength. Children's knowledge of life and living things is very well developed, using investigational approaches to learn about themselves, their health, other aspects of animal life, the environment and the study of plants. Children know and identify the external parts of the human body and the importance of a healthy diet, exercise and the dangers of excessive sunlight and how to prevent this.
80. The teachers have begun to develop a school garden within the children's secure area. As a result, they understand some of the conditions required for growth and compare and contrast trees and flowers. Children know the names of many fish: salmon, cod and starfish. They understand that a magnifying glass allows close observation and they describe the shapes and colours of the fish in detail. They possess good manipulative skills which they employ very creatively to construct a wide range of boats and other vehicles; for example, one group designed a vehicle which could float, travel on land and in the air.
81. They compare and contrast the seaside with their own environment in Blaby. They know that many activities associated with the sea such as swimming, paddling and building sandcastles are special to certain areas. School-based activities, including their interest in the chickens, local visits and the imaginative journeys of Bernie the Bear result in children having a well developed understanding of the geography of the school, their routes from home to school, and their understanding of 'near', 'further away' and 'distant'. For example, they know that they live in Leicester which is in England, and that France, Italy and Spain are countries which are far away.
82. Children use computers for a wide range of purposes. Their skills in information and control technology are above those expected for children of this age. For example, they use a word-processing program to write their names, frequently use a computer for mathematical activities, especially number facts. The many ways in which children present their completed work make valuable contributions to the development of their literacy and numeracy skills. They demonstrate very good mouse control when using art programs and creating pictures in the style of Seurat. They use fabric, card and paper for a range of activities and make greetings cards. They classify equipment in school and at home according to many characteristics. For example, they know that switches control certain machines such as a video recorder, CD player, washing machine and computers. They use the computers and cassette players independently and can print their artwork.
83. The quality of teaching and planning in this aspect of children's learning is very good. The range of activities and topics covered ensures that the children have wide experience and develop a good understanding of the world around them.

Physical development

84. By age five, children are likely to exceed the standards expected in the national guidelines. The quality of teaching is very good and the available resources are used very effectively. In a physical education lesson observed, children used the space in the hall very well and the equipment with confidence and imagination. They use the fixed apparatus in the play area creatively; for example, when playing with the wheeled toys they showed a good sense of direction and avoided any obstructions. However, the lack of wheeled toys and the very limited space in which to manoeuvre them limit this aspect of children's physical development.

85. Children handle construction toys, pencils and paints with high levels of dexterity and accuracy. They make very good progress in the physical aspects of writing letters, words and numbers. When using small equipment, such as scissors, they show increasing control and attention to safety. During musical activities, children show very well developed co-ordination when playing a wide range of percussion instruments at the same time as following a pictorial music score.

Creative development

86. By age five, children are likely to exceed the standards expected in the national guidelines. They listen carefully to, and respond very enthusiastically to, music and know many nursery rhymes and number rhymes by heart. They sing with accurate pitch, showing understanding of the humour where applicable, and with good rhythmic beat. They know the names of a wide range of musical instruments, describe the sounds they make and use them appropriately for sound effects.
87. Children successfully experiment with a wide range of percussion instruments and know how musical sounds can be made and changed; for example, when children matched musical sounds and instruments to the different sea creatures being studied. A further strength is the wide range of techniques and skills acquired in painting and printing. Particularly good examples include drawings of sunflowers with a very high level of awareness of shape, tone line and proportion, in the style of Van Gogh. They discussed their work on pointillism and were proud to show their achievements, explaining the techniques and materials used. A particularly good lesson during the inspection involved children listening to, and appraising, the music 'Fingal's Cave', and knowing when the atmosphere of calm seas developed into more turbulent and then extremely turbulent seas. They listened with rapt attention and produced excellent quality work, confidently using swirls and dramatic colours to give the effect of turbulence. In another class, they used paint and then swirled combs through it to achieve a different dimension of turbulence.
88. Throughout the year the children's creative development is extended to such an advanced level that they apply their previously acquired skills to other aspects of learning, showing a level of maturity beyond their age. The excellent quality of planning indicates that both teachers realise the need for variation in the level of challenges and the need to repeat the elements which give children confidence.

ENGLISH

89. Standards of attainment overall are in line with national averages at the end of both key stages. However, standards in speaking and listening, and to a lesser extent in reading, are higher than they are in writing. This is in line with the school's provisional results in this year's national tests at both Key Stage 1 and 2, but not in line with the school's performance last year (2000). On the latter occasion, standards were below average in all aspects of English at Key Stage 1, and above average at Key Stage 2. The sharp rise in standards at Key Stage 1 this year is explained by the introduction of a completely new team of teachers. The higher standards at Key Stage 2 last year are attributable to the strength of that particular cohort of pupils.
90. At age seven, and at age 11, pupils' standards of speaking and listening are slightly better than the national average. Pupils learn to speak to a variety of audiences, and for a wide range of purposes, from the very early years. As a result they are confident, articulate, and aware that they may need to project their voices, or to make the information they give sound interesting. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 read their story books with lively intonation, and a good sense of character. By Year 5 pupils are able to persuade representative groups of the local community whether or not to close the High Street to traffic. In doing so, they show a great deal of awareness and a certain style. When pupils announce their musical compositions prior to audio-taping them, they do so in the style of good radio announcers. Occasionally pupils do not make the progress they should in extending their speaking skills when the demands made of them are not challenging enough. This is not the case with their listening skills where teachers are consistent and demanding. As a result, pupils listen very carefully to their teachers and the adults around them, and to each other. They value others' opinions, and expect to learn from each other. They have good aural memories, and some of the credit for this may come from the high profile which music has in the school.

91. The pupils' reading at the end of Key Stage 1 is slightly ahead of the national average. Here, the majority of pupils read their books accurately, fluently, and with understanding. They use the punctuation clues very well, and identify words which are spoken using the quotation marks. They are good at working out how to sound out unfamiliar words and to adduce their meaning from the text. The school has a good reading scheme, supplemented by books from the Key Stage 1 library. This provides a wide range of texts and helps the pupils learn about the different sorts of books available. Some pupils belong to the local library, and almost all pupils said they like reading.
92. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 read at average levels, successfully building on the positive foundations laid in Key Stage 1. They achieve greater fluency, as well as increasing the range of their reading. For instance, it is not uncommon for pupils to choose as their reading book a non-fiction book on a subject in which they are interested, rather than a story book. The hallmark of the better readers in Key Stage 2 is the lively expression of voice, and clear empathy with the characters in the books. Pupils understand what they read, and so are well able to predict or suggest outcomes, or twists, in the story. This is an advanced skill. Reading diaries are well used, and teachers usually keep careful records of books read. Most pupils in Key Stage 2 have reliable library skills, and are confident of finding information they need. Pupils in Key Stage 1 do not use the library, and therefore have a very limited idea of the classification system.
93. Pupils' writing is average for their age, and this represents an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils in Key Stage 1 write lively stories about witches, inspired by the story they are working on with their teacher. They write sentences in a 'holiday brochure' to persuade their friends to go on holiday with them. They also write lists of words, and spelling lists with particular sets of letters in the middle; for example, one class assembled a very long list of words containing 'ear'. In Key Stage 2 the pupils keep their own diaries and write letters, stories, and accounts of interesting events. In one history lesson, very lively 'postcards' were sent back to Finland from Greenland, written by Vikings who were busy exploring the western world. In a literacy hour, a Year 4 class used their persuasive writing skills to revise the school brochure. They were well aware of what to do, how to do it, and they successfully achieved some very persuasive arguments as to why prospective pupils and their parents should choose Thistly Meadow School.
94. Although there has been a significant improvement in the quality of writing in both key stages, there is still considerable room for improvement. Handwriting is given very good attention in the handwriting practice books, but often the skills refined here are not automatically used, or demanded, in day-to-day handwriting. Not all pupils use a dictionary or thesaurus, and too few pupils use their own wordbooks, relying on spelling from an often unreliable memory. The requirement for pupils to write longer pieces – accounts of scientific experiments, long stories, or playlets – is not yet a feature of the work of the school. Also, marking is inconsistent; some pupils have their spellings corrected, others do not. While the practice of regarding the pupils' diaries as all their own, and not marking them, may be understandable, it does little to help raise standards of attainment.
95. Overall, the quality of pupils' learning is good, and sometimes very good. They are predisposed to learn, as they behave very well, have very positive attitudes to most aspects of school, and cannot wait to get there in the morning. They enjoy their lessons, increasingly using the knowledge and skills they possess as a basis for further understanding. They are efficient learners, and particularly so where they are really challenged by the tasks set for them.
96. The quality of teaching is very good in Key Stage 1 and satisfactory in Key Stage 2. This rather significant difference is explained by the very good attention given in Key Stage 1 to matching tasks to pupils' abilities, and to trying hard to raise the attainment of the more able pupils. Although it is not a whole school system which is being used, secure assessment procedures are largely in place in Key Stage 1, and this gives teachers an accurate and on-going picture of what their pupils know, understand, can do, and need. This is less well-developed in Key Stage 2, at formal levels. As a result, the pace of teaching and learning is frequently slower and less assured than lower down the school.
97. The school has made great efforts to meet the demands of the last inspection report and in doing so to raise standards of attainment in English. It has been considerably aided in this

respect by the successful implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. This has provided a greater focus on the development of basic skills, and a framework for improved planning and teaching. Nonetheless, the planning would be still further improved in Key Stage 2 by making more use of the opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills in other areas of the curriculum. The library provision has been improved, but there are still too few non-fiction books for the older pupils.

MATHEMATICS

98. Attainment in mathematics is in line with national averages at the end of each key stage. This matches the school's provisional results in the most recent national tests (2001), and broadly matches the school's national test results last year (2000). Throughout the school, pupils achieve well and make good progress, including pupils with special educational needs.
99. At the last inspection, unsatisfactory standards in mathematics were identified as a key issue for action by the school. Effective action has been taken, albeit that the progress made has been uneven. Following a slowish start, standards have improved considerably in recent times. This is part due to the successful introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy, which has had a positive effect on much of the teaching and learning, and in part due to the impact of extensive changes to the teaching staff in the past year.
100. By age seven, pupils develop a sound range of basic number skills. They add odd and even numbers. They clearly know that adding two odd numbers always results in the answer being an even number. The highest attaining pupils show sound understanding of multiplying by single digit numbers and of counting on in threes, fours and fives. However, too many of them find this easy and are not subsequently challenged by harder tasks. The majority understand simple fractions and can calculate halves and quarters for numbers divisible by ten. Other aspects of mathematics are developing appropriately. For example, pupils are beginning to measure accurately with a ruler, calculate the change needed from amounts up to fifty pence, and weigh items with acceptable accuracy using kilograms.
101. By age 11, most pupils make good progress. They have a good grasp of the importance of place value and can multiply and divide using numbers up to one thousand. Higher attaining pupils show a good understanding of the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages, changing readily from one to another and calculating the equivalent value correctly. They know there are three hundred and sixty degrees in a circle and apply this knowledge effectively when calculating the size of segments in a pie chart.
102. Attainment and progress in the intervening years of the key stage is not as consistent. Eight year olds develop appropriate understanding of the properties of regular and irregular two dimensional shapes. They use such terms as edge, vertices and face appropriately in response to the insistence of their teachers to use the correct mathematical terminology. Sometimes, however, they find some of the mental work too easy; for example, when challenged to find the corresponding sum to thirty five divided by seven they found the answer with ease. The attainment of nine year olds in number falls below that expected for their age. Many of them take too long to undertake simple multiplications and divisions and often give the wrong answer. Higher-attaining pupils understand the importance of using brackets to ensure they get the right answers to calculations involving more than one mathematical procedure. However, often the numbers they are expected to use in these calculations do not provide sufficient challenge for them. Better practice is evident in the learning opportunities provided for ten year old pupils. Their teacher consistently asks them to explain how they have arrived at the answers to their calculations and many are sufficiently confident to stand in front of the class and do this.
103. Teaching is a strong factor in the higher standards pupils achieve and the good progress most of them make. Very good management is a consistent feature of all the teaching. In the main, teachers' planning is rigorous and challenging, especially for the younger pupils. Expectations are high and pupils are well motivated and confident. On the occasions when the more able pupils do not do as well as they should, this is because teachers do not push them sufficiently. Although the teaching has benefited significantly from the direction provided by the National Numeracy Strategy, there are still some aspects of practice that have not been sufficiently adopted consistently across the school. As noted above, the best teaching requires pupils to identify their strategies for calculating their answers. This is not practised by all teachers.

Likewise, at the end of lessons, the best teaching requires pupils to assess their own progress by asking them what they think they have learned. On the other hand, some teachers simply tell pupils how well they have achieved and give them little opportunity to assess their own learning.

104. Provision for the subject benefits from good leadership and from the support the subject leader provides for her colleagues. The curriculum is appropriate with suitable amounts of time allocated to each aspect of the National Curriculum throughout the school. Teachers mark work with comments that advise pupils on what they need to do to improve. They assess the levels attained by pupils regularly and accurately. As a result of these assessments they are in a position to set appropriate targets for pupils' future attainment and progress. For all but a few pupils, good use is made of this information to ensure that pupils achieve appropriately.

SCIENCE

105. At Key Stage 1, standards of attainment are in line with national averages; at Key Stage 2, they are below average. Given that standards at Key Stage 2 were judged to be average at the last inspection, it would appear that standards have slipped since then. This is not the case in absolute terms. The school's national test results in the intervening period show that standards have improved over the last four years, most noticeably in the 2000 national tests. However, on the evidence of inspection findings for the current cohort of Year 6 pupils, attainment is not as high now as it was last year. Previous shortcomings in the school's provision have been not been entirely eliminated.
106. The school's results in the Key Stage 1 (age 7) national assessments for 2000 were:
- very high for the proportion of pupils reaching the national standard (100 per cent);
 - above average for the proportion of pupils exceeding the nationally expected standard.
107. These results are higher than those achieved in previous years, particularly in the proportion of pupils exceeding the national standard for seven year olds. The present Year 2 cohort is not performing at quite this level, though the improved performance of the more able pupils has been sustained. Pupils have been well taught this year. Their completed work shows a sound knowledge and understanding of all aspects of the science curriculum. They understand the conditions for growth, in particular that living things need light and water in order to grow. They know what a fair test is, use simple scientific terminology to describe the processes of investigation and record their findings using tables and charts. This is well illustrated in the Year 2 experimental work on the growth of tomato plants. The more able pupils show increasing precision and accuracy in presenting their work – the presentation of the dandelion study is a case in point.
108. At Key Stage 2 (age 11), the school's national tests results in 2000 were:
- average for the proportion of pupils reaching the national standard;
 - average for the proportion of pupils exceeding the national standard;
 - average compared to schools of similar background.
109. These results are very much higher than those of earlier years, particularly in the proportion of pupils doing better than the national standard. The current Year 6 pupils are not doing as well. This cannot be explained on the basis of cohort differences as this same cohort of Year 6 pupils has managed to maintain the school's improved performance in English and mathematics. The significant difference in their performance in science, when compared to English and mathematics, is the lack of higher attainment by the more able pupils.
110. The majority of Key Stage 2 pupils have an appropriate, and sometimes good, factual knowledge of the topics they study; for example, of the properties of materials, growth, electrical circuits, sound and light. They talk confidently and accurately about the processes of investigation and engage in a wide variety of experiments across all areas of science. Presentation of their work, however, tends not to match the quality of their understanding and knowledge. The more able are not consistently challenged to use and apply the skills they possess in order to extend their performance beyond the average; for example, the higher

attaining pupils in Year 5 though achieving satisfactorily were not given sufficient chance to make even better progress when undertaking an experiment on sound.

111. Across the school as a whole, the teaching is good and has improved since the last inspection. It is stronger in Key Stage 1 where the lessons observed were consistently good and in one case very good. In Key Stage 2, the more effective teaching was found at the lower end of the key stage. While all teachers plan very thoroughly their planning is not of equal effectiveness. Planning in Year 1, for example, builds meticulously on pupils' prior knowledge and attainment, not just from their work in science, but, also from learning in mathematics, geography, English and information technology. One lesson observed was a superbly crafted piece of teaching and learning that had the pupils utterly motivated to achieve to their intellectual limits. A lot of the other lessons reflected similar characteristics without quite achieving the same pace, urgency and consistency of expectation. The sound lessons did not match the persistence, rigour and demand on a consistent basis for all pupils, notably those with higher levels of knowledge, skill and prior attainment.
112. Although the science curriculum has been strengthened since the last inspection, it still does not ensure that appropriate standards are consistently achieved across the school. Rigorous planning, linked to careful assessment, have successfully driven up standards in Key Stage 1 in a very short space of time. The Key Stage 2 team has yet to achieve this effectiveness. Assessment is not used systematically to identify strengths and weaknesses in either pupils', or the school's, performance. As a result, target-setting for individual pupils, and for groups and classes of pupils, remains under-developed. Monitoring of performance is largely conducted as a verbal exercise. The subject co-ordinator is not sufficiently engaged in the monitoring process, partly because the assessment information through which he might perform this task is unmanageable and not readily accessible, and partly because he is not given the opportunity to monitor teaching in the classroom. The lack of priority given to science in the school currently is highlighted in the uninspiring state of the specialist room provided for the subject.

ART AND DESIGN

113. Very few lessons were observed during the inspection. However, there was enough evidence from the work displayed in the corridors and in classrooms, together with photographic evidence, to show that standards are above those expected for both seven-year-old and eleven-year-old pupils.
114. The quality of learning is good and reflects high quality teaching. Good levels of improvement have been achieved since the last inspection. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress in the acquisition of skills and in their understanding of art as an expressive medium. Pupils cover a wide range of two-dimensional and three-dimensional art using a wide variety of media and techniques.
115. By age seven, particular strengths in pupils' attainment are their observational drawings, their awareness of shape and texture and their careful use of tone, light and shade. The observational drawings of musical instruments, by Year 2 pupils, are of a very high standard. Pupils draw shapes with confidence, use good techniques to show light and shade and possess a keen awareness of proportion. Throughout the key stage, pupils successfully apply their artistic skills to other areas of the curriculum; for example, design and technology where they show an awareness of texture and shape.
116. By age 11, pupils have continued to develop their skills and to extend their knowledge and understanding of observational drawing. They incorporate the use of grids or viewfinders in their compositions, showing an appreciation of perspective beyond their years. In a lesson focusing on the natural landscape and the local rural environment, they successfully selected a range of methods to communicate their observations, ideas and findings. Their consideration of the most effective techniques to use in their creative work presupposed a good knowledge of the work and styles of different artists, including local artists.
117. The quality of learning is good. Throughout the school pupils enjoy experimenting with a wide range of artistic media in producing exciting two and three-dimensional compositions. They successfully use a variety of cultural, multi-cultural and historical images as stimuli for their creative work. For example, art work based on the study of the Greek period showed a strong awareness of tone, line and texture. Their skills in observational drawing link well into their

learning and achievement in design and technology. Information and communication technology skills are also effectively incorporated into the art curriculum and enhance pupils' learning, especially the use of rotation and colours and studying the work of well-known artists such as Matisse. By the time they leave the school, pupils are able to look critically at the work of different artists in terms of their own and others' cultures.

118. The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned, with clear learning objectives. Effective questioning helps to develop pupils' recognition of the visual element of paintings, especially pattern, shape and form. Techniques are well taught. The interest and confidence shown by the teachers encourages pupils to achieve well. Pupils who attend the art club benefit from well-focused instruction; for example, in the skills of sketching.
119. The subject is well co-ordinated. The scheme of work meets National Curriculum requirements and enables teachers to plan for the progressive development of pupils' skills. The art co-ordinator monitors provision by evaluating teachers' planning, and assesses standards by scrutinising pupils' finished work. Although general assessment procedures are in place, they do not provide the teachers or the co-ordinator with sufficient information about the specific skills that pupils have acquired, or need to acquire. The provision for higher attaining pupils and those with special educational needs is good. The art club caters well for pupils who are particularly interested in this subject.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

120. At the time of the last inspection, attainment was in line with nationally expected standards for pupils at age seven and 11. Progress was satisfactory. Although standards remain in line with those found in most schools, they have improved since 1996. This is the result of a richer curriculum, more rigorous planning, higher expectations, a greater emphasis on the design and evaluation processes and improved teaching.
121. By age seven, pupils develop high levels of skill and accuracy, especially when cutting, measuring and joining different materials, as for example, in the Year 2 task of designing and making glove puppets for children in the reception classes. The finished products were designed, labelled and sewn with a very neat running stitch. Pupils were also expected to select the decorative features for the puppets from a wide range of materials, while ensuring that the materials they chose were as close to their original designs as possible.
122. By age 11, pupils progress to making more accurate drawings and diagrams for their products. They identify the materials required from a wide range of materials ranging from fabric to cardboard and wood to food, and decide on the sequence of construction. This is reflected in Year 6 pupils' work where they design and made slippers, taking into account the essential considerations facing manufacturers; the occasions when they will be worn, the age and interests of the customers and how these aspects impact on design, comfort and strength. Pupils consider the scientific properties of the materials they use and why they are the most suitable for the purpose. In a further Year 6 investigation on the topic of "shelter", pupils successfully consider why lightweight and waterproof materials are the most suitable for tents and why metal frames are needed for support.
123. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress. Understanding, and applying, the concept of "fitness for purpose" is a strong feature of their learning, not only in design and technology lessons but also in design-related work in other subjects; for example, in portraying Greek vases, or designing chairs, in art lessons. Year 5 pupils showed great invention in their range of designs for musical instruments and their awareness of health and safety issues. For example, one pupil incorporated a brass instrumental mouth piece into his final product in order to ensure that the surface was smooth. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a result of the good support they receive. Likewise, higher-attaining pupils achieve appropriately.
124. As noted earlier, improved teaching has played a key part in raising standards. Teachers use a standardised format for planning their lessons which ensures that the activities and investigations they plan are based on the progressive development of pupils' design, making and evaluation skills. Recording the progress pupils make in acquiring these skills is not as well developed and needs further work. Teachers manage pupils very well. They encourage them to take a pride in their work and set good examples in this respect. Pupils enjoy the subject

and are stimulated by the range and challenge of the tasks presented to them. They invariably produce work that is neat, accurate and indicative of their positive attitudes towards the subject.

125. Provision for the subject has been strengthened since the last inspection, as, for example, through the inclusion of food technology. The recently appointed co-ordinator has begun to incorporate elements from the nationally produced scheme of work in order to extend the guidance for teachers when constructing their longer-term plans. Although this needs further refinement, it is already proving its worth in terms of enhanced teacher confidence and increased coherence of the curriculum as a whole. Key areas for development are, extending the range of activities which require pupils to incorporate construction equipment and mechanisms into their work, and producing records of pupils' progress that take more account of pupils' skills development.

GEOGRAPHY

126. Only one full lesson was seen during the course of the inspection, but this, together with a careful scrutiny of the work done, is sufficient to give a secure judgement about the standard of work achieved.
127. Attainment in both key stages is in line with national standards. In Key Stage 1 pupils have looked through holiday brochures and chosen a location they would like to visit. They give their reasons for wanting to go there; for instance, one pupil wants to visit Lapland to see Santa Claus and go swimming, and another wants to go to Egypt to see the pyramids and the sphinx which guards them. They have a very good sense of climate and construe the snowy or sunny pictures accurately.
128. In Key Stage 2, pupils have carried out a piece of research in Blaby to discover whether local people would like the High Street closed to traffic. Attainment during this project is better than found in most schools. Pupils possess effective research skills and use them confidently. They interpret their findings in several different ways. They understand the arguments for and against closure of the street to traffic, as well as the alternative actions which could be taken; for example, diverting traffic down Sycamore Street and re-opening the railway. Pupils also study environmental issues, especially pollution. Their map work is extensive, including a successful comparison of their own area with those of Keswick and Gloucester. Attainment in these aspects is sound.
129. Not enough teaching was seen to enable a secure judgement on its quality to be made. The evidence from teachers' planning, and standards of pupils' completed work, indicate that is in line with other teaching observed during the inspection. Good links are made with other subjects; for instance, the Key Stage 1 work on holidays leads directly into a history project on the seaside in the past. The Key Stage 2 work on traffic links into the work on persuasive use of language which is the focus for the literacy hour. The weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge, reported at the time of the last inspection, are no longer evident. Adoption of the nationally produced scheme of work for the subject has provided a more secure framework for teachers' planning and pupils' learning.

HISTORY

130. Little history teaching was observed during the inspection. Nonetheless, evidence from pupils' completed work, classroom display, teachers' planning and discussions with pupils, indicates that standards are in line with national expectations at Key Stage 1, and above those found in most schools at Key Stage 2. This is an improvement on the average standards reported at the time of the last inspection.
131. No lessons were observed at Key Stage 1. Teachers' plans show that, by age seven, pupils have covered an appropriate range of historical topics. Pupils' completed work indicates that they have developed sound skills and insights into the past. They understand simple concepts of time, successfully drawing out the similarities and differences between the present and the past; for example, in their work on Victorian houses and on the differences between hospitals in Florence Nightingale's time and hospitals today. By the end of Year 2, pupils confidently

sequence the events of the Fire of London in order to make sense of the event. They know what evidence is and how it tells us about the past.

132. By age 11, most pupils reach very good standards in their historical knowledge and skills. By the end of Year 4, they talk with great gusto and interest about the foibles of Henry VIII; at the same time, they understand, and can explain in historical terms, the importance of his quarrel with the Pope. Their factual knowledge of events is secure, as is their ability to think historically. They are good at imaginative reconstruction, but not at the expense of historical accuracy. The Year 3 work on the Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings highlights this ability. By Year 6, pupils research for themselves and interpret the evidence available to them; for example, in their work on ancient Greek vases.
133. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers' planning in Key Stage 1 is thorough and precise. They successfully ensure that specific skills and knowledge are targeted as pupils move from topic to topic; for example, in the study of family trees incorporated into the Year 1 topic on families. The work in Year 2 on the Fire of London reflects similar levels of effective planning. As a result, pupils in Key Stage 1 achieve well. Teachers make good use of the subject to underpin the teaching of basic skills, as well as to fire pupils' interest in the past.
134. The high point in the teaching was found in Years 3 and 4. The two lessons seen contained a very successful mix of teaching approaches and learning aims. Without ever losing sight of the historical context of the times, events and historical figures being studied, pupils are led on voyages of discovery, beautifully orchestrated by the teachers through an exciting range of stories, authentic evidence, visits and intriguing little cameos from the personal lives of the participants. Good levels of motivation and achievement are the result. Pupils choose to read books on the Tudors, the Romans and the Greeks for pleasure, and use the Internet at home to research information to bring to school. More use could be made of the many opportunities to extend pupils' creative writing skills.
135. Although much improved since the last inspection, curriculum planning is still not effective enough to ensure consistency in the standards of teaching and learning across the school. This is mainly due to the under-development of assessment as a means of monitoring and evaluating the pupils', and school's, performance on a regular and systematic basis. Apart from informal discussion, and the impact of individual teacher interest in the subject, the subject coordinator has few formal means of assessing, and raising, standards in the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

136. Overall, standards of attainment in both key stages are in line with those expected for pupils of their age. Pupils achieve well. All groups, including those with special educational needs, make good progress as they move through the school. The school has invested wisely in resources for the subject and this has contributed to a rise in the quality of teaching and learning. The school is well placed to raise standards further.
137. Six year olds show great confidence when using the computer to prepare data from surveys they have undertaken in pictogram form. They are well supported by their teacher during this process but rapidly gain sufficient confidence to operate the program independently, concluding the activity by printing the graph showing their findings. Eight year olds also undertake similar activities that are successfully matched to their age and abilities.
138. Seven year olds are confident and competent when using CD-ROM to undertake research. Their skills are demonstrated in response to challenges from their teacher to find out where Ayers Rock is and to confirm if India is the third largest country in the world. They undertake this and similar activities with great enthusiasm and are supported well by their teachers and classroom assistants.
139. Ten and eleven year old pupils have well developed skills. They have used a data-handling program to present information about responses to the possible closure of the main street in the village to traffic. They know how to access the 'Internet' and use search engines to locate information for their research in geography.
140. Throughout the school a high proportion of pupils are sufficiently confident to experiment with computers. When machines and programs do not work, pupils offer suggestions for rectifying

faults and suggest the processes they should follow, predicting the results that particular actions might bring about. Pupils use the computers in their own time. They know how to activate the machines and 'log on' using their passwords. One group of pupils was observed using a spreadsheet programme to produce a rota for play during the after-school chess club. The spreadsheet was modified successfully for display in poster size.

141. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The purchase of a lap top computer for each teacher has contributed significantly to their good subject knowledge. They manage and support pupils very effectively. A strength is the way that teachers incorporate information technology into their teaching right across the curriculum, giving it a natural and appropriate context in pupils' learning. This is skilfully achieved so that teacher demonstrations of the computer's potential for the younger pupils, for example, in the Year 1 science lesson, are gradually replaced by expectations that pupils will make use of this potential for themselves. By the latter stage, many pupils are sufficiently confident to experiment with computer programs in order to solve problems and to test out their own ideas for finding solutions to these.
142. The school's provision has been greatly strengthened since the last inspection, thanks to the drive to upgrade the school's resources and to take advantage of government training initiatives and a national scheme of work. All have provided the school with a greater confidence, as well as a much improved resource capacity in the form of a computer suite, for teaching and learning in the subject. This has been enriched by an extra-curricular computer club which is both popular and effective in extending pupils' interests and skills. Its activities include the production of the school magazine containing word-processed articles and reports, photographs taken using the digital camera and others included by using the scanner.

MUSIC

143. Standards of attainment are in line with national expectations at Key Stage 1 and above those found in most schools in Key Stage 2. One reason for this difference is that almost half of the pupils in Key Stage 2 are provided with opportunities to benefit from the instrumental tuition offered by the many peripatetic tutors who visit the school. As a result, pupils' enhanced knowledge and refined skills have a significant effect on attainment for pupils in this key stage. A further reason for the higher standards amongst older pupils, is the impact of a culture within the school that gives music a high status and prominence. Pupils quickly become absorbed in this culture and respond very positively to the opportunities provide for them by an enthusiastic staff.
144. Almost all pupils sing clearly and in tune in assemblies; even the very youngest children know the words to the choruses of the hymns, and sing them with gusto. Standards of attainment are almost always above national expectations in the extra-curricular music sessions, and the school orchestra has a particularly able and effective percussion section. The choir sings with above average diction and tone, and has a very good sense of ensemble.
145. Key Stage 1 pupils successfully learn the difference between beat and rhythm and accurately return a clapped rhythm given to them by the teacher. They are particularly good at recognising the rhythm of words and rhymes. They compose soundscapes to represent the weather, after listening to Beethoven's Symphony No. 6 'The Pastoral'. By age seven, they make some very realistic representations of the wind in the trees, simply using mouth music. They know how to play a good range of tuned and untuned percussion instruments, and they sing clearly, and with enthusiasm.
146. In Key Stage 2, pupils listen to *The Planets* suite by Holst and compose pieces of music to represent aspects of space travel. They make a very careful assessment of the nature of weightlessness and of the type of sound which will best illustrate this. They have written graphic scores so that each member of the small ensembles knows what to do and when. They are able to explain how they arrived at their composition and why they chose the particular form of score they did. Another class has made up some 'Dragon Music' and performs this on largely unpitched percussion, carefully, and for the most part in time. There is no requirement for scoring here; pupils rely on their memories and prompts from the teacher.
147. A hallmark of the class music lessons, throughout the school, is the generosity of spirit with which pupils listen to each other's playing, and the positively critical evaluation of each other's

performance. This is shown when pupils listen and watch with delight and amusement as their classmates play trombones to represent barges on a river in a London smog. This spirit is also responsible for a good sense of ensemble, and a clear understanding of the need for rehearsal, and for the polishing and refining of performance.

148. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. There is very good subject knowledge in the school and all teachers know their pupils well. Teachers use the good range of resources effectively, creating a kind of 'chamber music' atmosphere in the Music Studio. The peripatetic music tutors make a significant contribution to the musical knowledge within the school. The quality of learning is good in both key stages and very good in the extra-curricular sessions. Attitudes and behaviour in school music lessons and in extra-curricular lessons and activities are uniformly very good. The enthusiasm the pupils show for their lessons is infectious. They know they will enjoy the lessons and be successful in their endeavours.
149. The school's provision is clearly strong and benefits from the attention paid to music outside lesson times. The regular summer concerts, Christmas celebrations, and large musical productions put on in the neighbouring high school every two years, are all occasions to be very proud of. But they should not be allowed to distract from the need to ensure that the provision within lessons matches the standards expected elsewhere.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

150. By the time they are seven and by the time they are eleven pupils' attainment exceeds that expected for their ages and they achieve well. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. Improvement since the previous inspection of the school is good. Overall, standards have risen and attainment in gymnastics is significantly higher than that found at the time of the previous inspection.
151. By age seven, standards in games exceed those expected for pupils of this age. When running and skipping they show good control, starting, stopping and changing direction smoothly and quickly. They make good use of the available space and move into position quickly when trying to intercept a ball rolled towards them by a partner. Pupils work very effectively in pairs and in small groups, acquiring and consolidating skills well. They make good progress during lessons that are prepared well by their teachers.
152. By age 11, pupils attain standards in gymnastics that are well above those expected for their age. Some of their work, when they move in partnership and balance together, supporting each other's weight, is outstanding. The sequences they develop are complex, sustained and challenging, and make good use of the available apparatus as well as the floor area. They respond very well to the high expectations of their teachers and to the praise they receive, making thoughtful replies to well phrased questions that enable them to analyse the quality of their own performance and that of other members of the class. Pupils also develop appropriate skills in games; for example, when playing cricket and rounders, they bat, bowl and field with competence and enthusiasm. In dance, pupils work with enjoyment and clarity of purpose. They express themselves well in response to music, developing extended sequences of movements that are carefully synchronized.
153. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is good. Teachers manage lessons and pupils very effectively. For example, they teach pupils to assemble and put away items of large apparatus quickly and efficiently. This makes a significant contribution to the good progress pupils make during lessons. Teachers are enthusiastic and encouraging. They praise achievement and effort readily and make pupils feel that they are successful. In the best teaching, teachers provide pupils with an understanding of the skills needed to bring about improvement. Pupils respond enthusiastically. They show very good attitudes to their work and their behaviour is very good. These qualities are typified by their endeavour and enthusiasm shown during extra-curricular athletics when they run and jump with great energy and effort, achieving times and distances that are good for their age.
154. The quality of provision benefits greatly from the hard work and commitment of the subject co-ordinator, the very extensive range of extra-curricular sport, including the visits of specialist coaches, and the good resources made available for the teaching of the subject.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

155. Standards of attainment at the end of both key stages meet the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus. The quality of pupils' learning, including that of the more able pupils and those with special educational needs, is good overall. Their knowledge of the different denominations of Christian faiths in the locality, and many of the other faiths celebrated in multi-faith Leicester and Britain, is particularly strong.
156. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils show a good understanding of the influence of behaviour, values and attitudes to others and relate this to their understanding of Judaism and Hinduism. They understand that people of different religions celebrate different festivals and worship special people and have codes of behaviour. They know that Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas and identify many of the events relating to the Easter story, as well as knowing some of the parables. They are also familiar with the story of Rama and Sita and many aspects of the way in which Hindus celebrate the festival of Diwali. Their links with a multi-cultural school in Leicester significantly assist this understanding and their appreciation of other people's customs and beliefs.
157. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have a good knowledge of the life of Jesus and other people in the Bible, and what it means to be a Christian. During a Year 6 lesson, pupils' discussions with the teacher, and with each other, reflected a very good understanding of church architecture and the important features of the Church of England and the local Baptist church. This knowledge was effectively used when pupils considered the beliefs of Christians and empathised with the feelings of Baptists as they entered the baptismal pool and the emotions that Christians feel as they enter and worship in their churches. They understand the important aspects of Holy Week written from different viewpoints and the feelings of the people involved.
158. Pupils throughout the school make good progress and achieve well. A strength of their achievement is the manner in which they are able to extend their knowledge to consider its implications for their own lives, beliefs and ways of thinking. In Year 1, for example, pupils explore the life of Moses in terms of the personal and social qualities of leadership. In other classes, they consider issues of justice and injustice, and the question of fairness. In Year 5 pupils gain a very high level of understanding of Muslim beliefs, especially the Five Pillars of Islam, and their group presentations showed a very high level of knowledge and understanding of these rituals and valuing of these religions. Pupils' inclusion of other incidental information about the Muslim religion reflected a very high level of understanding of the importance of Ramadan the fasting month, Eid-ul Fitra and Eid-ul Adha. They think about the importance of rules, how one makes decisions and how holy books guide different people. Pupils in Year 4 know the different denominations of the Christian religion in the area and also the many ways in which these churches are used by the community. Their knowledge and understanding has been enhanced by a visit from the local Baptist minister when he discussed his role in the community.
159. The contributory factors to pupils' quality of learning is the high quality of teaching and pupils' very positive attitudes in both key stages. The use of good quality resources, including visits to the buildings of the major faiths, are instrumental in gaining and maintaining pupils' levels of interest and their ability to use information. Teachers' questions are very effective in drawing out ideas and views from pupils very successfully. For example, in the Year 1 lesson on the qualities of leadership, pupils decided that a guide dog, because of its skills and understanding, was a very successful leader of a blind person. Particularly strong features of teaching are teachers' knowledge and understanding of all faiths being studied. Their use of subject-specific vocabulary is introduced at the appropriate time. Pupils enjoy bringing their own experiences to lessons and are exceedingly responsive to listening to the beliefs of other religious groups, and this enhances their ability to value them. They listen attentively, contribute thoughtfully to discussions and take part with enthusiasm in small group performances within the classes. However, they do not always show quite the same care and enthusiasm with the presentation of their written work.
160. The curriculum has been well developed by the co-ordinator. Plans are detailed and provide teachers with a clear plan of the year's work. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is a very good range of quality resources and plans to further extend this. The available resources, which include computer software, videos, artefacts, posters and pictures, and a programme of visits, are used well.

The subject is in a much stronger state than in 1996. Nonetheless, not all of the shortcomings identified at the last inspection have been successfully resolved. There is still insufficient monitoring of pupils' work by the co-ordinator. There is also a lack of consistency and continuity in the school's systems for assessing pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding which limits teachers' capacities to plan appropriately on the basis of pupils' prior attainment and progress.