

INSPECTION REPORT

NEWTON WESTPARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Leigh, Wigan

LEA area: Wigan

Unique reference number: 106422

Headteacher: Mrs L Carroll

Reporting inspector: Mrs Sonja Øyen
7167

Dates of inspection: 7 – 10 May 2002

Inspection number: 195065

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Tennyson Avenue Leigh
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Cllr Anne Turnock
Date of previous inspection:	3 - 6 June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
7167	Mrs Sonja Øyen	Registered inspector	The Foundation Stage Information and communication technology Music	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9649	Mrs Jean Smith	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30651	Mrs Margaret Entwistle	Team inspector	Special educational needs English Geography History Religious education English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

17913	Mr Brian Frost	Team inspector	Mathematics Science Art and design Design and technology Physical education Equal opportunities	
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	12
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	17
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	21
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	25
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	28
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	29
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	33
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	34
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	38

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Newton Westpark Primary School is in West Leigh, an Education Action Zone. It is a community school with 186 pupils, making it smaller than most primaries. The number on roll has fallen slightly since the last inspection in 1997. There are more boys than girls overall, and in some year groups the boys considerably outnumber the girls. Most pupils live in the immediate area and there is a growing, marked incidence of pupils joining and leaving during the school year. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups and none has English as an additional language. Half the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs. This is more than twice the national average. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational need is three times the national average. Thirty-seven pupils (20 per cent) receive support from external agencies, predominantly for emotional and behavioural needs as well as physical, speech and learning needs. Sixty pupils are eligible for free school meals. At 32 per cent, this is almost twice the national average. The school also has a significant number of pupils in the care of the local authority. Pupils' attainment on entry to school varies from year to year but is generally well below that expected for their age, especially in speech and social skills. Some pupils have attended the pre-school group held in the school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Newton Westpark is successful in meeting its mission statement of "*working together, learning together, sharing and caring together*". The school has effective systems to develop the pupils' social skills. The headteacher provides strong leadership in sustaining a positive climate for learning and the pupils want to be at school. The reception children and the pupils in Year 6 achieve particularly well because of good teaching. The good team approach, satisfactory teaching and commitment of all the staff to the pupils ensure the school provides a satisfactory quality of education. The parents rightly value the hard work of the staff in supporting the pupils, particularly those with special educational needs. Standards are low and only rising slowly as there are too many variations in the teaching from year to year. Overall, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- It gives the reception children a good start because of the very good teaching and a wide range of activities throughout the year.
- The headteacher is very successful in developing the pupils' respect for others, for the school and its achievements.
- Every pupil is valued; all the staff show a high level of care and concern for the pupils and cope well with those who find it hard to control their behaviour and feelings.
- It provides good quality support for pupils with special educational needs.
- There is a strong team spirit and sense of community where values are shared and understood.

What could be improved

- Pupils' attainment and achievement in reading, writing, mental mathematics, science, ICT and music.
- The teachers' use of assessment and marking to identify where the pupils need to improve.
- The challenge for the higher attaining pupils.
- The gathering and analysis of information to show where improvements in teaching, learning and the curriculum can be made.
- The effectiveness of governors, senior staff and subject leaders in raising standards.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory improvement overall since the inspection in 1997. It has dealt with aspects of the five key issues but been more successful in some than others. Financial management procedures are now secure and information to parents meets all statutory requirements. A rise in standards has brought the school's performance closer to that of similar schools in mathematics and ICT. However, the need to raise standards further and to improve the quality of assessment, monitoring and evaluation remain as areas for development even though the school has acted on the recommendations given in 1997. Inconsistencies in procedures and in the critical use of information to pinpoint exactly what needs to be done, partly explain why the school's progress has been patchy in raising standards. Other key factors have been the absence of senior staff and the high demands on the headteacher's time to deal with social and behavioural issues. In so doing, however, she has strengthened the climate for learning and the team spirit evident throughout the school. The recent appointment of a deputy headteacher brings the management team back to full strength and places the school in a good position to accelerate the programme of improvement.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
English	D	E	E	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E lowest 5% schools E*
Mathematics	E	E	E	D	
Science	E	E*	E*	E	

Over time, many pupils make good progress but variation in the quality of teaching and the pace of learning is keeping standards low. Since the last inspection, standards have risen slightly. In 2001, nearly all the Year 2 pupils reached the level expected for their age and almost one in three did better in reading and mathematics. This year standards are similar in mathematics but have dipped in science. Too few Year 2 pupils have reached the level expected for their age. Many are just in the early stages of reading and writing because the teaching has not moved them enough. Higher attaining pupils have also not reached their potential. In 2001, the school's results for Year 6 pupils were not as good as those of similar schools and little has changed this year. Not enough pupils are reaching the level expected for their age, especially in English. This in part reflects the low attainment of a high number of pupils with special educational needs who nevertheless achieve well over time. Good, systematic teaching and revision sessions have lifted the Year 6 pupils' performance, especially that of the lower attaining pupils in science and mathematics, where pupils do best. The school's target of 75 per cent Level 4 attainment in English is highly challenging. Too many pupils find it hard to apply what they learn in lessons. Their difficulty in explaining and justifying their views affects their attainment in other subjects, notably science. Standards are rising in ICT but the school has some way to go to catch up with most schools. Standards are satisfactory in art and design, design and technology, geography, history, physical education and religious education. In music, standards are unsatisfactory. The children in the reception year have made good progress in all six areas of learning and most are on track to reach the standard expected for their age.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good; the pupils like being at school and most try hard in class.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory; in lessons, the volatility and low self-discipline of a few pupils lowers the good behaviour of most and their work rate slows.
Personal development and relationships	Good; boys and girls generally get on well together and many show a strong close tie to adults they particularly like and respect.
Attendance	Satisfactory; most pupils attend regularly and are on time for school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. The profile has improved since the last inspection with a much lower incidence of unsatisfactory teaching. However, it is not as strong as seen nationally. There is much good teaching for the junior pupils, especially in Year 6. Low expectations of what the pupils can do and a lack of explicit teaching have limited the learning of Year 2 pupils. As in the last inspection, the strongest teaching is for the youngest pupils. The reception year children make really good strides in their learning because of the very good partnership of the teacher and nursery nurse and well focussed teaching that encourages the children to show initiative and have a go at new things. A common teaching strength throughout the school is the commitment of the teachers and learning assistants, whose good quality support contributes much to pupils' achievement.

The teaching of English and mathematics is satisfactory and pupils learn well the basic skills of reading, writing and number. However, inconsistencies in the teaching mean pupils are slower to write expressively and to see relationships between numbers. Only in the better lessons do the teachers ask challenging questions, reinforce key learning points and use resources that really engage the pupils. The teachers too often expect the higher attaining pupils to do more of the same rather than more challenging work. Recent training and the support of the co-ordinator have increased the teachers' confidence and expertise in teaching ICT. The pupils are learning quickly although they have too little time to practise their skills.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall; most time is given to teaching basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics but opportunities are missed to develop and apply them in other subjects. The reception year children experience a good range of activities over the year.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good; the adults are very caring and provide effective support that helps the pupils make good progress towards their individual targets.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good; the headteacher is a very strong model in showing and expecting respect for all. The daily sessions of outdoor social activities ensure that pupils of all ages play and learn together to follow rules. Less emphasis is placed on fostering the pupils' skills in reflecting on their experiences to develop personal insights.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall; very good features are the procedures to foster pupils' good behaviour and those for the pupils' safety and welfare. The teachers know the pupils well but there are unsatisfactory gaps in the way they record the pupils' progress and assess their attainment.

The headteacher and staff know many of the families very well and encourage parents and carers to help their children. This is at its best in the pre-school group, run by the reception class teacher and nursery nurse, and in the regular borrowing of mathematics games to play at home.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory overall; the good lead given by the headteacher has developed many aspects of the school's work and heightened team spirit. Others are not as active in driving the improvement programme.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory; the governors meet their responsibilities but rely too heavily on the headteacher for information and guidance.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory but developing; the school compares itself with others, is tracking the pupils' progress and setting targets for attainment. However, it is not analysing sufficiently the information available to find out where improvements are needed.
The strategic use of resources	Good; funds are used well to support the pupils' learning and to develop further links with the community. The ICT suite is frequently used but classroom computers are not. Some lessons are too long.

The school has a high number of learning assistants who provide good support for those with particular needs. The caretaker, headteacher and staff take pride in keeping the accommodation orderly, safe and welcoming. Pupils' work is attractively displayed. The school seeks best value in its purchases, consults parents on major matters and sets challenging targets. It has much difficulty in appointing parents as school governors.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children are expected to work hard. • They feel welcome in the school and comfortable about broaching concerns. • The teaching is good. • The school is well led and managed. • Parents feel well informed about their children's progress. • Their children like school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside lessons. • The children's behaviour.

Many of the things that please the parents reflect what the school does well. Much of the teaching is good although not consistent enough to raise standards markedly. Like many other primary schools, Newton Westpark offers a limited range of activities after school but visits and visitors enrich the pupils' learning experiences. The poor behaviour of a few pupils tends to overshadow the good behaviour of most.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards are below average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Although a higher percentage of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils than seen nationally have not reached the level expected for their age, the majority have made good progress from a low starting point. Half of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs. A significant number do well and reach the level expected for their age but the low attainment of most is reflected in the school's test results.
2. In 2001, the school's overall results for Year 6 pupils in the national tests were well below the national average, and below those of similar schools, in English and mathematics. In science, the results placed the school in the lowest five per cent of all schools. Nevertheless, standards were higher than in 2000 in all three subjects. Since 1997, standards have not risen significantly. Because national standards have risen, the gap has widened between the school's results and the national average. In 2000, this was most apparent in science where the pupils were a year's progress behind pupils nationally. An analysis of the pupils' performance helped to show where curriculum changes were needed and this year, standards are higher. Most pupils have attained the level expected for their age and a small percentage even better. Standards have also risen in English and mathematics and brought the school closer to the average of similar schools but not to national averages.
3. The picture for Year 2 pupils shows a reverse trend. Since the last inspection in 1997, when the school's overall results in reading and writing were very low, standards have risen at a far faster pace than seen nationally. In 2001, the school's results in reading were the closest to the national average they had ever been, although still below, and above the average of similar schools. The school did even better in mathematics. The 2001 results almost matched the national average. Newton Westpark did far better than most similar schools as a significant percentage of pupils did well for their age. In fact, the percentage attaining Level 3, the level higher than that expected for their age, matched the national average. This was a significant achievement for the school. In writing, however, the poorer performance of the boys stalled the improvement seen in previous years. No pupil did well for their age and almost double the national average failed to reach Level 2. This meant the school's results were below the average of similar schools and well below the national average.
4. Inspection evidence indicates that standards have fallen because of weaknesses in teaching for the Year 2 pupils. There is little evidence in pupils' work that the good standards in mathematics in 2001 will be sustained this year. The higher attaining pupils have done well in reading but in writing have not fulfilled the potential shown in September. Similarly, in science, higher attaining pupils have not been challenged enough to ensure they do well. Standards remain low.
5. When the children start in the reception class, their attainment varies but is generally well below that expected for their age. School evidence indicates that the profile of the current class is stronger than classes of previous years, but even so, it remained below that expected and very few children showed good knowledge and skill. This partly reflects the relatively low incidence of children attending nurseries but also immaturity in social and personal skills, communication and physical skills. In 2000,

the results of the assessments of the children's attainment in their first term, placed Newton Westpark 109th out of 110 schools in reading and mathematics.

6. All the reception children achieve well because of very good teaching and a good programme of activities over the year. By the time they enter Year 1, most have made marked progress in their attitude to learning and in their skills in getting on with others as well in reading, writing and number. For example, school records show that last year, most of the children left the reception class knowing letters and sounds and were beginning to read and write. This year, the children are on target to reach the standard expected for their age in all six areas of learning. The higher attaining children have already met the standard in counting and work is planned to boost their progress in reading and writing. A few are already reading and writing independently and this places the school in a good position to build on their attainment in Years 1 and 2 and to look to higher standards in 2004.
7. Two factors that help to account for the good progress of this year's reception children are the small class size of 20 and the very effective partnership of the teacher and nursery nurse in leading class and small group sessions. The achievement of the higher attaining children has not always been high enough. In some cases this is because the range of resources is too limited, as in creative development, or because the teacher's expectations have been too conservative, as in writing. In the area of mathematical development, the emphasis on practical work has extended the children's thinking especially in number.
8. The pupils' overall progress in Years 1 and 2 is generally satisfactory. However, it varies between the year groups and between groups of pupils of differing attainment. Year 1 pupils' work since September shows that the average and higher attaining pupils have made best progress in writing. This is less true for Year 2 pupils. Forty per cent have been identified as having special educational needs and thirty per cent of the class receive support from outside agencies for particular needs, often social, emotional and behavioural problems. When working with an adult, these pupils achieve well, but when working independently they are often quick to lose concentration. Not only does the pace of their learning slow but the pupils also show low retention of what they have learnt. This has been aggravated by weaknesses in the teaching and in the curriculum. For example, pupils have had limited experiences in science and history. Not enough has been done to consolidate key knowledge and skills to ensure they attain the level expected for their age. As a result, many pupils have learnt basic skills but are still in the early stages of reading, writing and number work. The boys particularly, are slow in mastering writing.
9. Part of the problem for many Year 2 pupils in reading is their lack of confidence in working out unfamiliar words. They tend to gloss over words and even the higher attaining pupils miss clues in the context, in pictures and in the words themselves. The pupils' narrow vocabulary constrains their understanding of what they read and also the quality of their free writing. Pupils retell stories well but make surprising errors in spelling and punctuation. For example, higher attaining pupils often omit capital letters at the start of a sentence. Standards in handwriting also vary and much work is untidy. This affects the presentation and quality of work across the curriculum.
10. In mathematics, Year 2 pupils do best in number where most are working at the level expected for their age. While they count confidently and recognise number to 100 and beyond, they have poor recall of number facts. They cope well with known procedures such as inserting missing numbers and adding, but do not readily see

number relationships such as halving being the opposite of doubling. In large part this reflects the frequent use of workbook exercises and missed chances to develop the pupils' skills in solving mathematical problems in other subjects and in the daily life of the classroom. This is also the picture in science where the pupils know key scientific facts from the topics covered but are less aware of how to carry out their own investigations and how to present their findings.

11. The use of test data to track pupils' progress is giving the school a clearer picture of the differences between year groups and rates of progress, particularly of those pupils who join the school in the infant and junior years. For example, the information shows that in the junior years, pupils make satisfactory progress overall. However, the lower attaining pupils tend to make better progress than the higher attaining pupils. This is also evident in pupils' work and mirrors the lack of challenge for the higher attaining pupils in many lessons. As the adults give a lot of time and support to the lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, the higher attaining pupils are often left to work independently. The lack of drive in the teaching for them depresses their achievement.
12. The pace of learning accelerates in Year 6, especially in the revision period before national tests. The explicit teaching and repetition of key points, strategies and techniques lifts the pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science, especially that of the lower and average attaining pupils. As a result, a significant number of Year 6 pupils with special educational needs are on target to attain the level expected for their age. However, many remain on the cusp of Levels 3 and 4, and their performance varies depending on the task. The school's target of 73 per cent Level 4 attainment in mathematics is realistic but that of 75 per cent in English is highly challenging, especially given pupils' variable skills in understanding the nuances of what they read, particularly in non-fiction, and in expressing their thoughts in writing. The pupils are more proficient in writing letters and leaflets than stories. These lack richness and complexity in the use of language. While their work is generally well structured, correctly punctuated and common words are spelt correctly, the quality of the content and presentation is lower.
13. Year 6 pupils converse well with others but a continuing area of weakness is their difficulty in explaining and justifying their views clearly and explicitly. This affects the quality of their work across the curriculum, particularly in science. The pupils have sound scientific knowledge but are less able to generalise and apply what they know. A further problem is that many pupils do not read instructions or questions carefully enough to respond as required. The school's use of practice tests has helped to alert Year 6 pupils to what they need to do.
14. As seen in Year 2, standards in Year 6 are strongest in mathematics. Most are accurate in following known procedures when adding, subtracting, dividing and multiplying. They are not as confident in dealing mentally with number problems or in applying their skills in other situations and subjects. In science, for example, the pupils know how to interpret tables and charts, but are less skilled in collecting and presenting their own data on a given subject.
15. Standards are rising in ICT but, as in 1997, are unsatisfactory. The school's recent investment in equipment, training and support for teachers is paying off in the increasing level of pupils' skills in using computers. The pupils are learning quickly because of regular sessions in the ICT suite and specific teaching in how to use new programs and functions. Year 2 pupils' attainment is close to that expected for their age but the junior pupils have still much ground to make up from previous years, not

least in their familiarity with the keyboard and competence in using ICT across the curriculum. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in lessons but they have too little time to perfect their skills. The use of classroom computers as part of learning remains an area for improvement.

16. As in 1997, standards are satisfactory in art and design, design and technology, geography, physical education and religious education. Standards have fallen in music and are now lower than expected for pupils' ages as their skills in composing, performing and appreciating music are limited. There is little high attainment in many subjects because the pupils are often all expected to do the same work, and in some subjects, the teacher decides how the work should be done and how it should be presented. In history, this is a prime reason why standards remain unsatisfactory. History epitomises well where the school misses links between subjects to raise standards and achievement. Too little is done to develop and apply pupils' speaking, reading, writing, number and ICT skills through study in history.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. As judged in the last inspection, pupils' attitudes to school and to learning are good. Nearly all the parents who returned the questionnaire agreed that their children like school. In discussion, the pupils said they enjoy school because they like their teachers and have good friends. The good relationships and easy social mixing contribute greatly to the positive atmosphere in school and to the pupils' progress.
18. The pupils are generally interested in lessons and respond positively to the encouragement of the headteacher, teachers and support staff. However, the level of enthusiasm is most evident in the oldest and youngest pupils and reflects similar enthusiasm and sense of purpose in the teaching.
19. The pupils' positive approach to school gets off to a very good start in the reception class, where the children are really keen to come to school, look forward to the day and want to learn. They show good self-confidence in leaving their parents and carers and willingly take their lead from the teacher and nursery nurse in showing interest in what they and others do. They want to do their best for the adults, and often pre-empt instructions as they know the routines so well. For example, the children know that Fergus Frog has a habit of mixing up the number cards and they must help to put things right. At such times the children show real eagerness to help and overall, they show a high level of contentment, true enthusiasm and excitement in learning. They are quick to choose what they want to do and are also pleased to work with the adults. Most show a good ability to concentrate for long periods. In sessions seen, the children behaved very well but on one afternoon, their behaviour and attitudes were exemplary. There was a strong, quiet buzz of activity as the children were highly absorbed in what they were doing; they tried out and followed up their own ideas, sought occasional help and showed much pride in what they achieved.
20. When infant and junior pupils are interested and challenged by the content of their lessons they listen attentively and are eager to respond to questions. For example in a personal, social and health education (PSHE) session, Year 6 pupils responded willingly and openly to challenging dilemmas on the subject of bullying. All the pupils were attentive and interested and many showed a mature and reflective attitude in giving their views. They also worked hard and showed much thought in their written responses.

21. However, in some lessons, particularly when pupils are expected to sit and listen for too long, their interest and attention wane quickly. The pupils enjoy the more active, practical sessions, such as using the computers, but even so, are quick to lose concentration and show little perseverance when things go awry. When working in a small group with an adult, the pupils tend to show more positive attitudes. However, several too readily rely on adult help and show reluctance to use their own thinking skills. Too many are quick to give up when they meet a challenge and some show reticence to start when the procedure is different from what they have done before. For many, this partly explains why their learning is not as good or as rapid as it could be.
22. A small number throughout the school openly show negative and occasionally disparaging attitudes. These pupils, most often boys but not exclusively so, are quick to speak out of turn, to mutter to others and to fiddle with items. A common concern is the way the pupils turn away from those speaking and only partially tune in to what is being said. Many need to have their name said several times before they respond. This often disrupts the flow of the lesson as other pupils wait for them to do as the adults ask. For example in an art lesson, several Year 5 pupils were persistently inattentive and noisy while the teacher explained what everyone had to do. However, once all started painting, they became fully involved in their work, and treated their painting materials with care. Most pupils are extremely tolerant and understanding of the contrary nature and unpredictable conduct of the few. They try hard to maintain their attention. Nevertheless, sometimes the restlessness spreads and hinders the progress for all.
23. The children's overall behaviour is satisfactory. As at the time of the last inspection, the majority of pupils behave well in and out of class but the challenging behaviour and low self-discipline of a minority lessens the overall quality. Most pupils move around school sensibly; they abide by class and school rules and are friendly and courteous towards adults. Pupils' behaviour in the playground is usually good-natured and they get on well with each other when playing games. Occasionally tempers flare and pupils flout rules. In the last school year there were six fixed term exclusions and in this year there have been two for serious misbehaviour. These pupils failed to respond to other strategies.
24. The relationships are good between pupils and between pupils and adults. Pupils of all ages show concern for and interest in others. Older pupils praised Year 3 pupils for their assembly on the Ancient Egyptians. All the pupils look forward to the outdoor games activities organised by staff during the afternoon break. They mix happily with others from different classes and enjoy traditional games. At such times, boys and girls show little embarrassment in holding hands to play ring games and older pupils are keen to help the younger ones. For example, a Year 6 play leader, helping in the infant playground, steered a pupil in a wheelchair round the new play markings while chatting about what they were.
25. Pupils' personal development is good. From an early age pupils are keen to take on responsibilities, such as taking registers to the office, giving out books in class, or sweeping up after art activities. Many are quick to show initiative although not always in a way that benefits all. The Year 6 pupils showed a genuine concern to do their best in the pending national tests and talked about their intentions and hopes for the future. Many commented on how they had "grown up" in Year 6 and realised just how important it was to do well. Pupils were keen to point out their work displayed in school, and pupils in Years 5 and 6 showed pride in the outdoor murals they had designed and painted. The tidy and well-kept environment, in and outside school,

reflects the respect that pupils show for school property. They see Newton Westpark as “our school” and want it to be “nice”.

26. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils’ attendance over the last school year was slightly below the national average, but the majority of pupils attend regularly and arrive punctually. A small number of families do not ensure that their children attend regularly. The school’s rate of unauthorised absence is higher than the national average because the school follows correct procedures and refuses to authorise absences when parents keep their children out of school for reasons such as shopping trips and birthday treats.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

27. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. In all but three lessons, the teaching was at least satisfactory. It was good in 39 per cent and very good in a further six per cent. This is an improvement since the last inspection, especially in the lower incidence of unsatisfactory teaching, but the teaching is still not as strong as the national profile. Care should be taken in interpreting these statistics as each lesson is equivalent to two percentage points.
28. Although the overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, there are significant differences between the three key stages. As in the last inspection, the teaching is strongest in the reception class. The very good teaching is the prime reason why the reception year children make good progress over the year, and are keen to learn. The teacher and nursery nurse have worked together a long time, know each other very well and often anticipate each other’s thoughts and actions. Their good relationship and good humour rub off on the children who thrive in the positive, encouraging atmosphere. The adults’ shared commitment and enthusiasm, as well as their willingness to take up and develop new ideas, keeps their teaching fresh. They show flair in their use of interesting routines to mark different times of the day and in organising space and resources to create an attractive learning environment. This ensures the children achieve well especially in the key areas of personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy and mathematical development.
29. Several of these features also typify the teaching elsewhere in the school but not to such an influential extent. There is much good teaching for the junior pupils, but not consistently in the key subjects of English, mathematics and ICT. This partly explains why standards are not rising markedly across the school in these subjects. In the lessons seen, the teaching for the older juniors was generally good, especially for pupils in Year 6, where occasionally it was very good. The pupils were learning well and, in the case of Year 6, were making good strides in seeing the relevance of what they knew to possible questions in the pending national tests.
30. The teaching for the infant pupils is satisfactory but has significant weaknesses that are slowing the pupils’ learning and the school’s drive to raise standards. During the inspection, temporary teachers were working with both the infant classes. The quality of their teaching differed markedly. While Year 1 pupils benefited from much good and occasionally very good teaching, Year 2 pupils’ learning varied. The teaching seen was mostly satisfactory. However, the pupils’ work since September shows up significant weaknesses especially in planning what the pupils should learn and in assessing their attainment and progress. This has limited the learning of many pupils, most especially the higher attaining ones.

31. The three instances of unsatisfactory teaching in ICT, geography and music were not in any one class. In all three, common weaknesses explain the pupils' limited learning. The teachers' expectations of the pupils were too low, the lesson purpose was unclear and the pace of teaching was slow. The teachers managed and supervised the pupils rather than take their learning further. In two instances, the teachers praised pupils for work that was well below that expected for their age, and in another, pupils found it hard to do good work as they had few resources to help them. Shades of these weaknesses are evident in teaching throughout the school and explain why the teaching is not stronger than it is, especially in literacy and numeracy. Some were also noted in the last inspection:

- The teachers' expectations are not always high enough, especially of the higher attaining pupils who are often expected to produce more of the same work rather than work at a more advanced level. Homework does not always extend the pupils' learning. Too many teachers appear to be relying on the target setting process itself to raise standards without gearing their teaching to the content of the targets. In some sessions, it is not clear what the children are to learn. In the reception class, chances were missed in some sessions to set individual and group targets for learning in the independent activities.
- Pupils are not always learning knowledge and skills in a progressive and systematic way and they are not learning well enough how to apply them. For example, in history, pupils are not provided with enough opportunities to develop the skills of finding out about history from a variety of sources, and in music, pupils have too few chances to perform their own compositions. This in part reflects gaps in the teacher's subject knowledge. The teachers are not all drawing on their knowledge of good practice from national guidance in teaching reading, writing and developing pupils' skills in mental mathematics. They also place too low an emphasis on helping pupils to see the relevance of their learning in different situations. Many pupils, especially the average and lower attainers, need heavy prompts and cues to make links between previous learning and new situations. Year 6 pupils discussing bullying found it hard to recall the term "empathy" even though it had been the focus of work the same day in history.
- Too many sessions are over-long or are not sufficiently broken by changes in pace and activity. As a result the pupils' attention wanders and their work rate drops. This is most noticeable when the teachers talk for too long, or when pupils have too long to complete their tasks. Many pupils are easily put off when they do not get things right first time and even when using the computers, their level of application and learning rate drop after a short time.
- The quality of class sessions at the start and end of the daily literacy hour and mathematics lessons is too variable. Not all mathematics lessons start with a session of mental mathematics, and when they do, the pace is often too slow to sharpen the pupils' thinking. There are often few questions to challenge the higher attaining pupils and test their mental number agility. As in literacy hours, the teachers do not consistently discuss the strategies used or ask the pupils to explain their thinking. Too many end sessions lack a review of what pupils have learnt in relation to the purpose of the lesson.
- The teachers are not using their marking as a teaching and learning tool. They reinforce good work with stickers such as "Hooray for you" but few identify clearly what the pupils have done well and where they need to improve. In contrast, good, incisive marking shows Year 5 pupils what they must do, as in the

comment, "You haven't explained ...". The teachers rarely refer to targets and few engage the pupils in self-assessment or extend the content of their work through questions.

32. A key area for improvement is the observation of teaching and learning to identify common and individual weaknesses or to share good practice more widely. The teachers know that the pupils' learning is at its best when they are actively involved, especially in art and design, science investigations and physical education, and when the sessions are short, purposeful and well organised. However, this knowledge is not being put to best use often enough in organising the timetable and in planning activities.
33. Since the last inspection, the teachers have improved the quality of their planning. They are making effective use of schemes of work to identify what pupils are to learn and discussing with the learning assistants how to ensure that all pupils are involved. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because the adults give them much support and guidance. The learning assistants most often work with these pupils and they know their needs and personalities very well. Their good skills, calm approach and timely interventions are key factors in why these pupils succeed in lessons. The assistants help the pupils to sustain and focus their attention. They often use different ways to present the task so that the pupils understand what they have to do. For instance, because of an assistant's step-by-step explanation to reinforce the teacher's talk about compass points and maps, a group of Year 4 pupils with special educational needs made very good progress in locating and recording places on a road map of the Lake District. Similarly, the provision of a bag of socks and slippers helped an infant pupil to grasp the concept of pairs and counting in twos.
34. A notable element of the success of the team-work in all classes is the way the pupils see it as a privilege to work with a learning assistant. This is reinforced by the status given to pupils' feedback to the class when they work out of the classroom. A good example was when a group of Year 6 pupils wrote a diary as a group, using the computer to draft and edit, and then proudly presented the printed version on return to the class.
35. However, not all the teachers know how to implement a small step-by-step, practical approach to ensure that pupils with special educational needs meet the targets in their individual programmes. As a result, activities in lessons do not consistently reflect the content of the pupils' learning programmes nor make best use of resources available. A scrutiny of work in pupils' books shows that the work done with a support teacher to develop the reading and writing skills of small groups of pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4, matches quite precisely the content of their individual learning programmes, and is a good model for class teachers. Similarly, a model of very good practice was seen when a teaching assistant discussed with a support teacher how best to meet the learning needs of one pupil. Together they developed a comprehensive plan for the week ahead that included practical ideas to match the content of the pupil's learning programme and the curriculum content for the class.
36. Other effective features of good practice lie in:
 - The teachers' good relationships with the pupils. Touches of humour and repartee typify the good relationships in many classes. Shared understandings about personalities, interests and experiences outside the classroom often pepper the exchanges between teachers, learning assistants and pupils. This is well exemplified in the work of the reception class and Year 6 teachers. They talk

maturely with the pupils and show a genuine interest in their learning. As a result, the reception children and the Year 6 pupils work hard and try their best.

- The careful planning of resources and strategies to gain and keep the pupils' interest in learning and finishing a task. Where this is done really well the teachers grab the pupils' attention, share the purpose of the lesson and challenge their thinking and learning. For example, there was a real feeling of joint enterprise when the teacher drew Year 1 pupils into helping her write sentences about a book they had read. Year 4 pupils were engrossed by the teacher's use of the interactive whiteboard and computer to highlight how to use compass points and maps. In both these lessons, the high quality resources, the confidence and good subject knowledge of the teacher ensured the pupils made good progress and also felt a sense of achievement.
- The adults' skills in managing the pupils' behaviour. All the staff work hard to sustain firm, effective discipline and ensure a positive, learning atmosphere. They know the pupils really well and use different tactics effectively to avoid confrontation. The reception teacher and nursery nurse are skilled in pre-empting lapses in good behaviour through quick changes in focus, the use of phrases such as, "Are all eyes on me?", the use of toys such as Buzzy Bee to signal routines and their willingness to let the children occasionally direct their learning when they make good suggestions. In other year groups, the teachers and learning assistants work well together to ensure classroom codes are followed. They often use praise, rephrased questions and instructions, time limits and realistic targets to good effect. Such techniques ensured that Year 5 pupils sustained their interest and effort in performing standing long jumps in a physical education lesson.
- The teachers' skills in reminding pupils of the relevance of what they know. For instance, Year 3 and 6 pupils made good progress in spelling "tricky words" because the teachers reinforced the pupils' awareness of spelling patterns and the use of look-cover-write-check to learn exceptions to the rules. Rapid questioning to particular pupils kept all on their toes and set firm expectations of accuracy in later work.
- The use of ICT to support pupils' learning. In some literacy and mathematics lessons, the teachers are making effective use of overhead projectors to demonstrate procedures and computer programs to reinforce pupils' work and awareness of how ICT can be used. For example, Year 5 pupils saw clearly the relationship between perimeter and area when their teacher used transparencies to highlight the difference and Year 3 pupils used their keyboard and mouse skills to compile a letter using a computer word bank.

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

37. The quality and range of the curriculum is satisfactory overall, and is good in the Foundation Stage. This is improvement since the last inspection.
38. The school provides a broad and balanced range of experiences to meet the pupils' interests and aptitudes. A particular strength is the good provision for the pupils' personal development. The headteacher places high value on this strand of the curriculum. As well as being taught as a separate subject, personal, social and health education forms part of the curriculum in religious education, science and

design and technology. This ensures that pupils are informed about sex education, drugs abuse and aspects of citizenship.

39. The daily life of the school and overall curriculum reflect the content of the school's policy for equal opportunities and the mission statement of '*working together, learning together, sharing and caring together*'. A good example was the programme to help Year 6 pupils get ready for the pending national tests. This not only revised thoroughly what pupils had done in English, mathematics and science, but also helped all the pupils to think about relevant coping strategies. Great care is taken at all times to ensure that pupils are not excluded unduly from the curriculum and the teachers do much to try and raise the aspirations of all pupils. This is particularly evident in the good curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs. The support staff play a key role in ensuring that these pupils play a full part in school life and have full access to the curriculum. For example, the enlargement of the programme on the computer screen enabled a visually impaired junior pupil to learn the same new skill as the others.
40. The quality of curriculum planning for the reception year children is very good. It is detailed and systematic with clear learning intentions that form the basis for the assessment of the children's progress. The well-structured, coherent curriculum closely follows and covers the early learning goals in the six areas of learning for the Foundation Stage. The teacher and nursery nurse have strengthened the curriculum since the last inspection by drawing on national guidance and their own evaluations of what has worked well to provide a curriculum that is meaningful for the children. They show considerable originality in using stories and themes, such as "Postman Pat" and "A taste of India", to link and provide experiences across the six areas of learning, often including visits and visitors. During the inspection, the curriculum reflected aspects of what the children had seen on a visit to Pennington Flash and the focus lay in developing their knowledge of mini-beasts. For example, the water tray was a class pond, the children observed snails and looked at reference books, made bug biscuits and danced at the Boogie Bug Ball.
41. The wide curriculum reflects the staff's clear understanding of the importance of play and first-hand experience as well as direct teaching and adult-led sessions to develop the children's learning indoors and out. The creation of a garden area and involvement of the children in deciding on playground markings are a direct result of the staff's wish to improve the quality and use of "the outdoor classroom".
42. There are several other noteworthy features of the Foundation Stage curriculum. The prime focus in the autumn term on personal, social and emotional development ensures that by the summer term, all the children, including those with special educational needs, are highly independent and well able to make their own choices and organise their own learning. Similarly, the staged introduction of songs, actions and books over the year fosters the children's recognition and use of letter sounds and key words and their steady progress in early reading and writing. A particular strength is the use of everyday activities to foster awareness of number so that the children have a sound understanding of counting and number relationships in practical terms before they are introduced to formal ways of recording number sums in Years 1 and 2.
43. The curriculum for the infant and junior pupils meets statutory requirements to teach all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. It has some gaps in the provision to develop skills, particularly in mental mathematics, scientific investigations and the application of ICT in other subjects although the curriculum to

teach ICT skills is satisfactory. The school's involvement with the Education Action Zone has helped to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of the curriculum, especially in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Effective links with business and industry as well as visits and visitors to the school, enrich the basic curriculum in physical education, geography, history and art and design.

44. In recognition of the need to raise standards, the school gives more than 50 per cent of its teaching time to literacy and numeracy. The hour-long literacy and mathematics sessions, most usually in the morning, are not always fully productive in fostering pupils' learning. Although there is a link to the quality of teaching, there is also scope to reorganise the timetable to give shorter, more focussed sessions to reflect the interests and learning needs of the pupils, especially the boys. The introduction of outdoor "social activities" in the afternoons is a good model for curriculum development and timetable changes as it built on the staff's awareness of what motivates the children and helps their learning.
45. The school is following the guidance of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and also uses the Early Literacy Support, Additional Literacy Support and Mathematics Recovery programmes as the basis of the curriculum in English and mathematics. The format of the literacy hour is well followed and the strong focus on teaching basic skills is contributing to improvements in pupils' attainment. As many teachers rely on a published scheme to structure their lessons, the school's high quality resources are not being used well enough to widen the pupils' awareness of stories and poems. A weakness is the lack of curriculum planning to ensure that the pupils learn how to transfer and apply the skills and knowledge taught in literacy and mathematics sessions to other subjects. Despite input from EAZ co-ordinators on how this may be done, subjects such as science, geography, history and religious education are not being used consistently to develop pupils' writing skills and in reading for information. Insufficient attention is given to the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills, especially the development of vocabulary and the ability to infer, deduce, explain and justify. This partly accounts for lower standards in science and history. Subject policies refer to links with English, ICT and to personal, social and moral education, but planning documents do not always make these explicit and opportunities are lost in practice.
46. In other subjects, the schemes of work draw heavily on national guidance and ensure that the school meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. The co-ordinators have ensured that the school has the resources needed for each unit of work and the teachers' weekly and daily planning follows the structured progression in knowledge relevant to the year group they teach. The geography scheme has a clear outline of how skills develop across all the year groups but this is not common to all subjects. However, the absence of agreed assessment procedures in many subjects, such as ICT and religious education, means that curriculum planning does not always build accurately on what pupils already know and can do.
47. In the questionnaires returned by parents, the lowest area of agreement was in the school's provision of an interesting range of activities outside lessons. Although the school provides a limited range of after-school activities, mainly in sport such as netball, rugby and football, the curriculum is much enriched by visits and visitors. For instance, regular visits by the community police officer, the dental health nurse and other professionals are an integral part of the curriculum in personal, social and health education; a history specialist brought archaeology to life for Year 3 pupils by showing artefacts, and a local artist drew out the talents of Year 5 pupils in creating a mural on an outside wall. The school arranges visits as it can to extend the curriculum in

several subjects. Pupils visit the local church, the Leigh Centurions ground and local places of geographical and historical interest such as a farm. The annual residential visit for Year 6 pupils makes a valuable contribution to their personal development as do the visits to local firms as part of the school's links with the Education Business Partnership.

48. As in the last inspection, the overall provision is good for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, although it is strongest in moral development. There are marked strengths in the provision for social and cultural development but weaker strands in that for spiritual development.
49. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. The staff give much thought and care to the display of pupils' work and the attractive environment of the school sets a high aesthetic standard. For example, a vase of real sunflowers complemented Year 3 pupils' versions of Van Gogh's painting of sunflowers. The good use of questions and comments as part of displays draws on pupils' curiosity and responses. Assemblies and daily acts of collective worship, which meet statutory requirements, prompt pupils to explore questions about values and beliefs. However, at such times, too little emphasis is placed on fostering the pupils' skills in reflecting on their experiences in ways that develop personal insights and self-knowledge. Similarly, little use is made of plenary times at the end of lessons to ask pupils to reflect on their own learning and feelings about what they have achieved. This partly explains why the pupils often find it hard to see the relevance in what they have done before.
50. The very good provision for the pupils' moral development is a real strength of the school. The school is a caring community that promotes very successfully a strong sense of right and wrong, and a clear moral code that provides a solid framework for the pupils' moral development. The headteacher and other staff act as very good role models. They provide consistently high quality examples of moral and social behaviour in how they interact with pupils. The headteacher takes the lead in working with pupils to help them think through the consequences of their behaviour and its impact on others. The very good behaviour and discipline policy has clear aims and objectives based on the school's belief in the right of all individuals to respect and self-esteem. School rules, displayed prominently in classrooms and corridor areas, are stated positively, and are realistic, achievable and well known by the pupils who often remind each other of how they should behave. In assemblies and in class discussions, pupils are asked to consider situations where choices and actions might affect others in the community.
51. Good provision for the pupils' social development is reflected in common social values and strong sense of a school community. The headteacher, teachers and support staff show much concern for the pupils and spend a lot of time in and out of lessons ensuring that pupils get on well with each other and begin to accept personal responsibility not only for their learning but also for their relationships. In this way the pupils develop a sense of tolerance of and respect for others' feelings and opinions. Pupils are encouraged to consider how they might help others within the school. For example, some of the Year 5 and 6 pupils are chosen to help in the reception class for the last 15 minutes of the day.
52. The need for Year 6 pupils to apply to be trained as play leaders during the afternoon periods of social activities has given the position high social status and emphasised the need for pupils to show commitment to others. The involvement of all the teaching staff in supervising the social activities sessions enhances the relationships

between adults and pupils. The mixing of year groups also fosters the pupils' acceptance of others. For example, when playing a team game, the Year 2 pupils were loudly encouraging and praising the reception year children. Fundraising activities, such as those for a local hospice and hospital in Africa, also help to develop the pupils' sense of responsibility to others less fortunate than themselves.

53. The provision for cultural development is good. As the school is in a locality where there are few opportunities for pupils to meet with people from minority ethnic groups, the teachers make a conscious effort to foster cross-cultural understanding through the taught curriculum. In geography, for example, pupils study the way of life of people in the emerging economies of the world as well as in tourist spots such as the Caribbean. Good use is being made of the pupils' interest in the football World Cup to look at the environment and way of life in South Korea. The curriculum in religious education includes the study of the beliefs and festivals of other faiths and emphasis is placed on developing in pupils positive, respectful attitudes towards them.
54. The curriculum includes many opportunities for the pupils to learn about their own local heritage. Year 5 pupils' murals show this to good effect. The display of school awards as well as visits to the local rugby ground help to develop the pupils' pride in local achievements.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

55. As in the last inspection, strengths of the school are the care and commitment shown by teaching and support staff to the pupils. The headteacher takes a prominent role in ensuring that the pupils receive individual support and care according to their need. All in the school – including the caretaker, secretary and kitchen staff - work hard to make the school a welcoming, interesting and safe place to be, to make the pupils feel special and to boost their self esteem. Inspection evidence endorses the parents' ready praise of the dedication of the headteacher and her staff to the children. The unobtrusive but highly influential work of classroom support staff in keeping the pupils amenable and on task, is a significant element in the school's very good provision of care. A good example of the thought and care for pupils is the programme to help prepare the Year 6 pupils for the national tests. The school has ensured the pupils are well used to the format of the tests and during the test week, can have breakfast in school as well as drinks and snacks during the day.
56. Parents confirm that the school has good procedures to help their children settle happily and quickly in the reception class. A good initiative is the pre-school group held in school and led by the reception class teacher and nursery nurse. This helps to familiarise the children with the school layout and activities in the reception class, as well as to heighten parents' and carers' awareness of how to help their children's learning. As the reception children play with the other infant pupils and pass their classrooms to reach other parts of the school, the transition to Year 1 is smooth. It is helped by the transfer of the children's progress books, started in the reception year. For the Year 6 pupils, the sound programme of taster sessions and visits eases the move to secondary school.
57. Good procedures for ensuring the health and safety of pupils reflect the high priority placed on the safety of the pupils by the governors, headteacher and staff. This is well exemplified in the effective systems and procedures seen in action on several occasions during the inspection as incidents occurred. For example, when the water was suddenly turned off, the headteacher was quick to acquire "wet-wipes" for the

pupils to clean their hands. All the staff know what to do and this ensures that the school runs smoothly and pupils feel safe and secure. Lunchtime supervisors provide good care for pupils and there are efficient procedures for recording and dealing with playground incidents and accidents. Governors act immediately to deal with issues of risk and safety. A continuing priority is to lessen the incidence and impact of vandalism to the buildings and grounds. The security fence has reduced the amount of damage but the caretaker still uses much time to ensure that the grounds are clear of glass and dirt. The headteacher has been successful in developing the pupils' sense of ownership of the school and their participation in preventing incidents when they can.

58. The school has very effective child protection procedures and members of staff are fully aware of related issues. The headteacher, as named person for child protection, liaises regularly with other agencies. She places uppermost the health and welfare of the pupils and shows enormous commitment and dedication to helping those children and families who give rise to concern. Her quickness to take action, and her skill in working with the pupils often ensures they continue to learn.
59. The headteacher also takes a prominent lead in monitoring and promoting pupils' good behaviour. The procedures are very good and are largely highly effective as most pupils conform to class and school rules. Teachers and support staff are generally consistent in their generous use of praise and positive approach to dealing with pupils. On some occasions, however, the pupils' answers, work and behaviour do not merit comments such as "excellent" or "well done". The pupils value the system of stickers, reward points and treats when they behave well, and Year 6 pupils particularly like the status of being able to help in the infant classes at the end of the afternoon as a reward for working hard.
60. A number of effective strategies, such as report cards, help those pupils who have difficulty in controlling their behaviour. The key is the headteacher who acts as personal mentor, setting the pupils daily targets and rewarding their achievement. She knows the pupils extremely well and works hard on a daily basis to help them understand their feelings and improve their behaviour. In addition, the involvement of parents, the use of support staff to supervise and work with pupils in lessons, and the partnership with the behaviour support team from the Local Education Authority, maintains and extends the level of support in the learning situation.
61. The school behaviour policy includes clear useful guidance on how to deal with bullying. The school's strong moral ethos and the specific guidance given in personal, social and health education lessons help the pupils to recognise and deal with bullying. When incidents occur, parents confirm that the school deals with them firmly and quickly, and they are also carefully recorded.
62. The school has several ways of recording pupils' attainment and progress but has only limited assessment procedures to diagnose where strengths and weaknesses are in pupils' attainment and progress. This lessens the teachers' effectiveness in setting individual, group and class short-term targets for learning and realising where there are significant differences between predicted and actual attainment. There are significant discrepancies between Year 2 pupils' attainment and class predictions.
63. The assessment procedures for English, mathematics and science meet statutory requirements but, as in the last inspection, remain an area for improvement. The school has developed easy to use systems to record and track pupils' progress over their time in school. It is not yet making full use of the information to compare the

progress of different groups of pupils or to identify trends, areas of weakness and possible factors. The school is setting targets for pupils' attainment based on their previous achievements and is using tests to check progress towards them. This is not giving the teachers enough information to help them plan what they should teach and what pupils should learn next. The teachers have few records from their marking or evaluation of lessons to indicate pupils' progress against year group or curricular criteria. While the reading records indicate progress through the reading scheme, they do not help to identify where the weaknesses lie in pupils' reading skills and strategies. This is one reason why the pupils' progress in reading slows. Some pupils are reading books that pose insufficient challenge while others need help in developing a range of strategies to identify unfamiliar words.

64. There is no assessment of speaking and listening skills, or of pupils' skills and knowledge in science. This raises concern about the accuracy of teacher assessment of the Year 2 pupils' attainment. Some subject records refer to what has been done rather than what the pupils know and can do. There are plans to develop assessment procedures for ICT but opportunities are being missed to record pupils' skills and attitudes observed during sessions in the ICT suite and in the classroom.
65. An exception is the ongoing detailed assessment of the children's progress in learning skills and acquiring knowledge in the reception year. The teacher keeps comprehensive records of what the children can do in all six areas of learning. She works closely with the nursery nurse to observe and record regularly each child's progress starting in the first term with the required entry assessment. As a result, the staff have a good awareness of the children's stage of development in all six areas although the method of record keeping does not show clearly the rate of progress for each child. Similarly, the indicators of the next stage of development are not always being used to inform teaching and target setting for groups and individuals. The teacher and nursery nurse make good use of photographs to record events and activities and each child's progress book has high quality comments indicating what they have achieved in writing and number.
66. The analysis of how Year 6 pupils did in the 2001 national tests in mathematics and science led to changes in teaching focus. For example, the teachers now place much more emphasis on helping the pupils to understand the questions, and will provide readers for qualifying Year 6 pupils when they take this year's tests. In English, the use of detailed descriptors is helping the teachers to ascribe more accurately the pupils' level of attainment in writing, but the teachers are not using the same information to inform their planning of what to teach to ensure the pupils reach the next level.
67. Since the last inspection, the school has much improved the procedures for the identification, monitoring and assessment of pupils with special educational needs. The special educational needs co-ordinator, who is also the head teacher, has dealt with the backlog of concerns that existed when she took up her post and the school now has good, secure, effective systems for early identification and support. Changes on the register show the progress made by some pupils in meeting their targets and also the school's recognition of the need to involve outside agencies to support others. The school is in the process of implementing the guidance in the 2002 revised Code of Practice. The headteacher advises classteachers on the compilation of pupils' individual learning programmes but the quality varies considerably. The better programmes have realistic, specific targets that are broken down into small learning steps. Reviews take place on specified dates and the

school places great store on seeking the views of parents who attend the reviews. Pupils' views are taken informally but there is no record of their comments.

68. There are good procedures for monitoring and improving attendance. Pupils who attend regularly receive generous rewards. The headteacher and education welfare officer monitor regularly the patterns of absence. Families are contacted where necessary and more formal procedures taken when absence persists. An aspect of good practice to prevent truancy is the way the school telephones parents of Year 5 and 6 pupils on the first day of absence.
69. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are good. Parents commented on how well the staff know their children and show interest in them. From the headteacher down, the staff work hard to keep pupils informed and involved in what is happening and to give them a sense of self-fulfilment. When the staff realised that the pupils found it hard to sustain their attention in the afternoons, they introduced social activities to playtimes. This innovative idea has had a positive impact not only on pupils' behaviour but also in their ability to trust and respect others. The school plans to start a school council for pupils to voice their views and show initiative. At present, there are limited chances for pupils to do so. A good example that motivated Year 6 pupils was the invitation to apply for the position of playleader and, when selected, undergo training. Pupils demonstrate a real sense of pride when they receive their certificates for personal achievement.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

70. The school has developed its partnership with the parents since the last inspection and the quality is now good despite some areas of low involvement on the parents' part. Parents and carers strongly support the school. Although only four parents attended the meeting with inspectors, over 40 per cent of parents returned the parents' questionnaire. This was almost three times the percentage in 1998. Several parents also spoke with inspectors during the inspection. The parents' response reveals a high level of confidence in most aspects of the school's work.
71. The area of strongest agreement was that the school expects the children to work hard. Parents also strongly agree that they feel comfortable approaching the school with their concerns, and that the school is well led and managed. They value the good teaching and the fact that their children like school. They feel they are kept well informed about their children's progress. In oral and written comments, parents praised the dedication of the headteacher and the staff and the range of activities. Parents of reception age children were very complimentary in how their children had settled and were doing well. A small percentage of parents expressed concern about behaviour in the school and disagreed that the school offered a good range of activities outside lessons.
72. The inspection team endorses the parents' positive views and finds some merit in their concerns. A small minority of pupils regularly misbehave but the school is successful in keeping the level low.
73. Good links between home and school help the pupils' learning. They develop well in the reception year as many parents and carers know the reception teacher from previous years or from her work with them in the pre-school group. The work in the pre-school sessions not only forms good links with the parents and their children, but also helps to develop ideas on what they can do together at home. The reception teacher comments that this is reaping benefits in the ease with which the children

settle into school and in how parents show increasing interest in helping their children to learn.

74. Parents and carers commented on the useful, informative weekly newsletters with their reminders of diary dates. The parents feel the school listens to their concerns and the headteacher has their children's interests at heart. For the last few years, the school has used questionnaires to gain the views of parents who have children leaving the reception year and also Year 6. Although the school does not provide parents with information on current class topics, parents see what their children are learning through the attractive displays of pupils' work, class assemblies and informal chats with class teachers. The annual written reports on pupils' progress are satisfactory. They are written in a very positive manner and give parents a clear picture of what their children can do in all subjects. They include a few suggestions for areas for improvement but rarely identify weaknesses in learning.
75. There are strengths but also weaknesses in parents' involvement with the work of the school. Many parents support their children's learning by hearing them read and by writing comments in the home/school reading diary. Parents also borrow story sacks and mathematics games that have information cards to help them know what to do. The school has some evidence to show that these activities are improving the pupils' skills especially in dealing with number. Further schemes to increase parents' involvement in their children's learning are due to start in September as part of work initiated through the Education Action Zone.
76. The school continues to work hard to improve the partnership with parents and carers but is thwarted by the limited success of many of the initiatives. Parents enjoy coming to school events but are reluctant to come to formal sessions such as parents' evenings and workshops. The school has been unable to run family literacy and numeracy courses because of poor take-up despite success in earlier years. One grandparent and parent regularly help in school. The school is unable to fill three vacancies for parent governors and the Friends Association is dormant because of lack of support.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

77. The overall quality of leadership is good but there are weaker strands in the management of the school, especially in making best use of available information to identify where improvements need to be made. As a consequence, the school is working on too many fronts and common strands are being overlooked.
78. Since the inspection in 1997, there have been significant changes in the leadership of the school. The headteacher took up post shortly afterwards and led the action plan to deal with the five key issues. Overall improvement has been satisfactory. However, good levels of success in improving systems, policies and resources, particularly in financial management and meeting statutory requirements, have been offset by the less marked improvement in standards which was the nub of one key issue and underlay two others. Part of this is due to the instability arising from the absence of key staff, such as the literacy co-ordinator, and uncertainty from the necessity to have an acting deputy headteacher for five terms. Other reasons stem from the lack of critical, rigorous analysis by governors and key staff of exactly where the problems lie and how to deal with them.
79. The headteacher provides strong, effective leadership. She is highly involved in day-to-day school life, knows every pupil very well and cares deeply about the pupils and

staff. During the inspection, she was quick to deal with several incidents in and out of school, and to involve outside agencies when appropriate. Her decisiveness and efficiency, as well as effective routines followed by the teaching and non-teaching staff, ensured the school continued to run smoothly and most pupils were unaware that anything had happened. This conscientious and responsible approach was also evident in the headteacher's detailed preparation of documentation for the inspection. Her enthusiasm as well as her dogged determination to do the best for all has fostered a united staff and a high level of shared commitment and loyalty to the school from governors, teaching and non-teaching staff. The parents recognise and value her dedication. Her leadership qualities go a long way to explaining the school's success in meeting its mission statement of "*working together, learning together, sharing and caring together*".

80. However, the headteacher shoulders too much and the delegated responsibilities and accountabilities of others are unclear. Co-ordinators have not got clear authority to lead and manage developments in their own areas. The appointment of a deputy headteacher, who took up post in April 2002, brings the school management team back to full complement and provides a key opportunity to clarify roles and to identify what is expected, especially in managing change and driving the school forward.
81. One area of very good leadership and management is in the Foundation Stage. The reception teacher has managed the introduction of this key stage very well although there is little in the school improvement plan, apart from the development of the outdoor area, to recognise what has and is being done. The reception teacher's very strong personal commitment to the children and her good skills in consulting with and using the skills of the nursery nurse, ensure a very clear sense of purpose. This is less evident in the leadership and management of Year 1 and 2 staff. Advice, support and guidance for temporary staff have not been enough to ensure consistency in the quality of provision. The package of audits used successfully to review, evaluate and develop the quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is a useful model to apply to other key stages and subjects.
82. The headteacher provides a very good role model in leading and managing the provision for special educational needs. She takes her co-ordinator's role very seriously and has revised school policy to reflect the changes in national guidance. She takes strong lead in putting into practice her belief in inclusion for all. In many respects, the school does more than most to ensure that pupils' needs are met, particularly those who have difficulty controlling their emotions and behaviour. For example, the governors have agreed to draw on reserves to provide a learning assistant in each class, and the headteacher is highly visible around school checking on pupils and praising their achievements. Although she has excellent administrative help, her workload is high, not least in conducting reviews of individual education plans and consulting parents, carers and pupils. Nearly half of the pupils on the register of special educational needs are also supported in some way by outside agencies. Contact with the agencies takes up a lot of the headteacher's time and while this serves to maintain a good climate for learning, it leaves little time for the headteacher to monitor other aspects of the school's work, especially the quality of teaching and learning, and the quality of other co-ordinators' monitoring.
83. This weakness in monitoring also typifies the work of co-ordinators. In all subjects, bar history and music, the overall quality of subject co-ordination is at least satisfactory. It is at its best in ICT and art and design where the co-ordinators have a good working knowledge of standards throughout the school. Their good lead in improving the quality of provision is beginning to show in higher standards.

Nevertheless, monitoring what goes on in lessons is not given enough priority. The information gained from the agreed programme of observations related to Performance Management is not sufficient to identify common and specific areas of strength in teaching and learning, and also areas for improvement. As a result, governors, senior managers and co-ordinators do not have a clear picture of the factors that help to explain why standards vary across the school.

84. Two areas of improvement since the last inspection are the development of the co-ordinators' role in monitoring subject coverage through teachers' planning and sampling pupils' work, and the development of good records of pupils' progress using test results. All the teachers are now using this information to track progress and to set targets for pupils. However, this is not being checked well enough against pupils' attainment in lessons and in independent work. In reading and science, for example, very limited records of pupils' skills and knowledge make it difficult to assess Year 2 pupils' attainment and actual progress.
85. The school is gathering statistics but is not yet using them to best effect. A good precedent was set in mathematics and science through the analysis of pupils' performance in last year's national tests. The identified areas of weakness such as data-handling and pupils' difficulties in coping with scientific explanations, have been dealt with in a piecemeal fashion rather than as a concerted school effort, and do not appear as explicit school improvement strands. Science is not included in the plan and chances have been missed to identify common factors such as the pupils' difficulties in applying what they know.
86. The current school improvement plan forms the basis of a three-year development plan that covers all aspects of the school's work. A review of last year focuses on what was done rather than its impact on the pupils' learning and achievement, and this also characterises the plan itself. While it gives a good picture of what is to be done, the reasons and intended outcomes are less clear. For example, one key issue is "raising standards of attainment in English" but the success criteria and outcomes are too general. As there are few measurable targets or specific indications of what is to be achieved, governors, senior staff and co-ordinators are not able to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of what has been done, especially in relation to the challenging school performance targets for this year. As in 1997, it is not clear how the nominated people are to monitor the progress of each action plan.
87. The work of the governors has strengthened since the last inspection. In response to a key issue, governors have gained a clear appreciation of their roles and responsibilities. They rely heavily on the headteacher for key school information and guidance but also take a questioning, systematic approach when reviewing what has been done and when setting new priorities. Continuing vacancies for parent governors place a heavy burden on existing governors in committee work but individual expertise and interests are being used well to ensure the school meets statutory requirements, as in health and safety and Performance Management. Many governors have a good overview of the school from their work in school and from their frequent visits to it. Although minutes of meetings indicate the content covered, they do not always identify clearly any agreed action.
88. The governors make sound use of the principles of best value. They use published results to compare the school with others and because of falling rolls, are conscious of the need to market the school through its website, prospectus and involvement in community events. They canvass parents' views when their children start and leave the school and consult them on major matters. With guidance from the Local

Education Authority, they seek best value in purchasing goods and services and look for ways to tap into grants, funds and projects.

89. Financial planning and management are good and show good improvement since the last inspection. The headteacher keeps a watchful eye on the school's finances and makes very effective use of a Local Education Authority bursar to monitor and advise on spending. As a result, the governors and headteacher make informed decisions on allocating the budget. The school receives slightly more per pupil than most schools but its high spending on staffing is rightly drawing on sizeable reserves. Governors see this as good value because the presence of learning assistants helps to keep classrooms calm and pupils are making better progress as a result. The skills and high level of application of the learning assistants add to the good value they provide. The governors are also considering the implications of the end of Coalfield Challenge funding which has been used to support the use of school staff to lead the pre-school sessions.
90. The school is using relevant grants to refurbish toilets and to maintain the school in good decorative order. The caretaker takes considerable pride in his work and the high standard of cleanliness contributes significantly to the positive atmosphere of the school. Corridors and classrooms are bright and cheerful because of well presented work by the pupils. The teachers and support staff use their ICT skills very effectively to produce information, labels and signs, and this gives the school uniformity and a sense of common purpose.
91. The accommodation is adequate for the number of pupils. The layout of the school, with two long corridors off a central hall, does not provide many spaces for group work outside the classrooms. Good use has been made of a small room to create an ICT suite but it quickly becomes stuffy and is too small for whole classes of junior pupils. All classes use the suite but sessions are often too long to sustain pupils' concentration. The school has ICT equipment, such as tape recorders, which are less well used and on many occasions during the inspection, classroom computers were idle. This is unacceptable given the need for pupils to acquire better keyboard skills and to practise their knowledge of different programs. In most subjects, the school has a good range and number of resources but there is a tendency to use them only with specific topics rather than see their potential across the curriculum. For example, there are many suitable resources to support pupils with special educational needs, especially in literacy and numeracy, but they are scattered throughout the school and not all the teachers and learning assistants are aware of how best to use them.
92. Overall the school gives satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

93. To raise standards further, especially in English, mathematics, science and ICT, and to build on the improvements to date, the governors, headteacher and staff should:
- analyse more rigorously the information from performance data, assessments and evaluations of teaching and learning to pinpoint exactly where weaknesses in pupils' learning lie and what steps need to be taken to deal with them;
(paragraphs 8-10, 21-2, 45-6, 63-5, 84-5, 129-130, 139, 145, 187)
 - strengthen the quality of teaching by sharing existing good practice, raising teachers' expectations of what the pupils can achieve and improving the teachers' expertise in developing pupils' subject skills, especially in reading, writing, mental mathematics, science, ICT and music;
(paragraphs 29, 31-2, 36, 45, 49, 66, 99, 117, 120, 122, 171)
 - make more effective use of class, group and individual targets by ensuring that the teachers use their marking to indicate to the pupils how well they have done and what they need to do to improve, and also use effectively the information from marking to plan what they need to teach next to improve the pupils' learning;
(paragraphs 11, 31, 65, 126, 127, 139)
 - raise the challenge for the higher attaining pupils by ensuring that the teachers plan work for them that builds on what they already know and can do;
(paragraphs 4, 7, 11, 16, 30, 99, 119, 162, 172)
 - strengthen the effectiveness of the governors, senior managers and subject co-ordinators in directing the work of the school by clarifying roles, responsibilities and accountabilities especially with regard to monitoring teaching and learning and taking action to improve the quality of both.
(paragraphs 32, 80-84, 87, 130, 140, 146, 152, 161, 166, 173)

When drawing up their action plan, governors may also wish to consider the following minor issues:

- ways to increase the use of the outdoors as part of the daily curriculum for children in the reception class;
(paragraph 111)
- the limited stock of books in classrooms and the school library to interest the junior pupils, especially the boys;
(paragraph 122)
- the need for pupils to have more time to practice and perfect their ICT skills.
(paragraphs 91, 169, 170)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	51
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	28

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	3	20	25	3	0	0
Percentage	0	6	39	49	6	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/A	186
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	60

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/A	7
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/A	93

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	16

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	15	13	28

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	10	12
	Girls	10	11	13
	Total	20	21	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	71(79)	75(76)	89(83)
	National	84(83)	89(88)	91(90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	11	12
	Girls	11	12	11
	Total	21	23	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	75(79)	82(83)	82(83)
	National	85(84)	89(88)	89(88)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	19	6 *	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	14	13	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	56(46)	52(50)	64(50)
	National	75(75)	71(72)	87(85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	10	13	13
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	42(43)	54(46)	54(46)
	National	72(70)	74(72)	82(79)

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

* as there are fewer than 10 girls, the statistics are omitted

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	184
Any other minority ethnic group	2

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR- Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.16
Average class size	26

Education support staff: YR- Y6

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	243

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	N/A
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	N/A
Total number of education support staff	N/A
Total aggregate hours worked per week	N/A
Number of pupils per FTE adult	N/A

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.3
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	N/A	N/A
Black – African heritage	N/A	N/A
Black – other	N/A	N/A
Indian	N/A	N/A
Pakistani	N/A	N/A
Bangladeshi	N/A	N/A
Chinese	N/A	N/A
White	6	0
Other minority ethnic groups	N/A	N/A

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

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
	£
Total income	459,746
Total expenditure	475,740
Expenditure per pupil	2,503
Balance brought forward from previous year	31,000
Balance carried forward to next year	15,000

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 41%

Number of questionnaires sent out	186
Number of questionnaires returned	75

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	56	35	9	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	44	8	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	45	11	3	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	56	8	4	0
The teaching is good.	60	39	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	52	39	7	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	61	29	4	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	33	0	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	43	43	8	3	4
The school is well led and managed.	51	45	0	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	49	40	7	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	40	15	4	1

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

94. The quality of the provision for children in the reception year has improved from good to very good since the last inspection. This is due to the very good teaching and strong partnership between the teacher and the nursery nurse, and their good understanding of how to promote the children's learning. The vibrant classroom and changing range of activities alongside known routines keep boys and girls equally enthusiastic about learning and ensure they achieve well. The staff have used national guidance and professional development to inform and confirm their practice, especially in the strong focus on the children's personal, social and emotional development.
95. Twenty children attend the reception class on a full time basis. All started in September; a few had attended pre-school sessions. The children's attainment on entry varies considerably. The current children' attainment was below that expected for their age, especially in language skills. School evidence shows that the profile of the current reception class is stronger than that of previous year groups but even so, very few showed good skills or knowledge for their age.
96. The majority of children have made good progress, and those with special needs, have made very good progress in all six areas of learning. The small class size has enhanced the quality of the contact between adults and children. Most children are on track to attain the early learning goals in all six areas by the end of the reception year. In mathematical development, many have already attained the goals for counting. The higher attaining children have not made as much progress as they might have done in reading and writing, but the teacher plans to extend their learning in the second half of the summer term. The need to provide greater challenge for these children throughout the year is a prime area for improvement.

Personal, social and emotional development

97. Very good teaching is a particularly strong feature of the provision. The reception teacher and nursery nurse have high expectations of the children that they will take care of their own needs and make their own decisions. They create a very positive and stimulating environment where the children are relaxed, happy and very confident in what they do and in their relationships with others. The children were not fazed by the comings and goings of adults, and initiated conversation with them to tell them how they could join in. Parents commented on how quickly their children settled in school and during the inspection, the children came into class excited about what the day might bring and keen to share their news. The children show genuine liking for the adults. They are eager to please, work hard and behave equally well for the teacher and nursery nurse.
98. The staff make very effective use of toys, such as Buzzy Bee, to signal particular sessions each day. The children like these characters very much and appreciate that all will get a turn to hold and use them. They understand that at times they are "working independently" by getting on happily with their own choice of activity and concentrating for long periods of time. This was seen at its best on one afternoon when the children were so absorbed in what they were doing that they worked through playtime and showed no concern when other classes passed by. Their behaviour

was exemplary, their attention was given fully to the task in hand, and they helped each other to organise resources or solve problems.

99. The children's good levels of self-assurance reflect the skill of the adults in encouraging care for one another and good manners. Comments such as, "*Yes you can, you know you can*" and "*I remember when you couldn't do that*" help to reinforce the children's confidence and self-awareness. The children are very proud when they receive points or awards for trying hard or doing good work, and understand why some had more points than others.

Communication, language and literacy

100. The children make good progress in communicating with others, and in developing early reading and writing skills, because of the good teaching and the good quality of the activities. Although some children start school with limited speech and a poor range of vocabulary, they all make good progress in chatting with others and explaining what they have done. The adults often prompt this by comments such as, "*Just tell me again ...*" and by talking to the children in a mature way. When they showed each other items from when they were babies, the children and teacher listened carefully and for their age, several children gave lengthy descriptions of how the items had been used.
101. Regular class and group book sharing times and sessions using story sacks develop well the children's interest in books. They handle books correctly and many show a good appreciation of storylines. For example, two children gave a spirited version of the "Don't scratch, Max". The children learn to recognise key words such as "was" and "the" as well as the names of the characters in the school reading scheme. The girls are more drawn to the books, including the information books that are part of some activities. Three chose to spend a long time in sharing books with an imaginary audience, using the pictures to guide them but pointing out words they knew.
102. The children recognise their names and most write their first names without help. Some form letters incorrectly and even more could be done on a daily basis to include class and group writing, such as writing letters, words and sentences on the small whiteboards as seen in one session. The higher attaining children are not being challenged enough. Optional tasks such as writing a get well card to Max attract the children but are more productive when an adult initiates and guides the work. Chances are sometimes missed to show the children how to record information, such as their views on the taste of different fruits, or how to produce their own versions of stories and events.
103. The staff use a commercial scheme to help the children learn to recognise the letters of the alphabet and their sounds. The children respond well and all know the actions that accompany the letters. The higher attaining children are beginning to blend sounds together as they work out unfamiliar words and have a go at spelling. They know that sentences start with a capital letter and end with a full stop. Most of the children accurately copy words from cards, labels and signs. Good use of homework extends their writing in a meaningful way. The children write entries in Billy Beetle's diary when they take him home and most completed the homework over the Easter period which was to write a sentence about what they had done and to read it out at school.

Mathematical development

104. The very good teaching which places high focus on practical experiences helps all the children to develop a sound sense of number, shape, pattern and measures. Good outdoor as well as indoor activities ensure the children develop an awareness of number in natural contexts, such as following the number snake on the playground. The children learn about number through number rhymes, games and practical problem solving. They learn to count correctly to 20, and beyond, and to recognise the numerals. This is much helped by routines such as ordering numbers on washing lines or helping Fergus Frog to hop along the number line each day to record the number of children present. The staff ensure that the children have lots of opportunities to rehearse counting and one-to-one matching and increase the challenge as the year goes on. This ensures that the higher attaining children continue to progress. For example, the children were asked to predict what number they would be when counting round the class and starting at numbers above 20.
105. School records show that the children have made good progress over the year. Most are secure in number to 10. With a little help, one child counted accurately the 13 spots on Max's face, hands and legs, while another spontaneously counted the eight legs on the spider he had made, also commenting that there were four on each side. Higher attaining children count in tens to 100 and show a growing awareness of the value of numbers such as 53 being higher than 41.
106. The children recognise and name basic shapes. They know that by altering shapes they can make others. For example, one boy folded a tissue circle and commented that he now had a semi-circle. Similarly, two boys showed good awareness of size and shape when cutting pieces of paper to cover a card.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

107. Over the year, the children experience good teaching and a good range of activities that develop their skills and knowledge and prepare them well for work in science, geography, history, ICT and design and technology. The staff show considerable ingenuity in using themes and setting up situations to encourage the children to investigate, explore and try things out. Photographic evidence from the year shows the use of the water tray to become Antarctica, a Sense Tent for the children to explore activities such as a feely box and senses game, and "Our discovery area" to look for mini-beasts, which built well on the recent visit to Pennington Flash.
108. The children make good progress in finding out about the world around them. The staff draw the children's attention to sights and sounds, such as bird song heard through an open window. The children used magnifying glasses to have a closer look at snails in a box and looked carefully at different fruits before tasting them. The adults' questions and prompts, such as "*Which did you like best?*" led the children to voice similarities and differences although they found it harder to justify their opinions.
109. The children acquire a sense of place and time through the routines of the school day and different themes throughout the year. For instance, "A taste of India" provides the children with good opportunities to sample different foods and to look at how people from different cultures live and dress. They know that things change over time and that they have changed from when they were babies. One boy laid baby clothes on his chest to emphasise the difference in size between now and then. The children learn to use different ICT equipment for different purposes such as listening to taped stories, punching in numbers on calculators or designing an Easter egg pattern on the computer. They handle the mouse confidently and click accurately on icons to open up programs and print their work.

110. When the children were asked to design and make a house for a mini-beast they showed sound skills in drawing a plan and selecting and using resources to make it. Although they conscientiously rooted about to find useful scraps and made good use of boxes, papers, scissors and glue, the children's fixing and fastening techniques were limited by what was available.

Physical development

111. The children develop good skills in moving around confidently and safely because the adults organise the reception room and activities to foster ease of movement. Good teaching in physical education sessions in the hall and daily play outside with pupils from Years 1 and 2 also fosters the children's competence in controlling their movements. Although the class has access to wheeled toys and other outdoor equipment, its use was not seen during the inspection. This school rightly recognises this as an area for improvement.
112. Over time the children experience a good range of activities that allow them to acquire, develop and rehearse their skills. In their play, and in handling tools and items, most children controlled their movements well and effectively manipulated large and small objects. For instance, one boy kept the scissors still and turned his paper to cut out a mini-beast he had designed on the computer before gluing it to another card, and one girl dextrously used a cutter's edge to add a crinkle pattern to her dough shape. Two children confidently and safely lifted, pushed and moved chairs and cushions into position to form their own seating arrangement.
113. As part of daily social activities with the infant pupils, the children benefit from seeing how the older pupils skip, throw and catch balls and follow the rules of ring games. Two children much improved their co-ordination in turning the skipping rope and jumping at the same time when an adult stayed close and indicated when to jump.

Creative development

114. Good teaching and a good range of activities across the year ensure the children make good progress and do as well as expected for their age. The quality of teaching is stronger in getting the children to respond to different experiences and encouraging them to express their ideas than in exploring media, materials and music. Although the children regularly paint, make models, listen to music and play instruments, this is intermittent rather than an integral part of ongoing activities that let the children repeat and rehearse what have they have learnt in their own way.
115. The teacher makes good use of the nursery nurse's skill and ideas to plan, organise and set up role play areas linked to current themes. For example, the good range of props in "Newton Westpark Clinic" guided the children's play as they took on different roles and created their own scenarios.
116. The children know a good range of songs and modern hymns and sing with much enthusiasm although not always in tune. They enjoyed dressing up in Caribbean style and listening to Caribbean music. With the deputy headteacher's guidance, six children agreed how to use percussion instruments to represent mini beasts, and shook and tapped a tambourine to indicate insects running and jumping.

ENGLISH

117. Although the standard of pupils' reading and writing has risen since the last inspection, it remains below average for pupils in Years 2 and 6. This is partly because of the low attainment of a high percentage of pupils with special educational needs but also because the level of challenge and rate of progress are inconsistent between classes. The overall quality of teaching for the infant and junior pupils is satisfactory. There is good teaching but it is not sufficiently widespread nor consistent and purposeful enough to raise standards in all aspects of English in each year group.
118. Many pupils achieve well over time from a low start. The school supports well those pupils who find reading and writing difficult but by the start of Year 6 there is still much to do to ensure pupils reach Level 4, as expected for their age. Current revision work and 'booster classes' are raising the pupils' awareness of what they must do, but the target of 75 per cent Level 4 attainment is very challenging as day-to-day standards in reading, and more especially in writing, do not match that of the average Year 6 pupil.
119. The improvement in the test results for pupils in Year 2 in 2001 has not been sustained. The teaching is not strong enough to accelerate the pupils' learning and a scrutiny of work shows that the higher attaining pupils are not reaching the potential they showed in September. Some pupils, especially boys, are losing ground.
120. Standards in speaking and listening are lower than in most schools. Pupils' limited skills in expressing their ideas and views also lower the quality of their reading and writing across the curriculum. For example, pupils' writing reflects their dialect with errors in grammar such as "we would of" and "we was". All the pupils make better progress in listening than in speaking. They learn to listen to their teachers and other adults and by Year 2 can listen attentively and appreciatively especially when their interest is caught. Too often, however, pupils fail to retain what they have heard and time is lost as teachers have to repeat instructions. Year 6 pupils showed good listening skills and paid careful attention to their teacher. Although most pupils are prepared to speak and to share their ideas, the teachers do not challenge the pupils often enough to extend and clarify their explanations. As a result the pupils do not acquire the vocabulary and confidence to do so. The pupils have few opportunities to present formally what they have learnt or to engage in debate and drama.
121. Most pupils make good initial progress in reading. Sound systematic teaching ensures the infant pupils learn key words and letter sounds and how to work out unfamiliar words from letter sounds. The use of the Early Literacy Support programme is giving those pupils who have been slower to read a firm grounding in letters and sounds. Most Year 1 pupils read confidently; they delight in stories and books. This enthusiasm is less evident in Year 2 and only the higher attaining pupils read with good fluency and expression. They spontaneously offer ideas about how the story will end and what they like about it. In both infant classes the pupils are not learning well enough how to use pictures and the sense of the sentence and story to help them work out new words. The teachers' comments on pupils' reading records are not specific enough about the pupils' reading skills and strategies to be of real use to them in planning how to develop the pupils' reading further.
122. By Year 3, most pupils read at a basic level but find it hard to grapple with the meaning and the nuances of what they read. This deters some and hinders their progress. The school makes sound efforts to sustain the pupils' enthusiasm for stories and books through book clubs, occasional visits by authors such as Shoo Rayner, and a variety of texts in literacy lessons. Some older juniors read avidly for enjoyment. They have favourite authors and book types, such as the "Goosebumps" series, but they bemoan the limited choice of books. This is echoed in their limited

knowledge of non-fiction, poetry and children's classics. The use of the library area by groups withdrawn from lessons restricts its accessibility by the junior pupils for research and pleasure. The current library stock does not reflect the pupils' interests and needs but the planned re-organisation of the library provides a good opportunity to deal with this problem.

123. In Story Club, Year 6 pupils read poems and stories with good expression and kept their reception class audience in rapt attention. Although the Year 6 pupils usually read accurately, many have difficulty in understanding and interpreting what they read in all subjects. They do not draw on the stylistic features in books they read, such as using similes or asides to enrich their writing.
124. Standards are low in writing and the school has correctly identified writing as a key area for improvement. The teachers are beginning to use national guidance in literacy teaching to inform their work but a push to raise standards in writing is not evident across the curriculum. Chances are missed to teach reading and writing as part of work in science, geography and history, and to use science, geography and history texts as the focus in literacy lessons to emphasise key features and writing styles. In the best lessons, the teachers use the chosen text to teach an aspect of reading and show its application to writing. For instance, during a very good lesson for Year 1 pupils, the teacher led a lively recount of the book 'Old' and then showed the pupils how to write it in a series of simple sentences. In so doing, she reminded them of the process of leaving spaces between words and used the pupils to spell simple and "tricky words". As a result, the pupils were keen to suggest sentences and to have a go at spelling.
125. Infant pupils' work on display shows they learn about different forms of writing such as the use of captions to explain photographs of a design and technology activity. When the writing has clear purpose, it is of sound quality and the pupils often use interesting words and phrases. The majority of Year 2 pupils structure and write a simple story and spell simple words correctly. However, the quality of the content is often poor and punctuation is erratic. A scrutiny of pupils' work since September shows that pupils have had little systematic teaching in how to improve their work by incorporating speech or using correct punctuation. As a result, too few have attained a secure Level 2.
126. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 build on and learn new writing skills and the lower attaining pupils often make good progress. In whole class sessions, the learning assistants make a strong contribution to the progress of pupils who find learning more difficult as they prompt and encourage them. In several lessons, it was their intervention and support that ensured pupils completed the task successfully. In Year 6, the lower attaining boys and girls make a huge effort to keep up with the others and to improve the quality of their work. This reflects the teacher's step-by-step consolidation and revision of skills and knowledge. However, the higher attaining pupils have not always known what they need to do to improve. In addition, in some classes, the tasks given to the higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenging or structured carefully enough to ensure progress when working independently.
127. A good feature of the teaching in writing is the way the teachers highlight the techniques of planning writing. The teacher's "thinking aloud" gave Year 3 pupils a good model of how to decide what to say in a letter. A successful revision session showed Year 6 pupils how to use ideas webs, lists, bullet points and key words to create a useful plan for a diary entry. As a consequence the pupils used effective features such as the phrase 'Let me tell you that ...' and humorous touches, 'I had

another conversation with my parents about that!'. However, in each year group, much of the pupils' writing lacks vitality. The structure of Year 6 pupils' writing reflects their learning and practice in grammar and comprehension but lacks the quality of content and use of language for effect that is expected for their age. Pupils' untidy handwriting is also a general weakness. Few teachers remind pupils about presentation standards or insist on neatness and accuracy as the pupils write. This contrasts markedly with the high quality of presentation of the pupils' work on display in class and around school.

128. The teachers are using computer programs to provide practice tasks in English and to develop the pupils' competence in word processing. Although the teachers make good use of the Internet to find information, there are too few opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their information retrieval skills. Similarly, there is little use of tape recorders and computers as learning tools to promote speaking, listening, research and the drafting and revising of work.
129. The teachers' use of regular assessments in reading and writing is helping to indicate the rate of progress of the class and individuals. However, the teachers are not using this information to identify what pupils need to learn next. This is not helped by the absence of key information. Teachers' marking is also inconsistent. There are pockets of good quality marking, especially in Years 3 and 5, but too few teachers' comments give the pupils clear information on what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. The targets for pupils are not effective in accelerating their learning as they are too general and are not being used as a guide for teaching and learning.
130. Subject leadership and management are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has good subject knowledge and is well informed about national and local initiatives in the teaching of English. She is aware of the constraints of some of the teaching materials. However, too little is being done to pinpoint where the problems lie and there has been minimal observation of the quality of teaching and learning, especially in writing. As a result, the school has little to help it identify key factors in raising standards.

MATHEMATICS

131. Overall standards are below average for Year 2 pupils but closer to average for those in Year 6. This echoes the judgements of the last inspection but masks a complex picture. Most of the Year 6 pupils are working at the level expected for their age and are achieving well. Their attainment is higher than that of the Year 6 pupils last year. Year 2 pupils do well in number but their skills in using and applying mathematics and their knowledge of share, space and measures are unsatisfactory. A common weakness throughout the school is in the pupils' strategies for dealing with number. They learn basic procedures well but are slower to realise when to use them to solve number problems. This is partly because of the high use of structured workbooks that provide the pupils with formats and procedures to complete.
132. From a low start, the pupils make good progress over time and a small number achieve really well and surpass the level expected for their age. Many enjoy mathematics and try hard in lessons. The pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress towards their numeracy targets because of good support from adults, especially from the competent learning assistants. The work planned for pupils is matched well to their levels of attainment. This is an area of improvement since the last inspection.

133. The infant pupils acquire sound counting skills and by the end of Year 2, this is their strongest area in mathematics. They reliably recognise and order numbers to 100 and beyond. The count accurately in twos, fives and tens and the higher attaining pupils understand underlying rules, such as numbers in the five times table always ending in five or zero. However, few pupils have a secure understanding of place value or good skills in handling number mentally and recalling number facts quickly. They rely heavily on using fingers and are tentative in suggesting possible answers. Their learning is slow because they are not taught how to use a range of strategies or how to see pattern in number. Although the higher attaining pupils readily and accurately add and subtract numbers to 20, they lack confidence in expected aspects such as doubling, halving and giving near numbers.
134. The junior pupils make better progress in their number work, especially in Years 5 and 6. By Year 6, the great majority show a secure understanding of place value and good levels of accuracy in computation work using the four rules. However, as with the younger pupils, they are not always as confident in working out problems mentally. The majority of Year 6 pupils have a satisfactory grasp of negative numbers and the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages.
135. In shape, space and measures, the infants' knowledge and understanding are under-developed. They know how to measure length in centimetres but are less familiar with measures of volume and time. Similarly, their knowledge of mathematical terms is hazy. For example, one pupil used 'ends' and 'points' instead of 'sides' and 'corners' when describing the difference between a rectangle and a triangle. The junior pupils, however, benefit from a good range of well-planned activities and experiences that develop their appreciation of shape, space and measures. They learn procedures and rules and how to explain them to others. As a result, by Year 6, pupils use correct mathematical vocabulary and know how to use formulae to calculate volume and area. Their computer-generated spreadsheets showing how to calculate the area of rectangles were a good example of the application of their learning.
136. Pupils' skills in handling data are satisfactory although they have limited experience in applying them. The infants learn how to create simple charts from information they collect. For example, Year 2 pupils created bar charts using a computer program to show the class' s response to the question "Is it OK to lie?". In the junior years, the pupils systematically learn how to interpret data from graphs, charts, diagrams and frequency tables. There is less evidence to show they know how to collect their own data and how to present it. By Year 6, the pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the use of measures of average, and use appropriately terms such as mode, median and mean and range. The majority organise their work carefully, present their results clearly and explain what they have done.
137. Although there is some evidence of the use of ICT in mathematics, the classroom computers were rarely used in daily mathematics lessons during the inspection. The pupils have too few opportunities to practise and consolidate their mathematical skills in other subjects.
138. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. Good teaching and well paced, organised lessons for the older juniors have boosted their learning. However, inconsistencies in how the teachers use the guidance of the National Numeracy Strategy weaken the overall quality of teaching and learning. In some classes, the lessons are too long, the pupils' concentration flags and the pace of learning drops.

The initial sessions of mental mathematics are often too slow to sharpen the pupils' feel for number. In a good lesson seen, the teacher's quick-fire questions and removal of numbers from a counting stick motivated the Year 4 pupils to think about multiples of eight. They became increasingly confident to offer answers as they realised the pattern in the multiples. In many sessions the teachers do not challenge the higher attaining pupils enough. Similarly, not all the teachers tell the pupils what they are expected to gain from the lesson. Year 6 pupils concentrated well and consolidated their learning because their teacher explained carefully the lesson purpose and in the end session, spent time reviewing how well they had remembered the procedures to round up decimals and use tally charts.

139. The assessment of pupils' work is inconsistent and teachers are not using the information well enough to plan further work. This is in part due to the absence of an effective, agreed mathematics policy. Throughout the school the teachers' marking of pupils' work seldom gives a clear picture of the pupils' strengths and ways in which they can make progress. Few teachers refer to targets achieved or set new ones to indicate what the pupils need to learn next.
140. The leadership of mathematics is satisfactory but a management weakness lies in the lack of monitoring to identify how the quality of teaching and learning might be improved in all year groups. This is slowing the process of action to raise standards.

SCIENCE

141. Standards are below average at the end of Year 2, but close to average at the end of Year 6. A higher percentage of Year 6 pupils are working at the level expected for their age this year compared with last. This is because of three key factors which have contributed to the good improvement since the last inspection. Firstly, the co-ordinator, who teaches Year 6, has analysed past test papers to identify where to improve the curriculum. Secondly, the teachers are placing more emphasis on guided activities and investigations. Thirdly, revision lessons have raised the Year 6 pupils' performance significantly. Most Year 6 pupils are achieving well and show sound scientific knowledge. They remember key facts although some need to be prompted to use relevant scientific terms especially when explaining a process. However, Year 2 pupils' attainment is lower than last year and there is some underachievement.
142. As no explicit science teaching was seen in the infant classes it is not possible to judge the quality. However, a scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning and assessment records reveal areas of weakness. Science is taught as one of several concurrent activities so it takes some time before all pupils experience the planned science activity. This explains the limited content in Year 2 pupils' books. Too little is expected of the pupils, especially the higher attaining ones. For example, the Year 2 pupils' investigations into diet showed little individual difference in the quality of the content. Some work, especially in Year 1, is poorly presented. Coverage has been thin in the area of science to do with materials and their properties and also in physical processes.
143. Good teaching and an improved quality and range of work in the junior years have resulted in an increased pace in pupils' learning, especially in Years 5 and 6. Pupils gain sound scientific knowledge across all areas of the subject, learn to use different scientific equipment correctly such as force meters and begin to use appropriate scientific terms and conventions correctly when recording their work. By Year 6, pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of materials and their

properties, as well as sound knowledge in areas such as plant growth, forces and the functions of blood circulation. They have a sound awareness of what constitutes a fair test although they are more tentative in explaining why certain factors need to be considered. Other areas of weakness are the pupils' skills in making generalisations about the phenomena they observe and their skills in obtaining and presenting evidence using diagrams, graphs and tables. This is because they are most frequently required to work with given material rather than devise their own methods of collecting and interpreting information. They have had limited experience of using ICT either as a tool to collect and record information or to present their findings.

144. The pupils enjoy science. In the lessons seen, the pupils' level of concentration was good because the teachers had prepared activities that caught their interest. For example, Year 3 pupils were curious about what would happen when celery was placed in coloured water and intrigued by the root ball of a pot-bound spider plant. Similarly, Year 5 pupils much enjoyed blowing across the tops of bottles of water filled to different levels and then producing their own pan-pipes. The teacher set clear targets for what they were to do and how they were to behave. Her searching questions prompted them to observe carefully and to link what they saw with what they knew. As a result, all the pupils made good progress in understanding how different lengths of air columns affect the pitch of sound. By the end of the lesson, the pupils predicted accurately which of their pan-pipes would produce the higher notes.
145. A key factor in the good progress made by the junior pupils is the effective way the teachers plan and organise their lessons. The learning assistants know what they are to do and their comments and explanations much assist pupils with special educational needs. Year 3 pupils made careful observations of plants because the assistant directed their attention to details. The lack of an agreed school assessment strategy makes it difficult for the teachers to assess the pupils' attainment and to set them realistic learning targets.
146. Subject leadership and management are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has revised the scheme of work to include national guidance and her monitoring of planning of pupils' work has identified the need to improve the use of ICT and the quality of teachers' marking. However, not enough is being done to observe science in practice, especially the quality of teaching and learning for the infant pupils.

ART AND DESIGN

147. As in the last inspection, the attainment of pupils in Years 2 and 6 is as expected nationally for their age. In all year groups, the vast majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well because of good teaching and access to a wide range of resources, including the use of the computer to draw and design on screen. The teachers are using a new scheme of work to guide their planning and good improvement has been made in introducing the pupils to artists' work through stories and ethnic art. A good feature is the murals produced by Year 5 pupils working with a professional artist.
148. The infant pupils make good progress in drawing from observation and learning to use an increasing range of media and techniques. For example, Year 1 pupils used chalk pastels to create vases of flowers and Year 2 pupils used heavier and lighter pressure on pencil crayons to give depth to the colour in their designs based on those of William Morris.

149. Junior pupils gain sound knowledge about the work and techniques of different artists and craftspeople and apply them to create their own work. For example, Year 4 pupils have combined a range of different materials to produce well-proportioned, three-dimensional sculptures of elephants linked to their topic work. They are attractively decorated and reflect the progress made by the pupils in investigating form, colour and texture. By Year 6, pupils make good use of a well-developed range of methods and approaches to communicate their observations, ideas and feelings.
150. The pupils enjoy art and work with enthusiasm because the teachers plan experiences that stimulate them. Year 3 pupils concentrated hard on producing their own versions of Van Gogh's painting of sunflowers and were proud of their work, especially when it was publicly displayed soon afterwards along with a vase of sunflowers. Year 6 pupils were highly interested in their teacher's own paintings. They made good progress in evaluating their work as she helped them to increase their skill in using water-colours. The pupils' knowledge of different artistic styles was evident in their work. Some pupils made very intricate drawings but no sketchbooks were seen to how pupils collect and try out ideas.
151. Occasionally chances are missed to develop the pupils' skills in choosing relevant resources. Several Year 5 pupils used brushes that were too small for painting sea scenes. When they worked with an artist on designing and painting a mural, they were shown how to work on a large-scale. Pupils have few other opportunities to work together or to combine media in two and three dimensions.
152. Work in art and design adds much to the pupils' personal development and to the aims of the school. Pupils visit galleries and their own work is displayed in school to a high standard. Good leadership from the knowledgeable, enthusiastic co-ordinator gives art a high profile in school. Although she has a good working knowledge of standards throughout the school, a weakness in the management is the absence of monitoring to share good practice and identify where improvements can be made.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

153. No lessons were seen so it is not possible to judge the quality of teaching. Work completed by the pupils in Years 2 and 6 is consistent with national expectations. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress during their time in the school. This sustains the judgements made in the last inspection.
154. Pupils successfully learn how to plan and evaluate their designs and products. In making their own items, they acquire different skills in handling tools and different materials as well as ways to fix, assemble and join them. In discussion, Year 2 pupils explained clearly the process of designing and making lorries that moved. Their plans included side views and pupils talked about the changes needed before they measured, marked out and cut wood and stiff card prior to assembling and joining the pieces. With help they had made wheels and axles so that their lorries were functional. They added individual touches such as a logo which they designed using ICT skills. By Year 6, pupils demonstrate a good understanding of how a finished product must be fit for its intended purpose. They spoke of their recent work in making slippers which they reported had helped them realise the importance to the consumer of the quality of finishing techniques.
155. Subject leadership and management are satisfactory. Although only recently appointed to the role of coordinator, the deputy headteacher has completed an audit

of resources and a review of the curriculum. This has highlighted the weaker strand of designing compared with strength in making products, and also the need to increase resources for each topic. The co-ordinator has realistic plans to develop a manageable assessment and recording system. These steps offer much potential to raise standards.

GEOGRAPHY

156. In all year groups pupils are doing as well as expected for their age although the higher attaining Year 2 pupils could do better. Although Year 6 pupils have not studied geography recently they show enthusiasm for the subject and understand geographical processes. Their knowledge of the location of places worldwide is not as secure. The quality of pupils' written work is often not as good as their oral comments and the standard of presentation is generally low.
157. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The co-ordinator now monitors teachers' planning to ensure that National Curriculum requirements are met and pupils' skills are being developed across the school. The use of a nationally approved scheme of work has improved the quality of subject planning.
158. Infant and junior pupils make satisfactory progress because of satisfactory teaching. The teachers are aware that many of the pupils have a limited experience of different places and make good use of visits, such as that to a farm by Year 1 pupils, as well as photographs and items, to help pupils learn about the features of different places. For example, an attractive display, taped music and fruit tasting sessions are being imaginatively used to introduce all the infant pupils to the sights, sounds and foods of the Caribbean. Similarly, the teachers are using a good collection of photographs and brochures to develop Year 2 pupils' skills in making simple comparisons between their own locality and Blackpool. Year 5 pupils show a more sophisticated knowledge of Blackpool's geographical features, their functions and reasons for their location. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a sound knowledge of places, climates and weather patterns and some understanding of how the features of places and landscapes such as rivers and mountains can change as a result of natural and man-made factors.
159. The 'Skills Booklet', completed each year from Years 3 to 6, is a good initiative. It acts as a useful check on pupils' learning and also directs teachers to the standards expected at the end of each year. Having learnt how to draw simple maps and charts in Years 1 and 2, pupils in Year 3 work with maps of the local area. In a good lesson for Year 4 pupils, a highly motivating and tailor-made computer presentation prepared by the teacher primed the pupils to work on maps of the Lake District. As the complexity of the maps had been carefully matched to their abilities, all the pupils, including those with special educational needs, found the work interesting, and made good progress in working out compass points and in locating features. Year 5 pupils competently used some of the same maps, as well as home-made compasses to give directions, identify types of roads and plan a route from Leigh to Blackpool.
160. A weaker aspect is in geographical enquiry and in pupils' skills to communicate what they have learnt. Infant pupils record the journeys of Teddy Newton and junior pupils track "What is in the news?", but pupils have relatively few opportunities to find out for themselves. Year 3 pupils made minimal progress in completing fact sheets about Korea as there were too few resources to help them and they were not encouraged to make use of relevant sources such as newspaper articles and information on the Internet. Much of the work in pupils' books appears to have been copied or is a

recount of what the teacher has said. There is little to show the pupils have collected and presented the information themselves.

161. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory with some good features, especially in the direction given to the teachers in planning. The skills booklet has the potential to be an effective assessment record throughout the school. An area for development is the critical monitoring of teaching and learning.

HISTORY

162. Standards of attainment are unsatisfactory at the end of Year 2, as in the last inspection, and satisfactory at the end of Year 6. The level of pupils' knowledge about history has improved since the last inspection but their skills in finding out about history are generally not as well developed. There is evidence of underachievement especially in Year 2. It is not possible to make a judgement about the quality of teaching as no lessons were seen.
163. A scrutiny of pupils' work in Years 1 and 2 shows that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, begin to acquire a sound sense of the passage of time by looking at how babies change and develop. From basic comparisons between 'then' and 'now', they find out about how people lived in the past. The work in books is patchy in each term and of poor quality. It is mostly a series of snatched facts, such as those about Florence Nightingale, and does not reveal an understanding of why people did things or why events happened. There is little evidence that the pupils gained information from sources other than from listening to the teacher, or that pupils recognise how people record the past.
164. In Years 3 to 6, the curriculum coverage and pupils' understanding are better although Year 6 pupils have only a tentative appreciation of chronology. Pupils build up their knowledge of past civilisations and their achievements. Year 3 pupils dressed like Ancient Egyptians and explained to parents how they would have used hieroglyphics to write and relied on the river Nile for water for their crops. They enthusiastically performed a dance to Egyptian music. By the end of Year 6, the pupils have a reasonable recall of facts and a developing understanding of why things happened. They showed empathy when talking about what it would be like to be a wartime evacuee.
165. Junior pupils learn simple skills in finding out about history from different sources. For example, Year 3 pupils have had a talk from an archaeologist about Roman artefacts and Year 4 pupils have visited Ordsall Hall to find out about life in Tudor times. However, the work in the pupils' books shows that too much information comes directly from the teacher. Video materials, photographs, CD-ROMS and the Internet are not used consistently or extensively enough to develop pupils' skills in carrying out their own historical enquiries. Chances are missed to link this more closely to work in English, mathematics and ICT. This is partly because the school has a limited range and number of resources but also because the potential of work in history has been overlooked as a means for pupils to apply their skills, especially those to research, record and organise findings.
166. The leadership and management of history are unsatisfactory. Not enough has been done to improve the quality of teaching and learning, especially for the infant pupils, or to develop ways to assess pupils' attainment and progress throughout the school.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

167. As in the last inspection, pupils' attainment is below that expected nationally at the end of Years 2 and 6. The profile of ICT has been heightened by the work of the co-ordinator, the recent installation of a computer suite, training for the teachers and advice from an ICT advisory teacher from the EAZ. An improved range of resources and the use of national guidance in planning lessons ensure the school meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.
168. The pupils are interested in ICT and keen to use the computers. Regular lessons in the suite ensure that the pupils learn new skills and how to use different programs. A magnified screen enabled a pupil with special educational needs to interrogate a database and save work. The clear step-by-step guidance of a learning assistant played a crucial role in ensuring the pupil's success. Many pupils are quick to learn and as a result, they are beginning to show good achievement as they plug gaps in their learning from previous years. However, several factors are impeding the drive to raise standards.
169. Firstly, pupils of all ages have limited skills in using the keyboard, mouse and toolbars. Too many use one finger to type; they take a long time to find needed letters and function keys, and have poorly developed co-ordination in controlling the mouse. The infant pupils are learning to use the mouse to click, drag and drop and to draw on screen. Year 2 pupils' work shows they have also successfully used the mouse to change functions to flood fill and spray colour when creating graphics. They have also learnt how to use a program to compile bar graphs and to write simple reports. Year 6 pupils have used their limited keyboard skills to enter information on simple spreadsheets to calculate the area of rectangles and to send emails. While older infant and junior pupils are quick to change font size, style and colour when word processing, they are less familiar with other toolbar icons and their functions. They have too little time using computers to develop keyboard skills and to rehearse and refine their knowledge.
170. Secondly, the lessons in the ICT suite are too long. For many pupils, the first half of the lesson is the most productive. In all four lessons seen, the pupils lost concentration in the second half and the work rate slowed. The pupils are keen to work on the computers and most try hard to carry out the given task. They generally work amicably in pairs to follow the teacher's instructions and to help each other when things go wrong. For instance, Year 4 pupils prompted each other to repeat instructions as they learnt how to control a pointer on screen. Nevertheless, a significant number, most often boys but not exclusively, find it hard to share with others and are very demanding of the adults when things go wrong. Their inattentiveness, and their reluctance to respond to instructions, slows others' learning. In some instances, the pupils' tetchiness was well defused by teachers and learning assistants although it boiled over in a few cases. In one unsatisfactory lesson, Year 2 pupils' learning was minimal as they fussed about the seats, argued about who was to use the mouse and what to do next.
171. Thirdly, although satisfactory, the teaching and curriculum are not strong enough to accelerate learning and raise standards significantly. In three of the four lessons seen, the teaching was satisfactory with some good features. The co-ordinator's advice and her lead in team teaching are lifting the teachers' confidence in teaching the pupils new skills. Nonetheless, there is considerable way to go to ensure a high level of consistency in the teaching and also in the use of computers, tape recorders, calculators and the digital camera as integral tools in teaching and learning, especially in literacy and numeracy. The teachers provide a good model in using websites and

desk-top publishing to compile items such as worksheets, captions, notices and certificates. However, pupils have far fewer opportunities to do the same. Only the co-ordinator is using the interactive whiteboard although others occasionally use tape recorders, such as the recording of Year 3 pupils' poems.

172. Fourthly, the starting point in lessons is the same for all pupils irrespective of what they already know. This reflects the lack of an agreed scheme of work and assessment system to track what pupils know and can do. The school is only just beginning to collect evidence of pupils' ICT achievement and currently has little information to help it set targets for attainment and to show pupils' progress in the short and long term. However, the guidelines provided by the advisory teacher give a clear indication of the criteria to be met for each level of attainment.
173. While the quality of subject leadership is good, a weakness in the management lies in the absence of monitoring of teaching and learning. The co-ordinator has taken a strong lead in improving the quality of resources and in helping other staff to gain confidence in teaching ICT. She is setting a good model in providing the pupils in her class with opportunities to apply and use what they have learnt, and in devising material for teaching, such as a family database. She has a realistic understanding of the shortcomings of the computer suite but has yet to identify the weaker aspects of teaching and the curriculum and what needs to be done to remedy them.

MUSIC

174. Standards are unsatisfactory and have fallen since the last inspection. Although no lessons were seen for pupils in Years 2 and 6, in other year groups, the pupils' attainment was lower than expected for their ages. The pupils show limited knowledge and understanding of music and immature skills in composing and performing it. However, the improvements when Year 5 pupils conscientiously worked on their ideas indicate achievement could be higher.
175. In the lesson for Year 5 pupils, the teaching was unsatisfactory. In other lessons for infant and junior pupils, the teaching was satisfactory but with areas for improvement. There is little to show that standards are rising in the junior years as a result of the teaching by a specialist music teacher from the Local Education Authority. The lack of explicit information about the purpose and structure of lessons limits the class teachers' ability to develop the content between weekly lessons or to work in tandem with the specialist teacher to ensure pupils gain the most from these lessons. The absence of a co-ordinator for music has resulted in discontinuity in the music curriculum.
176. The standard of singing is satisfactory. Pupils know a good range of songs and modern hymns but their singing often lacks depth of tone and many find it hard to sustain the melody when singing to a recorded accompaniment. Although infant boys and girls sing with enthusiasm, many of the older junior boys are reluctant singers. Pupils are not being taught how to improve the quality of their performance nor are they expected to evaluate their own work. This was a prime weakness in the teaching in the lessons seen involving junior pupils.
177. In assemblies and lessons, the pupils hear music from different times and cultures. Many show a liking for music, enjoy listening to it and sway spontaneously to the pulse. Infant pupils much enjoyed singing favourite songs with accompanying actions and jiggled about in time to music from the Caribbean. Most Year 5 pupils listened attentively to Matthew's "Pluto". Comments such as "sounds like meteorites" and "it

builds up the tension” showed that a few listened appreciatively. Opportunities are missed in lessons and as part of school life to develop and build on the pupils’ knowledge of musical terms and their awareness of composers and performers.

178. Year 5 pupils’ performance indicates limited progress in music making skills. In all classes seen, the pupils were very enthusiastic about playing tuned and un-tuned percussion instruments but few showed a good level of control. Year 1 pupils hesitantly played instruments to represent animal noises in “Old MacDonald had a farm” and Year 3 pupils struggled to keep a steady beat. The tuition for the small number of pupils who learn to play the recorder, guitar and brass instruments, adds positively to their musical knowledge, especially in reading music and appreciating how to interpret musical elements such as tempo and dynamics.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

179. As in the last inspection, the attainment of the infant pupils in dance and games, and the older pupils in athletics, is as expected nationally for their age. The vast majority, including those with special educational needs, make at least satisfactory and often good progress, because of much good teaching. Achievement is satisfactory and the pace of learning is helped considerably by the daily period of social activities when pupils follow the rules of team games, such as passing the ball or playing running games. Almost all the Year 6 pupils can swim the required 25 metres unaided. A strength of the curriculum is the nine-week swimming course for pupils in every year group. Over the year, the school meets the requirements of the National Curriculum as pupils experience gymnastics, dance, games, and for the older juniors, outdoor and adventurous activities.
180. In their play outside and in lessons, the infants show confidence and developing skill in moving around safely while mindful of the space others need. They enjoy being active and respond well to instructions. In a dance lesson, Year 1 pupils varied their speed and created their own sequences of movement to well chosen “machine” music. The teachers’ good use of a poem and demonstrations by some pupils helped all to improve how they moved. By the end of the lesson, many had combined three main movements and showed good imaginative touches as well as increased control and co-ordination. Year 2 pupils know that exercise makes their heart beat faster. They comment sensibly on their own and others’ abilities to throw and catch balls. Most caught balls from a short distance with two hands and a few higher attaining pupils confidently did so with one hand.
181. In their outdoor activities, the juniors show sound skills in sprinting, dodging and controlling their movements. The older juniors are learning to play team games, such as junior rugby, and show a sound awareness of fair play. In an athletics lesson, the Year 5 pupils benefited from good teaching in basic techniques and improved their long jump skills. They listened to advice, concentrated hard and put in much effort. As a result, all increased the length of their standing jumps and showed much pleasure in beating their previous efforts.
182. One reason why the teaching is better than in the last inspection is the use of commercial schemes of work to structure lessons and to outline key teaching and learning points. Lessons seen were planned effectively, well resourced and had a good balance between the teaching of skills and techniques and time for pupils to practise their skills. However, in some lessons the noise from a minority of pupils disturbs the concentration of all and inhibits their learning.

183. Subject leadership and management are satisfactory. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning to ensure that National Curriculum requirements are met, and has suitable plans to develop an assessment system.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

184. As in the last inspection, standards of attainment are comparable to those in most schools and meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for pupils in Years 2 and 6. The curriculum in religious education plays an important part in promoting the pupils' social and moral development. In the two lessons seen, the teachers strove to relate the pupils' learning about religious faith to their everyday lives. Year 1 pupils were helped to see the connection between the Commandments given to Moses and the rules that the pupils themselves had agreed for classroom life.
185. By Year 2, pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of the life of Jesus and key Christian festivals. The infant pupils learn about similarities and differences between different faiths, such as the fact that Christians, Jews and Muslims worship but that their places and forms of worship differ. When the pupils visit a local church they see the different items that are meaningful to Christians, such as a font. They come to a sound understanding of the importance of special books in religion. Junior pupils acquire more knowledge about other faiths and Christian celebrations and festivals. They gradually develop a sound understanding of their significance. A good example is the revisiting of the Christmas story in each year group starting in Year 3 with the narrative of Herod and the Wise Men to comparisons of the different gospel versions for Year 6 pupils. Older pupils also deepen their understanding of Islam and the Jewish faith and Year 6 pupils study Hinduism as well as the other faiths.
186. The quality of teaching seen was satisfactory. Teachers plan their lessons carefully. They use a good range of ways to make the content interesting and relevant to all the pupils, including those with special educational needs. For example, Years 1 pupils' interest was caught by the deputy headteacher's effective use of a book of the pupils' pictures, and then by her opening of a special container. This helped the pupils to see that the Torah is 'special' to Jews. Year 4 pupils, having heard the story of Pentecost, wrote a sentence about how they would like to change themselves, and assembled their ideas into a 'flame'.
187. The multi-faith element of the teaching programme is strong. Good use is made of displays of artefacts and books to extend the pupils' learning. These items are mostly on loan as the school has a limited collection of materials to support the curriculum. Little use is made of ICT to support pupils' learning. Subject leadership is being handed over to a newly appointed co-ordinator who has not yet had time to make an impact. The lack of assessment information means she has no clear picture of standards in each year group or where improvements need to be made.