

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **BIRCHES FIRST SCHOOL**

Codsall

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124077

Headteacher: Mrs J Willcox

Reporting inspector: Mr D Shepherd  
2905

Dates of inspection: 11 – 14 March 2002

Inspection number: 194647

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First with nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Birches Avenue Codsall Nr Wolverhampton Staffordshire
Post code	WV8 2JG
Telephone number:	01902 434100
Fax number:	01902 434104
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs V Eastup
Date of previous inspection:	6 May 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2905	David Shepherd	Registered inspector	Foundation stage Music Religious education Science	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements What should the school do to improve further?
9883	Timothy Page	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
19507	Beulah Andrews	Team inspector	Special educational needs Art and design Design and technology English Information and communication technology	How well is the school led and managed?
18817	Stuart Ginnever	Team inspector	English as an additional language Equal opportunities Geography History Mathematics Physical education	How well are pupils taught? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school is smaller than average for primary schools. It has 183 pupils, including 39 who attend part-time in the Nursery. It has been over-subscribed in recent years. There is one class in each year group from Reception to Year 4. Children are admitted part-time to the Nursery for a year the term after they reach three years, four months. Children attending the Nursery are not guaranteed a place in the school, but most are admitted to the Reception class in the half year in which they are five, in September or January. At the age of nine, most pupils transfer to one of two middle schools nearby. Most pupils are white and come from privately owned houses on the edge of Codsall and Bilbrook and on the border of Staffordshire and Wolverhampton. A small minority are from other ethnic backgrounds. Five pupils speak English as an additional language and none is at an early stage of learning English. Seventeen pupils have special educational needs, including two pupils with statements. Children are generally at average levels of attainment on entry to the Nursery.

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

This is a very good school. Standards are high. This is because the teaching has many good features. The leadership provided by the headteacher is clear and focused. The headteacher is supported effectively in her management of the school by all staff and governors. The school has a well-deserved reputation for working with parents and caring well for pupils. This is an effective school that provides good value for money.

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

- Enables pupils to achieve high standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Ensures that children have a good start to their schooling in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Promotes positive attitudes and good behaviour in pupils.
- Secures good teaching throughout the curriculum.
- Cares for pupils well and establishes good relationships with pupils and their parents.
- Provides very good leadership and management by the headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject leaders and governors.

#### **What could be improved**

- Higher attaining pupils are not always set tasks in all subjects that are appropriately challenging for them.
- The marking policy is not implemented consistently in all subjects.

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

There are no key issues for the school. There are less important issues for the school to work on.

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

The school was last inspected in May 1997. Since that time, the school has improved significantly. Standards are now much higher than they were in reading, writing, mathematics and science. The quality of the teaching has improved significantly and the leadership and management are now strengths of the school. The main weaknesses identified at the last inspection have been corrected. The quality of teaching, including that for the under fives, has improved since the last inspection. Pupils are now making faster progress than they were. Assessment procedures and practices are now systematic and are used to help teachers plan their teaching. The analysis of performance data is being used to set annual targets for pupils, and these are supplemented by individual termly targets that are shared with pupils and their parents. These are playing a key role in raising standards in literacy and numeracy. Procedures for identifying pupils with special educational needs are good, and provision for these pupils is very good.

Subject leaders are now carrying out their tasks well and the governing body is now playing an effective role within school. The school uses the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy well. National

and local guidance for teaching in all other subjects is followed appropriately and fits into the school's schemes of work for these subjects.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 2 based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
Reading	B	B	A	A
Writing	A	B	A	A
Mathematics	A	B	A	A

**Key**

well above average      A

above average          B

average                    C

below average          D

well below average      E

Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2 in 2001 were well above national averages when compared with all schools and schools in similar contexts. The percentage of pupils reaching the higher levels in these tests was also well above national averages. Over the past five years, standards in reading, writing and especially mathematics have improved at a greater rate than those nationally. Results in the 2001 teacher assessments in science were very high and in the top five per cent of schools nationally in life and living processes, materials and their properties and physical processes. They were average in experimental and investigative science. Standards in science at the higher level were well above average in all aspects of science. Standards attained in the optional national tests at the end of Year 4 also indicate that standards in English and mathematics are above average. In science, they are well above average.

The school sets targets for pupils' achievements at the end of Year 2 and these were exceeded in 2001. Pupils enter the Nursery with average levels of attainment in all areas of learning, except their personal, social and emotional development, where they are below average. The Nursery and Reception classes lay good foundations and children make good progress and most achieve, and some exceed (especially in creative development) the *Early Learning Goals* by the time they enter Year 1. Information from assessments in the Reception class is used effectively to guide planning in Year 1.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very positive. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and are keen to become involved in all aspects of school life. They take a pride in their school, and in their achievements.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well in classrooms. They have very good self-discipline, which leads to uninterrupted lessons. Pupils are well mannered and courteous, have a friendly disposition, and show concern for others.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils have high levels of self-esteem and confidence. They react positively when they are provided with positions of trust and responsibility. Very good relationships are built on mutual trust and respect.
Attendance	Very good. Above the national average. Punctuality is very good.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5 - 7 years	aged 7 – 9 years
Lessons seen overall	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.*

Throughout the school, the teaching and the learning it promotes are good overall. During the inspection, no teaching was unsatisfactory, most was good and some was excellent. The staff in the Nursery and Reception classes have considerable expertise in the teaching of young children and they teach them well at their different levels of ability. The teaching of creative development is particularly effective and pupils make very good progress in this area. The teaching of English, mathematics and science is good in Years 1-4. Most pupils make good progress in these subjects and their achievement over time is very high. For lessons in these subjects, the teaching is well planned and teachers ask searching questions of pupils that extend their learning. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well. The teaching of music, art, information and communication technology (ICT), history and gymnastics is good. It is satisfactory in geography, design and technology and religious education. Two minor weaknesses in the teaching were noted. Higher attaining pupils are not always challenged enough in some subjects, and the marking of pupils' work does not consistently inform pupils about how to improve.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is broad, has a good balance of subjects and includes a good range of extra-curricular activities. Visits to places of interest add much to the school's provision. The curriculum is planned well, with use of appropriate guidance. All statutory requirements are met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The school provides effective support for literacy and numeracy for pupils with special educational needs. The tasks set for these pupils in other lessons is not always targeted at their specific learning needs. Procedures for developing and monitoring pupils' individual learning programmes are good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The few pupils with English as an additional language take part in all aspects of the curriculum and make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. Provision for their spiritual and cultural development is good. The school promotes these aspects of pupils' personal development throughout lessons and other aspects of school life.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. Child protection procedures are very good. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of their pupils and make very good provision for their welfare, health and safety.

The school works in partnership with parents very well. Parents are kept well informed about the curriculum their children are being taught each half-term. Many parents and grandparents, help in school on a regular basis.

The curriculum is supplemented by a range of extra-curricular activities, such as an art club, drama, recorders and football and by day and residential visits to places of interest. A systematic programme of personal, social and health education is taught. Sex education and drugs education are also taught appropriately.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The school staff have a strong shared commitment and capacity to succeed. They share a clear vision of what they wish to achieve.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They show a clear commitment to support school improvement through self-review.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very effective. The school analyses its assessment data in English, mathematics and science well and tracks pupils' performances systematically in these subjects. The evaluation of pupils' performances in this way is used to guide school planning. The assessment of pupils' work in other subjects is not as good as in the core subjects.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school allocates funding and other resources, such as staffing, well, linking them to the school's priorities for improvement. The school applies the principles of best value well.

There are sufficient suitably qualified teachers to ensure that class sizes are not too large. Support staff are effective and the good support they provide is a contributory factor in the pupils' learning. Learning resources are good overall and used well to help pupils learn throughout the school. The internal accommodation is good and provides a stimulating environment for learning. The outside paintwork is in poor condition.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children like school</li> <li>The teaching is good</li> <li>The school is approachable</li> <li>The school is well led and managed</li> <li>The school is helping children to become mature and responsible</li> <li>The school keeps parents informed about their children's progress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The amount of homework</li> <li>The range of activities outside lessons</li> <li>The school does not work closely enough with parents</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with the positive views of the school expressed by parents. It does not agree with their criticisms of the school. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities and inspectors support the school's approach to homework. The school works very closely with parents.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Children's abilities and experiences on entry to Nursery vary considerably from those that are above average for their age to those that are well below. Overall, most pupils enter Nursery with broadly average abilities in all areas of learning, except in their personal, social and emotional development, where their attainment is below average. Most make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes because of the good teaching they receive and enter Year 1 having achieved the broad range of *Early Learning Goals* within the Foundation Curriculum.
2. Results of the 2001 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics in comparison with all schools and those in similar contexts, were well above average. Results of the teacher assessments in science place the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level among in the top five per cent of schools in comparison with all schools and those in similar contexts. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher level was well above average. However, pupils did not attain as high as this in scientific enquiry, where they achieved levels similar to those of pupils in other schools. These results are very high and are at their highest level for three years. This is due to the good, focused teaching they receive that enables them to make very good progress in Years 1 and 2. In 2001, the school exceeded the challenging targets it set for itself in reading, writing and mathematics.
3. Pupils continue to receive good teaching in Years 3 and 4, and make good progress. Their attainment at the end of Year 4 in the national non-statutory tests over the past four years in English and mathematics was above average.
4. Evidence from the inspection indicates that standards in speaking, listening, reading and writing in the current Year 2 and Year 4 are above average. Nearly all pupils are keen to take part in discussions and to hold mature conversations with adults around school. They speak confidently and clearly and some are very articulate for their age. The school's provision of suitable books for reading is much better than in most schools. This enables pupils to select stories that interest them. Most pupils enjoy reading and read a variety of stories well. Higher attaining pupils read fluently with very good understanding. Lower attaining pupils use their knowledge of letter sounds appropriately to work out unfamiliar words. Standards in writing are good. Most pupils write neatly, have a sound grasp of basic punctuation and many write well-structured stories. The school is implementing the National Literacy Strategy well and this has helped to raise standards since the last inspection.
5. Standards attained in mathematics by the current Year 2 and Year 4 are above average. Many pupils make good progress and achieve high standards in all aspects of mathematics. High attaining pupils solve mathematics problems well. Lower attaining pupils have a sound grasp of number, but find using this knowledge to solve problems more difficult. Most pupils have a good understanding of shape and measures, and collect, record and handle data well. The National Numeracy Strategy has been introduced well and this has helped raise standards since the last inspection.
6. Standards in science attained by the current Year 2 and Year 4 pupils are well above average. A particular strength is their ability to carry out scientific investigations. However, many pupils do not use their initiative enough to offer possible solutions about what they are finding out from their investigations. Most pupils have a good understanding about life and living processes, materials and their properties and physical processes. Most pupils make good progress in science and standards have improved significantly since the last inspection.
7. In Years 2 and 4, standards are above average in art and design and history. They are average in design and technology, geography and religious education. In ICT, they are average in Year 2 and

above average in Year 4. In music and gymnastics they are above average in Year 2. Lack of evidence prevents judgements being made about these subjects in Year 4.

8. The few pupils with English as an additional language make good progress in their work and have full access to the curriculum. No significant difference was noted in the progress of boys and girls during the inspection although girls have outperformed boys over the past three years in the national tests at the end of Year 2. Higher attaining pupils are generally challenged well in literacy and numeracy lessons and they achieve well in these subjects. However, they are generally not challenged enough in other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress, especially in literacy and numeracy. However, they do not make enough progress in some lessons where they are not given enough structured support in their work.

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

9. Pupils' attitudes to school are very positive. They are a strength of the school, as they were at the last inspection. Pupils quickly develop and sustain high levels of self-esteem. They learn effectively because they are interested and enthusiastic about their work. Pupils become self-disciplined and this enables lessons to be taught without disruption. They have the maturity to work sensibly, alone or in groups, and take responsibility for their own learning; they choose their own reading scheme books, select computer graphics in order to individualize their work, and evaluate the work of their peers.
10. Pupils thrive on the many opportunities to take responsibility in many aspects of school life. They know that their opinions are valued. This is seen in the school council, which not only provides a forum for debate, but enables pupils to seize the initiative to make things happen to improve the school. Several initiatives have taken place as a result of the school council's suggestions. For instance, the School Council 'Playground Rules' have been written, the weekly diary of events produced for the parents' notice board, and a suggestion box placed by the entrance to the school where pupils can place their ideas for the staff to consider. Separate from the school council is the 'Eco' committee. Pupils on this committee have taken the initiative to make regular lunchtime collections of waste paper from classrooms. They are now planning a sensory garden for the school. Pupils' independence is developed further by extra-curricular activities, such as the recorder club and football, and Year 4 pupils take part in a residential visit to Kingswood Activity Centre.
11. Behaviour in classrooms, and around the school is very good, as it was at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils are well mannered and courteous, and considerate to others. They take a pride in the school and help to keep their classrooms and other areas of the school neat and tidy. They respect the facilities that the school provides, especially the adventure playground, and agree with the rota system that gives all pupils an equal chance to play there. There have been no exclusions of pupils in recent years.
12. As at the last inspection, the very good rapport between pupils and adults is continuing. This is founded on mutual trust and respect, which contribute to a positive and happy atmosphere in which there is real concern for the well-being of others. Pupils say that the school is friendly, and no evidence of oppressive behaviour emerged during the inspection.
13. In an excellent Year R religious education lesson, it was clear that pupils as young as five are able to appreciate and interpret the messages of sadness and joy which surround the Christian festival of Easter. This understanding of feelings is extended into everyday situations with pupils being very aware if friends are unhappy, or hurt as a result of a minor playground accident, and they do their best to support them. Pupils appreciate the help they are given. For example, in lunchtime conversations they showed genuine excitement at the prospect of sixth formers from the local secondary school coming into school to help them with their reading to celebrate National Book week. The choice of charities that pupils support, such as UNICEF (pupils throughout the school raised money for poor people in Brazil and Bangladesh) underlines that even very young pupils are beginning to understand the different conditions under which many

other people have to live. Pupils with special educational needs respond very well to planned activities that match their needs and work with independence and purpose.

14. Attendance is above the national average. Pupils are keen to come to school, and lessons begin punctually.

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

15. The quality of teaching is good overall. Of the thirty-three lessons observed during the inspection, the teaching in fourteen lessons was good, in five it was very good and in two it was excellent. The teaching in twelve lessons was satisfactory. The teaching in the Foundation Stage was consistently good and some excellent teaching was observed. The teaching in Years 1 and 2, and in Years 3 and 4 was generally good. Some very good teaching was observed in Year 2. The teaching of literacy, numeracy and science is good. The overall good teaching helps pupils to make good progress in their learning in most subjects, and explains why the school's results are very high. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.
16. The teaching has a number of good features. The teachers are dedicated to their work and form extremely good relationships with pupils. They give pupils time and discuss issues well with them. They ask searching questions of pupils that challenge their thinking. Teachers use subject-specific language when teaching and, in the best teaching, they write key words for the lesson so that pupils can spell them correctly. This is the case in a number of subjects, but especially so in science and mathematics. Teaching is generally well planned and lessons taught enthusiastically by teachers. This was consistently noted in music, religious education taught to reception pupils and in Year 2 in literacy and history lessons.
17. In literacy, clear expectations of teachers result in pupils responding well and co-operating fully. Pupils have a desire to do well in these lessons. The national guidance for the teaching of literacy and numeracy is followed systematically and this is a significant factor in pupils doing very well in these lessons across the school. Most pupils make good progress in their speaking, listening, reading and writing and in their number, shape, space and measures, data handling and in using these skills to solve problems. The teaching of phonics is particularly effective and most pupils read well as a consequence.
18. Teachers' planning is a strength of the teaching. National and local guidance for planning is followed and adapted well to the school's context. This gives a sound structure for the teaching of the National Curriculum in all subjects and of religious education. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection. Teachers are more secure in their subjects as a result of this improvement.
19. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by the teacher responsible for teaching literacy and numeracy to them. The teaching is of good quality and reflects good planning and effective liaison with class teachers. As a result these pupils make good progress. Teachers draw up appropriate individual educational plans with the support of the special educational needs co-ordinator and are careful to include pupils with special educational needs in whole class sessions. Learning support assistants work effectively with pupils with special educational needs. On the whole, they are well briefed by the class teachers in supporting these pupils. Parent helpers too play an important part in helping pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Effective use is made of computers to support the learning of pupils on the special needs register both in classrooms and in the computer suite. The special needs co-ordinator places considerable emphasis on helping pupils to become independent learners who are able to take charge of their own learning. This makes a considerable contribution to their progress. The pupils who have English as a second language are taught effectively. They are all integrated well into normal lessons.
20. Homework is set by all teachers to support the work in the classroom. All classes from reception to Year 4 receive appropriate amounts of homework. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 receive one hour per week whilst those in Years 3 and 4 are set one and a half hours homework per week. All classes

are set homework in reading and a reading diary is kept to record this. Years 2 and 4 receive extra homework in the term before they take national tests. Year 4 pupils keep a homework book that is well maintained.

21. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. Pupils respond positively to this and their supportive attitudes and good behaviour are a strength of the school. Resources too are well managed and have been supplemented considerably since the last inspection in all subjects. This is especially the case in physical education; the purchase of large equipment has provided pupils with greater opportunities for gymnastics' lessons. The school now has well above the national average for books per pupil and this provides pupils with greater opportunities for independent study.
22. Two minor weaknesses in the teaching were noted during the inspection. First, in some lessons teachers set the same tasks for the whole class. Higher attaining pupils are not challenged enough in these lessons and find the tasks set for them too easy. This occurs in some lessons in science and religious education, for instance. Setting the same tasks for all pupils often means that they are too hard for pupils with special educational needs. Evidence from pupils' work indicates that this occurs in some geography and history lessons, as well as in other subjects. Second, teachers do not consistently mark pupils' work so that they know what is good about it and what needs to be improved. The school policy for marking is good and includes these features. However, they are not being followed by all teachers in all subjects. This slows down the progress pupils make in these lessons.
23. The teaching is particularly good in the Foundation Stage, art, music, English, mathematics, science, ICT, history and gymnastics. It is satisfactory in geography, design and technology and religious education.

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

24. The school provides for its pupils a curriculum that implements the National Curriculum in all subjects and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. National and local guidance is adapted effectively by the teachers in all subjects and this is used to develop sound schemes of work in all subjects. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are taught well in all classes. The impact of this is that standards in these areas are very high throughout the school. This provides a firm foundation for the teaching in other subjects. For instance, pupils write clearly in subjects such as history and use their knowledge of number to work out results of experiments in science. Personal, social and health education is taught well, as is sex education and drugs education. Computers are being increasingly used well to help pupils learn in a number of subjects.
25. The curriculum is enriched by a variety of clubs. These include clubs for art, drama, recorders, football and an eco club. Each of these extends pupils' learning and improves their skills in these areas. These take place at lunchtimes or after school. Pupils are also given opportunities to visit places outside school and these help them to become more socially aware. Pupils have sung to residents of a Residential Home, they have played recorders at music festivals held in the area and wider afield at Lichfield Cathedral. Year 2 pupils visit the War Memorial in Codsall to help their understanding of Poppy Day. Year 4 undertake a three-day residential visit to the Kingswood Centre each February to try out new outdoor skills such as rock climbing and to develop orienteering skills practised in school. The strong links with the community is a key feature of the success of the school. They are strongly supported by the staff and school governors.
26. Curricular planning, policies and schemes of work have been improved considerably since the last inspection. There is now clear continuity of approach to planning between the classes and this helps pupils make systematic progress in their learning in all subjects. Subject co-ordinators

monitor teachers' plans each half-term to ensure that they are teaching the school schemes of work as agreed by the whole staff. This is good practice.

27. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. They receive very good support and guidance, especially in literacy and numeracy. Effective use is made of parents and other adult helpers to help these pupils learn. Careful planning and organisation for pupils with special educational needs ensure that they are taught the full curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs in Years 3 and 4 work in an adjacent room to these classes each morning developing their literacy and numeracy skills. They experience the same curriculum as their peers at a level matched to their needs and in an environment where they are encouraged to organise their work and equipment. This has a positive effect on their self-esteem. They receive good support and the planned programmes of work are matched to needs according to their individual educational programmes. They generally make good progress. However, when the same tasks are set for all pupils in the class in some lessons other than in literacy and numeracy, pupils with special educational needs do not make the progress they should because the work is too hard for them.
28. The school uses outside agencies such as speech therapists and the local education authority's behaviour support team to work with class teachers to plan appropriate programmes of work for pupils. This helps pupils improve in their work.
29. The school is also aware of the needs of other groups of pupils. For example, pupils on the verge of attaining nationally expected levels in English and mathematics have access to additional support from special educational needs co-ordinator. Support from learning support assistants throughout the school is good. These extra learning opportunities are very valuable, and result in greater progress being made by pupils. The school also identifies pupils who are very able and successfully seeks to provide work that is suitably challenging for them. Pupils with English as a second language are taught well. All pupils take part in all aspects of school life.
30. The school provides good support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Support for pupils' spiritual development is provided throughout the curriculum. For instance, pupils are encouraged to reflect about the needs of others during the daily act of collective worship, and in lessons in religious education, history and literacy. This helps them to develop their own personalities and character. The headteacher introduces weekly themes in assembly on Mondays and these are followed through in assemblies led by class teachers later in the week. The school has a Christian ethos and appropriate emphasis is given to other major world faiths, such as Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam and Buddhism through the teaching of religious education.
31. Provision of moral education is very good. The school consistently promotes clear moral values in lessons and around school by reinforcing elements of good behaviour at every opportunity. All staff, together with parent helpers, provide good role models for pupils. They treat each other with respect and fairness and this helps pupils develop their own moral code. Pupils respect each other and they know right from wrong.
32. The school promotes pupils' social development very effectively and pupils are well adjusted socially. The school provides a variety of opportunities for pupils to interact with adults in classes, clubs and on visits. Pupils meet their peers from other schools on visits out of school. Year 3 and 4 pupils visit the secondary school for weekly swimming lessons and pupils from the secondary school visit the school to read stories to pupils during National Book Week. Year 3 pupils visit the middle school to prepare them for their transfer at the end of Year 4. The school further promotes social skills by holding a School Council where pupils decide upon ways of improving the school's provision for pupils.
33. Pupils' cultural development is promoted well. Year 4 pupils learn about people's different practices and religious beliefs. They link this to their work in geography on Chembakolli, a village in India, and to the lessons in dance in physical education. In their geography topic on Mexico, Year 2 pupils tasted Mexican cooking. Pupils respond well to the school's provision and are developing a greater understanding of others who live, think and act differently from themselves.

34. All statutory requirements relating to the curriculum are met in full.

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

35. The school has very good arrangements for ensuring the well being of its pupils. Child protection procedures are very good. The assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is now good, and its use in guiding curricular planning is satisfactory. The school has made significant improvements in the overall care of its pupils since the previous inspection.
36. The school has very clear health and safety procedures. Risk assessments are regularly undertaken and clear lines of responsibility are established. All the necessary checks are in place, and all staff are trained in emergency first aid. This is good practice.
37. The school monitors attendance well. Attendance registers are completed carefully, and reasons for absence analysed by the school. Individual pupils' attendance is rigorously monitored once concerns have been identified, and the educational welfare officer provides additional support to the school to help identify any unknown reasons for absence. Governors promote good attendance in their annual report by drawing parents' attention to the detrimental effect absence can have on their children's education.
38. Good behaviour is achieved through the successful promotion of self-discipline. Pupils are involved in recognising school rules because they sign up to them in the home/school contract. They accept that they are fair through discussions held at their own school council. The relatively few school rules are appropriate and supported by a range of rewards. These are consistently applied and focus on achievement. The school has procedures to deal with any persistent unacceptable behaviour. Parents are, quite rightly, involved at an early stage. There is an anti-bullying policy, and staff have had training in the recognition and handling of oppressive behaviour. The teaching of social skills is effective in establishing a friendly community.
39. Procedures for assessing pupils' work are good. Pre-baseline testing takes place when children enter the nursery, and their progress is regularly measured in other formal and informal assessments as they get older. Class teachers keep extensive records that help to frame individual learning targets for pupils each term in literacy, numeracy and personal development. These help pupils to achieve high standards in their work. They also help teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses in learning within school. Most work is marked but much marking does not help pupils improve in their learning or indicate what is particularly good about their work. Assessment is used well to guide curricular planning in literacy and numeracy, but it is not used enough for this purpose in other subjects. This sometimes leads to tasks being set that are not pitched at the correct level for pupils, especially for higher attaining pupils.
40. Procedures for identifying and supporting pupils with special educational needs meet statutory requirements and are very good. This is a strength of the school. The school has a culture of including all pupils well and pupils of all abilities are fully valued. The special educational needs co-ordinator works closely with parents and with outside specialists. Pupils on the special educational needs register have good quality individual education plans that clearly identify learning needs. They include measurable targets and these are carefully monitored by the staff. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is best in literacy and numeracy when taught by the special educational needs co-ordinator. Provision for these pupils is not as good in other lessons when all pupils are set the same task. The work is often too hard for them to complete well.
41. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. They have access to the whole curriculum by working to improve their skills in literacy and numeracy. Although pupils are withdrawn for these lessons they receive the same programme as their peers but at an appropriate level.



42. Pupils' personal development is monitored very well. Class teachers keep extensive records of pupils' effort and achievement, which is essential in identifying pupils for the award of weekly merit certificates, and special achievement awards at the end of each term. Pupils' personal folders contain an on going record of their progress and achievements as they progress through the school.

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

43. Parents' views of the school are very positive. Analysis of parents' pre-inspection questionnaires shows overwhelming agreement that children like school, that they are expected to work hard and achieve their best. Parents judge the teaching to be good and that the school is approachable. They consider that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible, and that children are well behaved. Inspectors endorse these positive views. A small minority of parents disagree that the school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons, that their children get the right amount of homework, and that the school works closely with parents and keeps them well informed about progress. These claims have been thoroughly investigated and disproved.
44. Communications with parents are very good; they are frequent, informative, wide ranging and effective. They have improved significantly since the previous inspection. All parents agree with the aims of the school and have signed their home/school contracts. The school consults parents regularly and is very responsive to their needs. There are termly meetings, termly class topic programmes that are sent out with newsletters and mid-year and end-of-year reports. Both reports contain grades to show how pupils are performing within their year groups, and include targets for improvement. Parents are also given full information about the their children's statutory assessment tests at the age of seven. All this is good practice.
45. Newsletters provide parents with a very comprehensive commentary on what is happening in school. They seek to involve parents in the work of the school with frequent invitations to class assemblies, school performances, and parents and friends association events. Many parents respond to this prompting and are pleased to take part in school life in these ways. Pupils' homework planners (often known as reading diaries) keep parents up to date on a daily basis. They enable parents to make a good contribution to their children's learning, and can be used as a useful avenue for communication with class teachers. The amount of homework set is appropriate for the age of the pupils. Some parents of Year 1 pupils feel uneasy because their children are not supplied with homework folders. However, these pupils are given regular reading tasks, which involve support from parents, and are encouraged to find things out from home to help them in their work.
46. Twenty parents, including grandparents, provide regular help in school. This has a very positive impact on the work of the school. The school is adept at harnessing the specific skills of parent helpers. For example, one parent uses her knowledge of computers to complement the work provided by the school. Other adult volunteers helped with reading and on school visits. The school has supported and encouraged parents to become classroom assistants by arranging training for them. This has resulted in well-informed additional educational support for pupils. There are other ways in which parents provide valuable help, such as providing materials and painting the school railings to improve the environment. The parents and friends association raises large sums for the benefit of the pupils; recent purchases have included a television, video, computers and art materials. They also contributed to the cost of an extension to the adventure playgroup at the school.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

47. The quality of leadership and management is very good. The very good leadership provided by the headteacher ensures that, through delegation and clearly understood management structures, all

staff have a shared commitment to the development of the school. They share the view that there is a need to maintain and raise the present high level of achievement. The capacity of the staff to succeed in this is high. The headteacher gives strong decisive leadership. Well-defined management structures at all levels - governors, teachers, support staff and cleaning staff - ensure clear lines of communication and delegation based on people's strengths. The headteacher is supported by a competent and effective deputy headteacher who has given a strong lead in curricular development, literacy, art and design and design and technology.

48. Good leadership is provided by all teachers holding positions of responsibility. All subject leaders have re-drafted policies, developed schemes of work for their subjects and have well-defined plans for further action for the present academic year. As a result of in-service training they understand their leadership responsibilities well and have the professional confidence to carry out their responsibilities very effectively. Subject leaders receive good guidance in their work from the senior management team of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and early years co-ordinator.
49. The co-ordinator for pupils with special educational needs is effective and manages the provision very well. She is aware of the latest developments with the new Code of Practice and is taking steps to implement them. Pupils' progress is monitored regularly and both parents and pupils are aware of how pupils with special educational needs are progressing in their learning. The governor with responsibility for special educational needs is supportive of the school and is knowledgeable about the subject. The school has formed good relationships with outside agencies, such as the LEA support services and medical services, to support pupils' progress.
50. The special educational needs co-ordinator is committed to enabling pupils with special educational needs to achieve as high standards as possible. She holds high expectations of the school's role in supporting these pupils. The priorities identified for further improving the school's provision are appropriate. However, there is no formal monitoring of the teaching and learning of pupils on the register within the classroom. Resources for special educational needs are good.
51. Performance management procedures are taking place appropriately. The school is now in its second cycle of performance management and reports the positive benefits of this national initiative. Staff new to the school are inducted effectively into the school's procedures.
52. The role of the governing body has developed since the last inspection. Governors are well informed, dedicated to the school and value the support given by the headteacher in keeping them well informed about developments. They fulfil their responsibilities very well. The chair of governors meets the headteacher once a week and is well informed about the school through these briefings. Governors use the data provided for them to evaluate the school's performance. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have taken effective action to correct weaknesses. They have provided appropriate financial support for the school's priorities. They are in the process of developing their role to visit classrooms and meet with subject co-ordinators.
53. The school development plan drives improvement and is supported by detailed subject action plans. Governors are knowledgeable about the school development plan and monitor its progress through reports given them by the headteacher.
54. There is a good match of suitably qualified teachers who have a shared approach to teaching children and a range of expertise and experience. There is a good balance in terms of age and experience. The school has a generous number of committed and trained support staff, including lunch-time supervisors whose contributions are invaluable. They support pupils very well.
55. The school secretary is experienced and very competent. She carries out the day-to-day running of the office efficiently and effectively and provides a welcoming face for visitors. She also provides learning support for pupils.
56. The quality and quantity of resources are good for most subjects. The new computer suite has already transformed the provision for ICT. The school manages its resources very well. Financial

planning is good and resources are used strategically. Grants and other funding are used well. The school applies the principles of best value well.

57. The accommodation is good. The school is situated in pleasant grounds and there is a reasonably sized playground marked for imaginative play. The main building gives an impression of spaciousness with good natural light. It is kept clean and welcoming by the cleaning staff. Display of pupils' work in classrooms and in other areas is of a high quality. Every opportunity is taken to promote pupils' literacy skills in the displays. Great care is taken to portray work well, thus confirming the value that teachers place on pupils' work. There are good facilities for physical education in the hall. The new computer suite is well appointed and able to facilitate a whole class group. The staff room is pleasantly furnished. Storage space is limited but efficiently used. There is a small but well stocked library. The school has a very high number of books per pupil.
58. Overall interior decorations are well maintained. The school benefits from a high standard of cleaning provided by a dedicated janitor. The exterior of the building requires painting and repairs to woodwork.
59. The school has improved significantly since the last inspection. Standards are much higher than they were, the quality of teaching is much better than it was and the leadership and management are now strengths of the school. The school provides good value for money.

#### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

60. There are no key issues stemming from the inspection. However, in order to continue to raise further and maintain high standards, the headteacher, staff and governors, as appropriate, should
  - (1) plan tasks in all subjects that challenge and extend the thinking of high attaining pupils and are matched appropriately for pupils with special educational needs  
(see paragraphs 22, 87, 93, 100, 119, 124, 145)
  - (2) ensure that marking identifies what is good about pupils' work and what they should do to improve it  
(see paragraphs 22, 88, 92, 100)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	33
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	36

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6	15	43	36	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	20	168
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	17

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.4
National comparative data	4.3

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.3

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	10	21	31

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls	21	21	21
	Total	31	31	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (93)	100 (93)	100 (100)
	National	84 (82)	86 (83)	91 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls	21	21	21
	Total	31	31	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (96)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

### Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	4
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	109
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

### Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.8
Average class size	28.8

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y4**

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	98.5

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	0

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	67.5

Number of FTE pupils per adult	7
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000-01
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	£
Total income	340,928
Total expenditure	333,624
Expenditure per pupil	1,676
Balance brought forward from previous year	32,310
Balance carried forward to next year	39,614

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	183
Number of questionnaires returned	124

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	67	31	1	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	38	6	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	56	38	2	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	43	45	6	5	1
The teaching is good.	67	29	3	1	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	60	31	8	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	66	29	4	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	38	1	2	1
The school works closely with parents.	54	36	8	2	0
The school is well led and managed.	61	30	7	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	61	34	4	1	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	41	12	2	10

### Other issues raised by parents

- Parents appreciate the extra-curricular visits. Year 4 pupils go to a wildlife centre and stay overnight at Kingwood.
- Parents appreciate the efforts staff make at Christmas time.
- The links between the nursery and reception class are excellent. These classes provide a very good start to children's education.
- Staff are very helpful.
- School welcomes help in classrooms from parents and grandparents.
- Children and parents respect and like the headteacher.
- More homework should be given in one class.

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

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

61. Children are admitted to the Nursery when they reach the age of three years and four months. The quality of teaching and the provision for children in the Nursery and Reception classes, the Foundation Stage, have improved considerably since the last inspection. The teacher and nursery staff no longer have too low expectations of children; the teaching is now good overall and, on occasions, outstanding. This is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. The curriculum now is well planned and follows the national guidance of the *Early Learning Goals*. Detailed records of children's progress in the six areas of learning are kept.
62. There is great variation in children's attainment in the six areas of learning on entry to the Nursery. Some begin Nursery with their attainment above average and others below average. Overall, children's attainment is broadly average in communication, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development. Their attainment is below average in personal and social development. This is confirmed by the pre-baseline assessments of these children. By the time they are ready to start Year 1, the majority of children achieve well and attain the *Early Learning Goals* in all six areas of learning. This is through good teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes that promotes good progress across the whole of the Foundation Stage curriculum. In creative development and in communication, the teaching is particularly strong, and many children exceed the goals in these areas. Standards are slightly higher than at the last inspection.

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

63. Overall, although there is great variation, most children enter the nursery with immature skills in personal development. By the time they leave the reception class, the majority are achieving the *Early Learning Goals* in this area. This shows good achievement and reflects the high quality teaching in both classes.
64. Children are constantly provided with opportunities and encouraged to work independently and feel confident about what they can achieve. In both year groups, children play and work together sensibly and co-operatively. They take turns using the outdoor slide and when making plasticine cakes in the Nursery. They share rakes and spades when searching for coins in the sand in the Reception class. They take their turn and line up sensibly when leaving the classroom for playtime or home time. They walk in pairs carefully around school and speak to people they meet on the way as appropriate.
65. The teacher and nursery nurses provide good role models for the children, treating each other with courtesy and respect. This promotes positive relationships and helps children to see others' points of view. In both classes, the adults work together as a team and often anticipate what they need to do next in the lesson. For example, they knew where to put out baskets for the next activity without being asked to do so. Children, in their turn, co-operate with each other in carrying out activities. For instance, children help each other with the computer without being prompted if one of their friends does not know what to do next.

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

66. Most pupils enter the Nursery with average skills in communication, language and literacy. Pupils' skills in speaking are often more advanced than their skills in listening. By the time they leave the Reception class, most pupils achieve the *Early Learning Goals* in this area. Some exceed these goals in their ability to communicate. All this is because of the good teaching they receive throughout the Foundation Stage.



67. Staff talk to the children with interest and are active listeners. They show that they value the children's efforts at communicating. Because children are encouraged to talk and to share their ideas during whole-class times, many become good at explaining what they are doing. For instance, in the Nursery one little girl re-told the story of the Three Little Pigs to an adult. In the reception class, one girl organised her group of four and performed an impromptu puppet show for the class.
68. In both classes, children enjoy listening to a range of stories and sharing books with each other and adults. Elements of the National Literacy Strategy are used well in the Reception class. Children are developing an appropriate knowledge of letter sounds and are learning to recognise simple words. For example, after re-telling the story of the Enormous Turnip to the class, the Reception teacher used cards to encourage the children to read, "We read a story" and "They pulled and pulled". Higher attaining children were encouraged to "have a go" at writing a sentence themselves about the Enormous Turnip story. These pupils formed their letters correctly and wrote a readable sentence.

### **Mathematical development**

69. Most children enter Nursery with average attainment in mathematics. Consistently good teaching ensures that children make good progress in all aspects of this area, and most enter Year 1 having achieved the *Early Learning Goals* in mathematics.
70. In the Nursery and Reception classes, children are treated as mathematicians, and many opportunities are provided to promote mathematical learning in real life situations. For instance, children in the Nursery arranged themselves, under the guidance of the nursery nurse, into a repeating mathematical pattern. They count how many children are present after the register has been marked. They count on the slabs outside using chalk, paint the number they are learning this week on perspex outside and roll a ball bearing around the shape of a number. Children in Reception recognise simple shapes, such as square, circle, triangle and rectangle. Most can add and subtract one away from a single-digit number, and, as a class, count forwards and backwards in twos and tens.

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

71. Most children enter with a basic general knowledge. They build on this knowledge to help them understand more about the world around them. The teaching is good and includes all aspects of this area of learning. By the time they leave Reception, most have reached the *Early Learning Goals* in this area.
72. Children benefit considerably from the visits made to Pendeford Nature Reserve, where they experience much about the natural world. Nursery children enjoy playing in their garden centre, buying and selling packets of seeds and plants. In the Nursery, children construct models using a magnetic construction kit. In Reception, children identify rough and smooth surfaces by investigating them. They sow seeds and plant summer plants naming them as they are working. In both classes, children use computers independently with confidence. They help each other out if they are stuck with operating programs. They follow instructions in programs appropriately for their age.

### **Physical development**

73. Children enter the Nursery with great variation in their physical skills. Some have never ridden a tricycle previously and others find handling scissors and holding pencils and crayons correctly difficult. On the other hand, some pupils have well-developed physical skills. By the time they enter Year 1, most children attain the *Early Learning Goals*. They do this because the staff provide activities that help them develop these skills, and show them how to handle large play apparatus and small equipment such as scissors.

74. The extensive use made of the outdoor area, physical education and dance lessons all help children in these classes to develop their skills of co-ordination and control. In these lessons, children play and work well together and develop their awareness of space, moving around without bumping into each other. In class, children in the Nursery use their fingers and hands to mark out numbers in the air and have many opportunities to use small equipment and tools such as chalk, paint brushes, pencils and cutters and spatulas.

### **Creative development**

75. This is a strength of the provision in the Foundation Stage. Children enter Nursery with average levels of attainment in this area, and they leave the Reception class with above average attainment. This is due to the expert teaching and skilled provision in music, art and drama provided in both classes.
76. In both classes, children use paint and crayons to explore the effects of colour on pictures and they are encouraged to think and talk about this work. Children in Reception also use pastels showing good control and co-ordination. Children in Reception sing simple songs, such as "The Grand Old Duke of York" and "Everybody do this, just like me" tunefully and they move to music well. A few children move to music with ease and great skill. The majority follow the lead from their teacher and perform a dance as a class. In the lesson during the inspection, the pupils were inspired and performed a dance of a high standard. In another lesson, children in Reception enjoyed the role play of The Enormous Turnip. Some also enjoyed making up their own finger puppet play about animals and the ballerina.

### **ENGLISH**

77. Results in the 2001 National Curriculum tests showed that pupils at the end of Year 2 achieved results in reading and writing that were well above the national average. When compared with results of pupils in similar schools, these results were very high for reading and writing. Both the boys and the girls outperformed their peers nationally. The girls performed better than the boys in these tests. Inspection evidence confirms that most pupils make good progress in English and their attainment is above the national average by the time they reach the end of Year 2 and when they leave school at the end of Year 4. This is an improvement since the previous inspection, when attainment was judged to be similar to the national average.
78. The reasons for improvements in standards include an effective implementation of the National Literacy Strategy, increased time allocated for spelling in Year 1, a structured programme to support pupils' learning of phonics and the introduction of individual targets for all pupils to help increase the progress they make. The full effect of this can be measured through the national test results in 2001 and the evidence from this inspection. The specific needs of the pupils are being met. Achievement for pupils of all abilities is good because the teaching of English is good.
79. Throughout the school, pupils' attainment in speaking and listening is above average. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers and to each other. They answer questions, discuss their work and have the confidence to express their ideas in extended sentences. A valuable weekly session to promote speaking and listening in Year 2 is taken by the special needs co-ordinator and this is very effective in raising standards in these areas. Pupils make good progress with their oral skills as they move through the school; with regular opportunities to discuss their work with their friends and with their teachers. There are many opportunities for pupils to explore speaking and listening, including role-play, drama, sharing books, telling and listening to stories and rhymes. During a visit from a professional theatre group, pupils from Year 4 were given an opportunity to develop their oral skills by taking part in a Shakespearean play. A small minority of pupils lack confidence in their oral skills but teachers respond well to this issue by asking direct questions to reluctant speakers, ensuring that they make a full contribution to lessons.

80. Pupils' attainment in reading is well above average because phonic skills are systematically and effectively taught throughout the school. Pupils in Year 2 read to their teacher and to other adults each week. The home/school reading scheme and diary make a valuable contribution to pupils' reading skills. Pupils enjoy reading and talk about their favourite books and poems. Above average attaining pupils read fluently with expression and apply their knowledge of phonics to help them read unfamiliar words. Pupils at all levels of attainment confidently sound out simple, unfamiliar words. A lower attaining pupil in Year 2 talked about parts of a story he was reading, but showed limited understanding of the vocabulary.
81. Most pupils in Year 4 read accurately. Pupils of average and above-average attainment read challenging texts fluently and with expression. They talk about the story and predict possible endings. Pupils of all abilities can name more than one author and identify fiction and non-fiction texts. A pupil of above average ability read confidently, knew a range of authors, including J. K. Rawlings, J. Wilson, H. Coleman and Roderick Hunt. She also uses the local library to borrow both story and information books. A number of pupils regularly borrow books from the local public library and use the school library to locate information from books. However, when a Year 4 pupil was asked to find a book on plants, the task proved more challenging because the useful 'Code Breaker' chart was not linked to labelling on shelves. Standards in reading in Year 4 is above average and many pupils use high order reading skills such as scanning and using contents well.
82. By the time pupils are seven, their attainment in writing is good. This is because most pupils construct simple sentences accurately, using capital letters, full stops and speech marks. They spell familiar words correctly and make a sensible effort at spelling unfamiliar words. In Year 2, higher achieving pupils often use capital letters, questions and exclamation marks accurately and are beginning to use adjectives effectively. Pupils of average ability show progress in pencil control and are trying to use speech marks accurately. Lower attaining pupils sometimes leave work uncompleted and do not use full stops and capital letters consistently. Pupils are given regular opportunities to write about events in their lives and to retell in written form the stories read to them in class.
83. Pupils continue to make progress in their writing skills as they move through Years 3 and 4. Higher achieving pupils in Year 4 use good sentence structures in their writing and are beginning to organise their work in paragraphs. At best their vocabulary is interesting, precise and well chosen. They have opportunities to write for a range of purposes, in different styles and for a number of audiences, including letters, information text about famous people, such as Martin Luther King, and a range of poetry. Average pupils use connectives well but sometimes mix up their tenses. Below average pupils only spell simple words correctly. They sometimes use full stops or capital letters incorrectly. Although pupils plan their written work, there is limited evidence that they use the all important strategy of drafting and re-drafting in order to improve upon their initial efforts. Omitting this strategy means that pupils do not have chance to improve their work by developing more interesting content and more imaginative and exciting use of language.
84. Handwriting is very well taught by teachers and pupils' handwriting skills are impressive. By the end of Year 2, a significant number of pupils are beginning to join their writing. In Year 4, the majority of pupils are fluent in their use of joined, legible writing. Throughout the school, handwriting is of a high standard because of good teaching. Teachers' hold high expectations of pupils' handwriting.
85. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school. They are supported effectively in lessons and are set appropriate learning targets to enable them to achieve well in relation to their prior levels of attainment. The new computer suite provides an effective learning resource for pupils with special educational needs as they develop their skills in literacy and numeracy using computers.
86. Pupils' attitudes to learning English throughout the school are very good because most pupils listen carefully to their teachers and each other. They concentrate and persevere with their work

well. Pupils understand class routines and their teachers' expectations of them and these help pupils to behave properly and learn effectively. This contributes significantly to pupils' social and moral development.

87. The quality of teaching in lessons seen is good because the teachers are very effective in teaching basic skills and they manage the pupils very well. During the inspection, the teaching of English was good. This is an improvement on the position at the last inspection. In the best lessons, teachers set high expectation for pupils' attainment. In Year 1, pupils work on group tasks that challenge them appropriately at their levels of ability. They respond well to the work set and to the opportunities to take charge of their own learning. For example, during the inspection, a group of pupils worked together to build as many different words as possible by changing the first letter. Other pupils sequenced sentences to tell a story. A third group, guided by the teacher, began to write an introduction to their own fairy tale. Pupils of above-average ability used adjectives and imaginative sentences in their writing that immediately engaged and aroused the interest of the reader. More generally, higher attaining pupils compare and contrast texts well. Pupils with special educational needs are taught by the co-ordinator to attain access to and understand work at their own level. However, in some instances, the teaching is not as good as this and tasks are not sufficiently challenging or appropriately matched to individual needs of the pupils, especially the higher and lower attaining pupils.
88. A further minor weakness in the teaching is that the school's marking policy is not being implemented consistently by all teachers. Pupils' work is thoroughly marked by teachers, but comments and advice to pupils about ways in which they need to improve are not sufficiently frequent to ensure they make the most progress possible. At a wider school level, pupils' progress is monitored closely and individual targets are set for pupils in English.
89. The management of English and literacy is very good because pupils' needs have been carefully analysed and programmes introduced to raise standards. The subject co-ordinator is very clear about the priorities for development in literacy. Overall, not enough opportunities are taken to develop literacy skills in other subjects, for example, in religious education. Resources are good and computers are used effectively to help pupils improve their literacy skills. The school library was refurbished before the last inspection and is well stocked. The pupils benefit from the visit of a county librarian each half term. The special educational needs co-ordinator and learning support assistants greatly support pupils with special educational needs. The provision of homework helps pupils improve in their work, particularly in reading.

## **MATHEMATICS**

90. In 2001, the school's performance in the National Curriculum tests in mathematics was very high in comparison with the national average. A high number of pupils gained the higher level of attainment. Over the past four years, results in these tests have risen steadily and show a significant improvement since the last inspection. A similar picture of high standards is noted as a result of the non-statutory national tests in Year 4. Throughout the school, most pupils make good progress in mathematics as a result of the good teaching they receive.
91. By the end of Year 2, most pupils recognise numbers to 100 and many numbers up to 1000. They apply their knowledge to simple problem solving exercises. For instance, in a lesson during the inspection, Year 2 pupils calculated the number of chocolate bars that were needed to complete a metre in length. They recognise two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes, measure in centimetres and metres and tell and record the time to half and quarter hours. In Year 4, pupils were confident with recognizing numbers up to 10,000. Most knew their tables up to their six times table as well as their ten times table. They produce and interpret pictographs with confidence and understanding.
92. The teaching of mathematics and numeracy is good. Teachers have enough expertise to teach the subject well. They explain mathematical concepts clearly and check on pupils' understanding by asking probing questions. Pupils are given good opportunities to talk about the methods they

have used to solve problems. This occurred during the Year 2 lesson investigating the length of chocolate bars. Teaching is most effective when the pace of learning is brisk and pupils' thinking is suitably challenged. This was the case during the lesson on handling data in Year 4. Teachers use resources well, including the use of computers. Teachers gain good support from learning support assistants and volunteer parent helpers. However, progress is hindered because marking does not always indicate what is good about pupils' work and what pupils need to do to improve it. Overall, the quality of teaching of mathematics has improved considerably since the last inspection.

93. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs are supported effectively. For example, in a Year 1 lesson the learning support assistant helped the lower attaining pupils to understand and gain confidence in learning about money in a practical way. In a Year 3/4 lesson, the teacher with responsibility for special educational needs was reinforcing simple fractions in a brisk, interesting and encouraging manner. However, on occasions, higher attaining pupils are not challenged enough and these pupils do not make the progress they should.
94. The school is implementing the National Numeracy Strategy and the national programme of study for mathematics well. Good opportunities are taken to use pupils' numerical skills in other subjects. For instance, in a Year 4 science lesson, subtraction calculations were used to conclude which materials acted as the most effective insulators against heat loss. In a Year 2 music lesson, pupils counted out the beat of the music as they learned how to clap out simple rhythms. Computers are used effectively to help pupils learn in mathematics.
95. The numeracy co-ordinator provides a clear direction for the subject. She understands the strengths and weaknesses in mathematics. This is as a result of systematic monitoring and evaluating of teachers' plans and pupils' work. The co-ordinator helps teachers with setting targets for improvement for pupils. The co-ordinator has monitored the teaching in lessons, but not yet often enough. There is a good range of resources for teaching mathematics.

## SCIENCE

96. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 is well above the national average. In the 2001 national teacher assessments, the proportion of seven-year-olds attaining the nationally expected level in comparison to all schools and those in similar contexts was well above average. It was in the top five per cent of schools nationally. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level was also well above the national average. Pupils' attainment was not as high as this in investigative science, where it was at the national average. Pupils' attainment in Years 3 and 4 is also above average. This is indicated by the high results attained in the national non-statutory tests at the end of Year 4. Inspection evidence from the work seen and from lessons indicates that, throughout the school, pupils of all abilities make good progress in science and that their achievement over time is very good. This is because of the good teaching that allows pupils to carry out their own investigations and understand scientific principles for themselves. Standards in science have improved significantly since the last inspection.
97. By the end of Year 2, pupils have learned how to plan an investigation to find out what makes plants grow. For instance, during the inspection pupils in Year 2 were learning how to carry out a fair test in order to identify what features make plants grow best. They know names for parts of plants. They sort materials by their properties. For instance, Year 2 sorted materials out by their weight and by their texture. They understand that materials can change significantly. For example, wool changes considerably from being on a sheep to being in a pullover. They investigate the effects of pushing and pulling on objects and can make a simple electrical circuit. By the end of Year 4, pupils have studied the human skeleton and its muscles. They have investigated that some solids, such as ice and chocolate, change into liquids when heated but revert back to solids when cooled down. They understand that some objects make good conductors and insulators. In Year 4, for example, pupils carried out experiments using different objects, such as paper clips, metal rods, plastic rulers and rubbers to see which acted best as a conductor or insulator.

98. Nearly all pupils enjoy science lessons. They like carrying out investigations and learning first-hand for themselves. They are keen to take part in lessons, behave well and work hard in the subject. This is a more positive picture than that at the last inspection. Overall, when they are carrying out investigations, pupils do not think enough and use their initiative to try to work out why things happen.
99. The quality of the teaching throughout the school is good. It is better than it was at the last inspection. At best, lessons are planned very well and include clear learning objectives. These are shared with the pupils so that they know what they are going to learn. Activities are prepared very well with all the equipment and materials to hand. Teachers set clear expectations of what different groups of pupils can achieve and set tasks to reflect this. For instance, higher attaining pupils are expected to record their work more extensively than lower attaining pupils. Teachers provide good direct teaching during lessons to help pupils understand the scientific principles they are discovering in their work. They ask pupils probing questions that extend their learning. These good features of the teaching help pupils to improve their learning and account for the high standards being achieved in Years 2 and 4.
100. However, in scrutinising pupils' work, it is clear that the teaching of science is not always as good as this. On a number of occasions, all the pupils carry out the same tasks in the same way. When this happens, not enough challenge is being provided for high attaining pupils and not enough help for lower attaining pupils. In addition, teachers' marking does not indicate often enough what is good about the work and what needs to be done to improve it. Not enough use is made of computers in science.
101. Science is well led and well co-ordinated throughout the school. There is a sound policy for the subject and the scheme of work wisely takes due account of national guidance. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning for science and carries out book scans of pupils' work in order to judge the strengths and weaknesses in the subject. As a result of this, an action plan, indicating appropriate priorities for the subject has been produced. This is good practice.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

102. Pupils' attainment in art and design at the end of Years 2 and 4 is above average. It was possible to observe only one art and design lesson during the inspection; the judgement is made from that lesson in addition to displays of pupils' work, talking to pupils and examining photographic records of pupils' work. The standard of work displayed in classrooms and around the school is of a good quality, encouraging pupils to recognise the level of work that teachers expect and to reaffirm the value attached to their contributions. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in art and design. This is an improvement since the previous inspection, when standards were judged to be about average throughout the school. Pupils achieve better than at the time of the previous inspection because there is now a detailed scheme of work for art and design and pupils are taught well across a wide range of skills using a range of materials, including paint, pastels and charcoal.
103. Year 1 pupils experiment with mixing colours, using pencils and pastels and texture. They use mirrors to help them observe their facial features as they paint a self-portrait. They use line and colour when their artistic and geographical skills combine to illustrate and enliven the journey of Red Riding Hood as she walks through the wood to visit her grandmother. In Year 2, pupils develop their observational skills as they study and reproduce willow pattern designs and experiment with tone and colour to make a class collage that creates the bright, sparkly atmosphere of a cold winter's day. They explore texture when using paper, twigs and wool to create a spider's web.
104. Pupils in Year 4 build up repeat patterns, overlapping to create new shapes. They use more detailed artistic skills as they study part of a portrait and extend the lines, shapes and tones to

complete the portrait. The development of their observational skills and use of water-colours to create a range of tones is shown in their impressive still life pictures.

105. Pupils' attitudes to learning in art throughout the school are good because teachers plan carefully to enable pupils to succeed and recognise that their contributions are valued. There is a popular Art and Craft club in which pupils study artistic techniques in more depth. In this club, they work with a wide range of materials to produce two-dimensional and three-dimensional works of art. Classroom curriculum time is insufficient to allow such in-depth studies. A ceramic tree, exhibited in the entrance hall, was created by the pupils under the guidance of a professional artist. This acts as a stimulus to inspire pupils to emulate such high quality work.
106. In the one lesson seen in Year 4, the teaching was very good. The work in previous lessons had focused on Indian and Islamic patterns. This provided a starting point for the observed lesson. Pupils were asked to make templates and build up repeated patterns so that they overlapped to create a feeling of texture. The teacher provided good individual feedback to pupils that motivated them, enabling them to be more productive and understandably proud of their achievements.
107. Computers are used effectively in art throughout the school. Some classes make good use of sketchbooks, which helps pupils to design their work. Pupils sketch good quality illustrations and diagrams to support their work in history, geography and religious education.
108. The management of the subject is good. The subject co-ordinator is an experienced professional artist and this is evident in the detail of her expectations for good quality experiences for all pupils. She looks at teachers' plans but, at present, does not monitor teaching and learning to ensure that pupils achieve their best. The assessment of pupils' skills is not formally developed. However, the subject co-ordinator has identified these points for development in the action plan produced for the subject. There is an impressive photographic record of pupils' work. There is a good range of resources for art and these are organised well.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

109. Pupils' attainment at the end of Years 2 and 4 is that expected for their ages. It was possible to observe only one design and technology lesson during the inspection. Judgements have been formed from a range of evidence, including the lesson observation, displays of pupils' work and by talking to teachers and pupils. Standards are not the same as at the last inspection, when they were judged to be above average. This is because the school has addressed many other priorities since the last inspection and design and technology has not received a high profile during the past few years.
110. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make at least satisfactory progress in design and technology. Pupils' achievement over time is sound because a detailed scheme of work is being taught that is updated by the subject co-ordinator as a result of her monitoring activities.
111. In the lesson seen in Year 3, pupils tried different ways of making a free standing structure. They moved around in groups, taking turns to experiment with different materials. The lesson was well planned and gave pupils good opportunities to find ways of strengthening paper to support an object, to layer, fold and shape card and build structures using lego-type equipment. The activities were interesting but lacked the challenge of having an identified outcome. Despite this, the pupils worked well.
112. In conversation, Year 2 pupils discussed the details of making puppets and recalled how they made a 'jack-in-the-box' using a sliding mechanism when they were in Year 1. They explained their designs for making a vehicle and how they decided on the tools and materials to use.
113. Year 4 pupils talked about making science fiction models at home for future work in school. There was no evidence of designing and making during the inspection but pupils' books show that

designs are created, recorded and used to decide what tools or materials will be used. This is good practice.

114. Pupils' attitudes to learning design and technology are good. Most clearly enjoy their learning and have some understanding of the reasons for designing and testing materials before they make an item. Pupils discuss their work with enthusiasm and satisfaction. They enjoy and benefit from working together and with their teachers. The way pupils work in design and technology makes a valuable contribution to the development of pupils' social skills.
115. It is not possible to make a secure judgement on the quality of teaching on the basis of the one lesson observed. However, there are detailed plans within the scheme of work and pupils talk about how they design, choose and use equipment and materials to make a product. There was limited evidence that pupils developed their design skills through amending, adapting and evaluating their work. Little evidence was available to show how pupils practise precise cutting and measuring skills. Good links between literacy and design and technology were noted.
116. The management of the subject is good. There is a sound policy for the subject that is supported by a good scheme of work. A good action plan has been produced that identifies appropriate priorities for improving standards. Among its priorities, the school is aware that the designing and evaluating processes require further development. There is a portfolio of photographs that is useful as a means of recording pupils' models. This would be more effective if it included written work from pupils - for example, evaluations of the process and of the finished product. Assessments of pupils' work are reported well to parents twice a year. Resources for design and technology are satisfactory.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

117. Standards in Years 2 and 4 have improved since the last inspection and are now at nationally expected levels. Throughout the school pupils make sound progress in geography.
118. By the end of Year 2, most pupils are developing appropriate geographical skills for their age. They understand the relationship between some places and are developing their mapping skills. For example, some Year 1 pupils drew a good quality map of Red Riding Hood's walk to Grannie's house. During a lesson in Year 1, pupils were looking at bird's eye view photographs, prepared by the teacher, of the locality of the school. They picked out key features of their locality, which they were able to do very well. Computers were used to help with this activity. Several pupils, including one with special educational needs, worked with a learning support assistant on views of every day objects seen from above. Year 2 pupils compared Codsall with Struay and produced some good work about the differences between the two places. Year 2 pupils understand some of the similarities and differences between where they live and Tocuaro in Mexico. These pupils increase their geographical skills by working on maps featuring the development over time of settlements. Year 4 pupils make comparisons between the village of Chembakolli in India and Codsall, using geographical terms, and use a globe and maps to find out where Chembakolli is situated.
119. Inspection evidence indicates that the teaching of geography is satisfactory overall. In the lesson observed during the inspection, there were good features to the teaching. These included good questioning, clear instructions to pupils, appropriate activities being set and good use made of resources. However, the pace of the lesson was too slow. A more general weakness in the teaching is that teachers too often use poor quality work sheets that do not challenge pupils' thinking enough. A further general weakness in the teaching is that teachers do not set enough tasks that are pitched at the correct level for pupils' abilities. Some tasks are too easy for higher attaining pupils and too hard for lower attaining pupils.
120. The co-ordinator provides a clear direction for the work in geography. A sound policy, supported by a scheme of work that takes account of national guidance, helps teachers in their planning. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' plans and reviews pupils' work with the teachers. The



assessment of pupils' work takes place after each unit. This is sound practice. The co-ordinator has also set up the Eco School scheme. This valuable initiative is raising pupils' awareness of environmental issues in the school. For example, litter is collected daily from each class; trees have also been planted. A good range of resources is available for geography. Computers are being used increasingly.

## **HISTORY**

121. Standards are similar to those found at the last inspection and are still above nationally expected levels at the end of Years 2 and 4. Throughout the school, most pupils make good progress in history.
122. By the end of Year 2, most pupils have an understanding of the past through the lives of famous people and events. For example, in Year 1 the life of Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot were discussed and acted out in role-play with pupils acting the parts of characters central to this story. In Year 2, The Great Fire of London is studied. At the beginning of history topics in Year 2, pupils discuss questions that they ask their teacher. These are then answered during subsequent history lessons. For example, pupils were asked, "How was the fire spread? How was it dealt with? How is this different from how we deal with fires today?". A topic on Poppy Day last term included a visit to the local War Memorial. The work produced from this visit showed pupils' sensitivity and understanding of the recent past. Most children in Year 2 have developed a simple understanding of chronology.
123. Pupils in Year 3 can discuss events in the daily lives of the Vikings, their travels and country of origin. Year 4 pupils have been taught about life in Britain during the Second World War. They experienced a day when they dressed up and undertook activities that might have taken place during the evacuation. They know that rationing took place during the Second World War. The majority of Year 4 pupils have a good understanding of chronology. They can put in the correct order the topics of The Great Fire of London, The Second World War, Guy Fawkes, The Ancient Greeks and the Vikings.
124. Evidence from reviewing pupils' work, discussions with pupils, school photographs and teachers' planning indicates that history is taught well throughout the school. The teaching in the one lesson observed in Year 2 was good. The teacher showed good subject knowledge, good questioning skills, enthusiasm and was well organised. Computers were used effectively in this lesson. A group of pupils went to the ICT suite to find out more facts and information about The Great Fire of London. A further strength of the teaching was that tasks set for pupils were matched to their abilities and needs. Low attaining pupils were supported appropriately with their tasks in this lesson. However, this is not always evident in all history lessons. The review of pupils' work undertaken during the inspection showed that the same work is often undertaken by pupils of all abilities. This slows down the progress made by both high and low attaining pupils. There are good links with other subjects, such as literacy and art, in history lessons.
125. A sound policy and appropriate scheme of work for history, based on national guidance, are used in the teaching. The co-ordinator works effectively to support teachers in their planning. She monitors teachers' plans and pupils' work to ensure that the curriculum is being taught as intended. Assessment of pupils' progress and evaluations of the history units taught are used to plan further work in history. This is good practice. There are enough resources to teach the school's scheme of work.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

126. Only two discrete ICT lessons were seen during the inspection but from observation of pupils using computers for other subjects, work seen and records kept, standards, overall, are above average. Standards in ICT are at least at levels expected for the age of pupils at the end of Year

2. They are above those levels by the end of Year 4. Pupils make good progress in ICT because they are interested in computers and are well supported when using them. This is as a result of the school's establishing the new computer suite. This provides pupils with increased opportunities for learning specific computer skills. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.
127. Year 1 pupils develop computer skills by following simple programs. They use icons to visit rooms in the house of Goldilocks and write a simple sentence to place in each room. In Year 2, most pupils load, use and quit programs independently and highlight, save and retrieve their work. They use text to change colours, fonts, shapes and block areas. Pupils talk about using a floor robot in Years 1 and 2.
128. In Year 3, pupils continue to use text and pictures when they write about the Vikings. In Year 4, they word process a set of instructions and create persuasive captions for their work. They set out their word processing appropriately. Teachers' records indicate that pupils print out from the Internet. ICT is planned and used in a range of subjects. For example, in art, teachers provide opportunities for pupils to experiment with colours, shapes and patterns using the computer. Computers are also used by pupils in their work in literacy, numeracy, history and geography. It is used particularly well to support pupils with special educational needs in literacy and numeracy.
129. Inspection evidence indicates that the teaching of ICT is good. Teachers are confident using computers and manage pupils well in lessons. They plan lessons effectively. Year 2 pupils work effectively with a learning support assistant and a parent. Both adults ask pupils probing questions to prompt them to try out new techniques until they find the correct solution. Pupils are developing in a sound way their knowledge of basic computer skills.
130. In Year 4, the teacher clearly explains the purpose of the lesson and with the help of a parent ensures that all pupils are successful in their work. However, there is some delay as pupils wait for help. Progress could be increased with the help of a teaching screen, enabling the teacher to demonstrate methods and to correct misunderstandings with the whole class. The school is reviewing and updating its own website.
131. Throughout the school, pupils are enthusiastic about ICT and, as many have access to computers at home, they are keen to learn more about computers. Their attitudes to computer lessons are very positive. They listen carefully and develop skills successfully and show a high level of confidence in the subject. Most are keen to move on to harder challenges and demonstrate a real sense of achievement when they discuss their work.
132. The new co-ordinator has been in the school for only a short time and is well aware of the priorities for further development. Useful procedures for assessing pupils' skills in ICT have been developed. A number of initiatives have helped the development of ICT since the last inspection. All the staff have received training and the computer suite now enables large group teaching and encourages the teaching of subject specific skills. As yet, there is insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning in the classroom and in the computer suite. The co-ordinator recognises that the pace of learning could be increased with the use of a teaching screen. Computer resources are good.

## **MUSIC**

133. Evidence for the judgements made comes from the observation of one lesson in Year 2, observation of a recorder club for pupils in Years 3 and 4, conversations about music with pupils in Years 2 and 4 and a discussion with the co-ordinator. Standards attained by pupils in Year 2 are above average. This is due to the very good teaching they receive from the music specialist on the staff. This is a similar picture as at the last inspection. Lack of evidence means that no judgements can be made about standards and the teaching in Years 3 and 4.

134. Throughout the school pupils enjoy singing and sing tunefully. In Year 2, nearly all can identify and clap to simple rhythms. Many can vary their responses to these rhythms by clapping, tapping their shoulders and heads and then resting. Lower attaining pupils find the complexity of creating such a rhythm beyond them. Higher attaining pupils are able to achieve this. This was the case during a music lesson with Year 2 pupils during the inspection. In the recorder club, pupils from Years 3 and 4 played their recorders well and kept in time with each other and the music.
135. The teaching of music is very good. The co-ordinator is a music specialist and she teaches music throughout the school. The teaching proceeds at a brisk pace and includes a variety of activities. Pupils respond to these activities eagerly and with obvious enjoyment. For instance, during the inspection, Year 2 pupils sang and clapped the rhythm to "Walking through the jungle I met a tiger". Pupils enjoyed this task and revelled in creating the sound of each of the animals. The teacher holds high expectations of pupils' responses to music and pupils respond to them by trying hard and achieving what is being asked of them. Pupils are managed very well and relationships are very good. These very good features of the teaching help pupils to learn and enjoy music in lessons and in other musical activities.
136. Pupils' progress in music is recorded conscientiously by the co-ordinator. She writes the music element for pupils' annual reports and completes the transfer record for pupils at the end of Year 4 as they move to middle school. The transfer record includes the different elements of music – singing and pitch, rhythm and composition. In doing so, the co-ordinator is guided by the levels of attainment in the National Curriculum at the end of Year 2 and by national guidance at the end of Year 4. All this is good practice.
137. The school provides a varied and interesting range of musical activities for pupils. The National Curriculum programme of study is taught systematically. Extra musical opportunities are provided through the weekly recorder club attended by about 30 pupils; the weekly singing club and instrumental tuition for the violin, taken up by seven pupils, is provided by the local education authority. Many pupils took part in the area music festival and the county festival that was staged at Litchfield Cathedral. Many pupils take part in special assemblies by singing and playing instruments, and some sing for the old people at Christmas. Some pupils also sing in the local church at Harvest time. The music curriculum is well organised and managed by the co-ordinator.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

138. It was possible to observe only two lessons, in gymnastics, during the inspection. Standards observed in Year 2 are above the nationally expected level for these pupils. Further inspection evidence gained from discussions with staff and pupils and photographic evidence indicate that the level of attainment in gymnastics is above average. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils make good progress in gymnastics as a result of keen and effective teaching. Swimming records show that half the Year 3 pupils can swim at least 25 metres, and in Year 4 nearly all pupils achieve this level. This is well above national expectations for this age group. Awards from the Staffordshire Swimming Scheme are presented in assembly. Lack of evidence means that it is not possible to judge standards in games or dance.
139. Two gymnastic lessons were observed, one in Year 1, the other in Year 2. In Year 1, pupils carried out a sequence of movements. This included a jump and a roll. In Year 2, pupils were creating their own sequence of movement and then "freezing". Teachers' planning and time tabling showed that during the half-term period pupils in Years 1 and 2 are also taught games. Pupils in Year 3 are taught dance and swimming, and in Year 4, dance, outdoor and adventurous activities and games. Most Year 4 pupils visit the Kingswood residential centre for three days in February. Here they have the opportunity to undertake new activities, such as rock climbing, canoeing, archery and go-carting. They also experience outdoor skills in orienteering.
140. The teaching observed during the inspection was at least satisfactory, and in one of the lessons was good. Features of the good teaching are the ability of the teacher to ask open ended

questions, good lesson preparation and organization and the use of praise. The teacher used pupils to demonstrate good movements, and these were evaluated by their class mates. Where the teaching did not have enough pace, pupils lacked interest and became bored. On these occasions, they needed more challenge. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well in physical education. Both boys and girls are given equality of access and opportunity in physical education.

141. The co-ordinator provides good leadership of the subject. She monitors teachers' planning and ensures that it is based upon national and local guidance. Resources are good and have been improved since the last inspection. There is now a large folding climbing frame in the hall together with beams and benches. These have greatly improved opportunities for pupils, particularly in gymnastics.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

142. Judgements are based upon the evidence gained from two lesson observations, scrutiny of all the work pupils have completed this school year and conversations with pupils from Year 2 and Year 4. Standards attained by pupils In Years 2 and 4 are average for their ages. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in the subject. This is due to the sound teaching in religious education. This is a similar picture as at the last inspection.
143. By the end of Year 2, pupils learn about some Christian festivals such as harvest and Christmas. They learn about the welcoming ceremonies in Christianity and Hinduism and understand the importance of special books in religion, such as the Qur'an in Islam and the Bible in Christianity. They learn lessons from religion by considering special people. They reflect on why they are special and why people close to them, such as family members, are special. They also consider other special people in religion, such as Jesus in Christianity. By the end of Year 4, pupils learn some of the practices and symbols from a number of the world's major religions, such as Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Sikhism. They know about the feast of the Passover in Judaism and of the Jewish festival of light, Hanukkah. They learn about some of the world's great leaders, such as Martin Luther King and Gandhi, and learn lessons from their beliefs and principles. They learn from religion and apply some principles to their own behaviour and lives.
144. Overall, the teaching of religious education is satisfactory. Teachers' lesson planning is generally sound and reflects, as required, the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Preparation of books and materials for lessons is good; their availability and accessibility enable lessons to be taught at a brisk pace. Teachers' subject knowledge of a range of religious practices is sound. This is evident in lessons that include knowledge and understanding from a number of religions, such as Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and Islam. Religious education is taught sensitively and this encourages pupils to understand why people think, believe and act differently from the way they do. This is good practice. These positive features of teaching help pupils to make sound progress in religious education.
145. However, there are weaknesses within the teaching of the subject. Tasks set for pupils are not always pitched at the level of their prior attainment. Too often pupils of all abilities are asked to carry out the same tasks. This means that high attaining pupils find them too easy and low attaining pupils too hard. Teachers do not always mark pupils' work indicating what is good about it or how it can be improved. Pupils are asked to draw and colour simple pictures too much as a way of recording their learning. Not enough opportunities are taken to consolidate pupils' literacy skills by asking them to write down what they have learned. Each of these factors prevents pupils of all abilities, especially high attaining pupils, from making the progress they should. For example, during the inspection a number of pupils became confused about the practices and symbols from different religions; their knowledge and understanding of the differences between religious practices had not been consolidated enough.

146. The leadership and management of the subject are good. In spite of the subject not being a priority within the school's development over the past few years, the co-ordinator has ensured through monitoring teachers' plans that the locally agreed syllabus is taught in all classes for an appropriate length of time. There is an adequate range of resources to teach the subject. However, to make lessons more interesting, a greater range of resources from different religions is needed. The school is seeking to purchase more big books of a religious content in order to teach aspects of religious education in literacy lessons. This is sound thinking. The school does not make enough use of computers in religious education.