

INSPECTION REPORT

GOBOWEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Gobowen, Oswestry

LEA area: Shropshire

Unique reference number: 123366

Headteacher: Mr M A Lightwood

Reporting inspector: Hugh Protherough
8339

Dates of inspection: 20th – 23rd May 2002

Inspection number: 195167

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: School Lane
Gobowen
Oswestry
Shropshire

Postcode: SY11 3LD

Telephone number: 01691 661343

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr A C Harris

Date of previous inspection: 2nd June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
8339	Hugh Protherough	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities English Information and communication technology Physical education	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well does the school care for its pupils? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
15181	Meg Hackney	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
16892	Julia Elsley	Team inspector	Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage Music Art and design	
27541	John Collins	Team inspector	Mathematics Science Design and technology Geography History Religious education Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is an average sized primary school with 222 pupils on roll comprising 112 boys and 110 girls, almost all of whom are of white ethnic origin. The size of each year group varies considerably so in order to keep class sizes manageable some of the eight classes contain a two-year age range. The school serves a large village community that is socially diverse and where there is a mixture of private and local authority housing. Local government has identified particular social needs in this area and thus the school is part of the North West Shropshire Education Action Zone. The pupils start school at the beginning of the term in which they become five. Their attainment generally covers the full range, but is weighted towards the lower end. A significant minority are achieving at considerably lower levels, especially in their spoken language skills. Around 18% of the pupils are currently on the school's register for special educational needs; eight are at the stage of school action plus and one of these has a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average at 18%. At the time of the inspection, the deputy headteacher was absent due to ill health.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Since his arrival at the school four years ago, the headteacher has worked hard with the staff team in bringing about a steady improvement in standards that received recognition last year with an Achievement Award from the Department for Education and Employment. The headteacher recognises that there is still a way to go, and his perceptive leadership ensures that there is a clear agenda for continuing improvement that underpins all aspects of the school management. With the exception of some of the current arrangements in the Foundation Stage the quality of education provided is generally good. Overall, the school offers satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher provides strong leadership and a clear sense of direction for the work of the school.
- The management of the school is good. The staff and governors have a much better appreciation of their roles and responsibilities.
- The teaching has improved and many lessons in Years 1-6 are of good quality.
- The children sing and perform to a high standard.
- The vast majority of the pupils are polite, well behaved and work hard in lessons.
- The teachers provide a good range of extra curricular clubs and activities.
- The management keeps parents well informed and strives to develop the educational partnership between home, school and local community.

What could be improved

- The standard of the pupils' writing throughout the school.
- The provision for the children in the Foundation Stage.
- The consistency of challenge for the higher attaining pupils.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

When the school was last inspected in June 1997, the inspectors identified significant weaknesses in many areas of its work. Since then, there has been a conscientious response from the headteacher, staff and governors that has led to good improvements in relation to most, but not all, of the issues raised. The analysis of the average points scored by the pupils in national tests shows that standards have risen steadily, especially in mathematics and science, but not all of the higher attaining pupils are yet achieving consistently the standards of which they are capable. The provision for design and technology and information and communications technology is of better quality and the standards achieved by the pupils in these subjects are now in line with the levels expected

of seven- and eleven- year-olds. The quality of the teaching has come on in leaps and bounds, so that there is now very little that is unsatisfactory. The teachers' approaches to managing the children's behaviour are far more consistent and successful. The headteacher's thorough approach to school management has led to the successful introduction of Performance Management so that all teachers have a thorough appreciation of their roles and responsibilities. The governors have a far better understanding of their duties and carry these out effectively, ensuring that the school's budget is spent wisely to the benefit of those pupils currently at the school.

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			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	E	E	E	E
mathematics	C	D	C	C
science	D	E	E	E

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The pupils entering the school in the Reception class arrive with below average attainment in their personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. Although they make steady progress, by the end of the Foundation Stage fewer than usual are reaching the early learning goals expected of five-year-olds. Those who spend only one or two terms in the Reception class frequently achieve less well than those who have the whole year.

The school's results year-on-year generally compare unfavourably with the national picture, but a closer analysis shows that standards have been rising steadily in line with the national trend. Although the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level in each subject is generally close to the national average, there are often far fewer pupils than usual that exceed them. In the national tests of 2001, the pupils achieved standards in English and science that were well below average nationally and in comparison to schools where a similar proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. In mathematics, standards were average in comparison with both the national picture and similar schools. The school's current targets are ambitious, but on current performance they are unlikely to be met. In last year's tests for seven-year-olds, the results were well below average in reading and writing and below average in mathematics.

The inspection findings confirm that throughout the school, the standards in mathematics continue to be higher than they are in English. The reason for this is that careful analysis of the test and assessment data in mathematics has led to better-focused teaching and improved results. Although the standards of reading are broadly average, standards in writing are well below average because the teaching of this aspect is not yet as effective as in reading and mathematics. This lowers the overall English test scores dramatically. The inspectors' analysis of the pupils' work shows that the vast majority works hard and achieves well. However, the small proportion of higher attaining pupils are not always consistently challenged in ways that would enable them to achieve the higher levels of which they are capable. Currently, standards at the end of Year 6 are below average in English and average in mathematics and science. At the end of Year 2, standards in reading, science and mathematics are broadly average, but are well below average in writing.

A great deal of hard work goes into the school's choir and instrumental tuition and this is reflected in the high quality of their public performances, several of which are available on either tape or CD.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The vast majority of pupils speak positively about school and work hard in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Their behaviour in and around the school has improved. A consistently applied policy and the teachers' higher expectations ensure that most pupils are polite and considerate in their dealings with each other and with adults.
Personal development and relationships	The increased opportunities for the pupils to accept responsibilities from an early age promotes their personal development and contributes strongly to the positive relationships evident around the school.
Attendance	Too many families take their holidays in term time and, this is the most significant factor in the attendance figures that are below the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Since the previous inspection, the quality of the teaching has improved significantly. On that occasion, a quarter of the lessons observed were judged unsatisfactory and none were very good. On this occasion, more than a half of the 46 lessons observed were either good or better, including six that were very good. Only two were unsatisfactory.

The teaching of mathematics is good. The lessons are carefully planned and briskly paced. The excellent analysis of the school's test and assessment data is being used effectively to determine the content and focus of lessons. As a result, the almost all pupils are appropriately challenged and make good progress. Throughout the school, the teachers are successfully developing the skills of reading. The recent focus on helping the pupils to improve the presentation of their written work has also been successful. However, the frequent use of worksheet exercises in literacy lessons is not helpful in developing the pupils' confidence, independence and writing stamina. Moreover, the higher attaining pupils lack sufficient opportunities to develop and refine longer pieces of work.

Since the last inspection, the teachers' approaches to classroom management have improved considerably. The thoughtful policies that reward good behaviour and hard work and the sanctions used with those who fall short of the expected standards are applied with much greater consistency. As a result, the pupils' learning progresses smoothly in the vast majority of lessons and children of all backgrounds, including a significant minority with emotional and behavioural difficulties, are successfully included within the school community. The teachers are conscientious in providing tasks that are well matched to the needs of the lower attainers and those with special educational needs. The next step is to ensure that all lessons include challenge and demand that will stretch the brighter pupils in order that they can attain the higher levels of which they are capable. The teaching of design and information and communication technologies has improved because relevant training has given the teachers a better subject knowledge and increased confidence in planning appropriate lessons for the pupils.

The school has recently encountered difficulties in recruiting teachers who have been trained for the Foundation Stage. The current teaching is successful in helping the children settle quickly into the routines of school and provides a reasonable blend of relevant learning experiences, especially in relation to development of literacy and

numeracy. However, there is an over-reliance on formal worksheet activities and too few opportunities for high quality play and self-initiated learning that would accelerate the children's progress in all the areas of learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	With the exception of some aspects of the provision in the Foundation Stage the school's curriculum offers a much improved breadth and balance that now meets the statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. The school has sound systems for identifying and supporting these children.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The teachers offer a good breath of interesting and relevant experiences that effectively support the children's all round development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school makes good provision for the health, safety and welfare of the children.

The home/school partnership is far stronger than that described in the previous report. Although a minority of the parents finds it difficult to sustain an educational partnership, an increasingly large majority welcomes the climate of openness and the opportunities offered to work with the school in furthering their children's learning.

Although a sound start has been made to the introduction of the Foundation Stage curriculum the school's provision would be improved by a wider use of play and child initiated activities. In addition, the approaches to assessment need to be extended to cover all of the areas of learning. Elsewhere, the school makes generally good use of its test and assessment data from Years 2-6, especially in mathematics.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher has a clear vision for the development of the school. The staff team are increasingly confident in the exercise of their wider management responsibilities.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are well informed. They carry out their duties assiduously offering both support and appropriate challenge to the staff team.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher and governors evaluate with rigour because they analyse a wide range of useful information drawn from a variety of relevant sources.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school makes much better use of its delegated budget because there are simple, but effective systems in place to prioritise how money is spent. A sound start has been made to introducing the principles of best value.

The levels of staffing are generally satisfactory. However, the school lacks teachers who have received specialist training in the Foundation Stage curriculum. The school's accommodation is adequate and the proposed improvements for the Foundation Stage and school library will offer greater flexibility. The levels of educational resources are satisfactory.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children enjoy coming to school and make the most of what is on offer.• The teachers make learning fun and expect the children to work hard and do their best.• The children make good progress in their studies and in their all round personal development.• It is easy to approach the school with questions or problems.• The headteacher is a strong leader and the school is well managed.• The school offers a broad curriculum with a good variety of extra-curricular clubs and activities.	There were no aspects of the school's provision where a significant number of parents expressed concern.

The pre-inspection parents' meeting gave overwhelmingly positive endorsement to the work of the school. In particular, the parents praised the strong leadership of the headteacher and the committed work of the staff team in bringing about continuing improvement to the quality of education offered to their children. The inspectors agree that the school has made good improvement and endorses those areas for future action that the staff and governors have identified in their school improvement plan.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The pupils entering the school in the Reception class arrive with below average attainment in their personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. Although they make steady progress, by the end of the Foundation Stage fewer pupils than usual are reaching the early learning goals expected of five-year-olds in these areas. The headteacher's analysis of the subsequent progress made by the pupils in the Year 2 national tests shows that those who spend only one or two terms in the Reception class frequently achieve less well than those who have the whole year there. However, the school is aware that urgent work is required to develop a more detailed and systematic approach to charting individual pupil progress, including the assessment information gathered at the point of entry, throughout the Foundation Stage and into the early stages of the National Curriculum.
2. In 2001, the national tests for Year 2 pupils showed that standards were well below average in reading and writing when compared with both the national picture and the results of schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. Standards in mathematics were below the national average and well below those of similar schools. In the Year 6 tests, the pupils achieved standards in English and science that were well below the national average and those of similar schools. In mathematics, standards were average in comparison with both the national picture and similar schools. These results in the national tests are similar to those of recent years, and the pupils' performance for Years 2 and 6 generally compares unfavourably with the national picture. However, a closer analysis shows that standards have generally been rising steadily in line with the national trend. The reason for this improvement is that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level is increasing. Consequently, last year the school received an Achievement Award from the Department for Education and Employment. However, the next step to more rapid improvement is to increase the proportion of higher attaining pupils who exceed the average levels. **This is a key issue for action.**
3. The inspectors' analysis of the national test data also shows that by the age of seven the boys are generally performing far better than the girls, but by the age of eleven the gap has narrowed and their performance is broadly similar. The inspectors could find no evidence of a consistent bias in the teaching towards either group of pupils in Years 1 and 2. However, on one or two occasions it was evident that lively and articulate boys can sometimes dominate discussion at the expense of the girls.
4. The inspection findings confirm that throughout the school the standards in mathematics are higher than they are in English. The reason for this is that the co-ordinator's careful analysis of the test and assessment data in mathematics has led to more sharply focused teaching and a consequent improvement in results. As a result, by the age of eleven the pupils are secure in their use of mental calculations and have improved in their ability to apply this knowledge to solve problems. The findings also show that standards in mathematics are average in Years 2 and 6.
5. At present, the standards of reading are currently broadly average, but in writing they are well below average. This is because the teaching of writing is not yet as effective as that in reading and mathematics. This lowers the overall English test scores dramatically, especially in Year 6. There has been recent concerted and effective action to improve the pupils' handwriting and presentation of their written work. However, many pupils struggle to develop as independent writers who can organise their thoughts on paper. This is because in some classes there are too many worksheet activities where the children simply have to fill in missing words rather than compose their own work. The teachers are covering the wide range of writing activities suggested by the National Literacy strategy, but the pupils have insufficient opportunity either to consider the structure of their writing or to polish and improve their work. This weakness is especially evident in the case of the higher attainers. **This is a key issue for action.**
6. The inspectors' lesson observations, their conversations with the pupils and the analysis of their work shows that the vast majority works hard and achieves satisfactory standards in all the other subjects of the National Curriculum. However, the small proportion of higher attaining pupils are not always

consistently challenged in ways that would enable them to achieve the higher levels of which they are capable. For instance, in subjects such as history and geography too much of the work being set by the teachers is the same for all the pupils, regardless of ability. **This is a key issue for action.**

7. The quality of the pupils' work in music lessons is in line with the expected levels. However, a great deal of hard work goes into the school's choir and instrumental tuition and this is reflected in the high quality of their public performances, several of which are available on tape and CD.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. A significant number of parents told the inspectors that there has been considerable improvement in the pupils' attitude to school, their behaviour, personal development and the consistency of the values displayed. The inspectors confirm that the school is a far more harmonious and considerate community than was described at the time of the last inspection.
9. In all classes, the pupils have a good attitude towards learning. The majority is enthusiastic and speaks confidently about the topics they are studying and their involvement in the activities. An example of this was seen when a group of pupils in Year 2 spoke excitedly about their science topic on the life cycle of a butterfly. The school is an orderly community where the pupils are happy and settled into familiar daily routines. Each term a new group of pupils starts school in the Reception classes; they settle swiftly into a secure and happy environment and all the children in the Foundation Stage are keen to learn. The pupils with special educational needs are equally interested and enthusiastic and are involved well in all activities. The staff and pupils show mutual respect and the parents agree that the adults in the school act as good role models.
10. One of the major reasons why this improvement has come about is that the children and their parents know what is expected of them. This is the result of useful information published by the school and the well-considered home-school agreement. The pupils respond well to the school's high expectations of self-discipline and personal initiative and this makes a good contribution to their progress and achievements. During most lessons, they are very keen to answer questions and to contribute their own suggestions and ideas. An example of this was seen in a literacy lesson in Year 5 when the pupils were enthusiastically discussing ideas and appropriate vocabulary before writing an advertisement for a new toy. Where the teaching is challenging and interesting, the pupils listen well to their teachers and to each other. Most pupils concentrate well on their work either independently or in groups, and try hard to do their best.
11. The pupils respond well to the behaviour and discipline policy, the positive systems for reward and the celebration of success and achievement. They are familiar with the school rules and the agreed playground code of conduct, and as a result their behaviour is good. They know the difference between right and wrong, and they have a clear sense of what is expected of them. In the playground and at lunchtime, they play together harmoniously. For instance, during a wet lunchtime they joined in quietly and sensibly in a variety of activities in their classrooms. Bullying and harassment are rare, but the pupils are confident that staff will deal with any problems appropriately. They are polite, friendly and helpful towards visitors and many are keen to show their work and to ask questions. They have a clear understanding of the impact of their actions on others, and this is developed well through stories in assemblies and the programme for personal and social education. There have been no recent exclusions.
12. Relationships throughout the school are good. Most pupils are caring and supportive of each other during lessons and outside in the playground. Older pupils in Year 6 act as playground buddies to support younger pupils, and they regularly organise lunchtime play sessions for them. This has a very good effect on the pupils' relationships and on their social and moral development. The pupils in all classes are confident to talk to their teachers, who listen carefully to what they have to say. The children are aware of the school's commitment towards inclusion, and those with special educational needs are fully involved in all activities. During lessons, and particularly those that are well planned and managed, the pupils share resources sensibly and willingly. They are co-operative and sensible when working in small groups and with partners. The pupils' good relationships with their peers and with adults make a strong contribution to their personal and academic progress.

13. The pupils' personal development is good and is underpinned by good opportunities to show independence and to demonstrate personal initiative. Children in all classes act as monitors for a wide range of jobs for which they formally apply and are given a written job description. For example, a few pupils help in the computer room and library and in the presentation of assemblies. They also help to organise the physical education equipment and a range of other learning resources. Besides acting as playground buddies, the pupils in Year 6 have the opportunity to become prefects linked to a particular year group. The children take their responsibilities seriously and perform their jobs efficiently and with confidence. In most classes, the pupils take responsibility for some aspects of their own learning, such as researching additional information at home and at school. They respond very positively to the regular visits that they make to places of educational and cultural interest, including a residential period for older pupils. Visitors from the local community and the use made of the environment make a good contribution to the pupils' progress and an understanding of the area in which they live. All of these experiences have positive effects on their personal and social development.
14. Although the school works hard to improve the attendance rates, the current figures are unsatisfactory. The levels of authorised and unauthorised absence are higher than the national average, largely because a significant number of pupils regularly take holidays during term time. This is constant problem to the school in its endeavour to improve the level of attendance. The majority of pupils are punctual and many start work before the opening of the school day. Registration and lessons start on time, and the positive response of the vast majority ensures that no time is wasted in getting down to work.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

15. Since the previous inspection, there has been considerable improvement in the quality and consistency of the teaching, particularly in Years 1 to 6. During the last inspection, a quarter of the lessons observed were judged unsatisfactory and none were very good. There were many weaknesses identified in the provision for Years 3-6. During the present inspection, more than a half (56%) of the forty-six lessons observed were of either good or better quality, including six that were very good. The remainder of the teaching was almost always satisfactory with the exception of two lessons; one each in science and information and communications technology. In this inspection, eighty per cent of the teaching seen in Years 3-6 was either good or better.
16. One of the major reasons why teaching is so much better is that the teachers and their assistants have worked together effectively to improve their classroom management. The thoughtful policies that reward good behaviour and hard work and the sanctions used with those who fall short of the expected standards are applied with much greater consistency. As a result, the learning progresses smoothly in the vast majority of lessons and children of all backgrounds, including a significant minority with emotional and behavioural difficulties, are successfully included within the school community. For instance, hard work and careful listening are frequently recognised by the award of stickers that accumulate credits towards more public recognition of individual improvement. A further significant development is the way that the headteacher maintains close personal involvement in these processes. For instance, one special needs pupil struggled conscientiously to write a letter to his favourite teaching assistant who has been ill. The teacher recognised his hard work and sent him to the headteacher for additional praise and reward. He returned to the class full of pride in his achievement and required little further encouragement to read his letter to his classmates. On other occasions during the inspection, pupils who were finding it difficult to cope with the behaviour of one or two other children were observed seeking out the headteacher to discuss their feelings rather than become involved in aggression or antagonism with others. Many children now speak positively about their experiences of school and show a good understanding of what is expected in terms of their attitudes and behaviour. These are strong indicators of a school community that is steadily eliminating the disruptive behaviour that previously interrupted the teaching and learning in a significant number of lessons.
17. The school's results in the national tests shows that the pupils' performance is generally better in mathematics than it is in English. Although the teachers have successfully introduced the national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy, the inspection findings show that the teaching of mathematics has more all round strength than the teaching in English. One of the reasons for this is that the mathematics co-ordinator has carried out an excellent analysis of the pupils' performance in the subject and has used this to help to determine the content and focus of lessons. As a result the lessons

are carefully planned and briskly paced. The vast majority of the pupils are appropriately challenged and make good progress. For instance in one effective lesson on shape in Year 5, the teacher set a tight time limit in which the pupils had to come up with ten accurate statements about the properties of a right angled triangle. They managed this because the teacher prompted them with some sharply focused questioning based pertinently on his knowledge of their previous learning. A further strength was the way that the lower attaining pupils were able to join in because the teacher adjusted his questions to their level of understanding.

18. The picture in relation to the teaching of English is more mixed. A significant proportion of the pupils entering the school have speaking and listening skills that are below average. In the Foundation Stage, there are occasions when the children share their ideas with a friend, but there are currently too few other opportunities for them to practise and extend their use of language through activities such as role-play and drama. Throughout the school, in the best lessons the teachers are careful to ask questions that encourage the pupils to respond at length. They use correct technical language and expect the children to do the same. However, these techniques are not yet consistently employed in all classes and occasionally the teachers include too many “closed” questions to which the children can only answer either “Yes,” or “No.” In the good and very good lessons, the teachers take care to ensure that all the pupils are involved in discussion, but occasionally the less effective teaching allows one group of pupils to demand attention at the expense of others. For instance, at the start of a Year 1 literacy lesson the teacher focused on the enthusiastic boys whilst the girls kept quiet and let the boys do all the work. The continuing development of the pupils’ speaking and listening skills will form a central part of the school’s drive to raise standards in English.
19. Throughout the school, the teachers are successfully developing the skills of reading. In particular, they are effective in providing the pupils with the knowledge of the sounds of letters that help them to tackle unfamiliar words in print. The recent focus on helping the pupils to improve the presentation of their written work has also been successful. However, the widespread use of worksheet exercises in literacy lessons is not helpful in developing the pupils’ confidence, independence and writing stamina. This is particularly evident in the folders of the lower attaining pupils where they are frequently filling in single word answers to the questions of others rather than having to organise their own thoughts and ideas on paper. The higher attaining pupils write far more and for a reasonable range of purposes. However, at the moment they lack sufficient opportunities to develop and refine longer pieces of work. **These are key issues for action.**
20. The vast majority of lessons are well planned and establish clearly what it is that the teacher wants the pupils to learn. In all classes and in most subjects, the teachers are conscientious in identifying tasks that are generally well matched to the needs of the children, especially the lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. For instance, in one science lesson the effective use of the electronic whiteboard and a microscope inspired the lower attaining pupils to investigate methodically the conditions that led to variation in plant growth. The next step is to ensure that all lessons include the sorts of challenge and demand that will stretch the brighter pupils in order that they can attain the higher levels of which they are capable. For example, some of the teaching of information and communications technology introduces the pupils to new programs, but does not challenge the competent computer users to carry out either more complex tasks or research. Similarly in history, geography and religious education all the pupils tend to cover the same work, and there is very little evidence of the higher attaining pupils being expected to achieve more. **This is a key issue for action.**
21. The teaching of design and information and communication technologies has improved. Following training, the teachers have a better subject knowledge and increasing confidence in planning appropriate lessons for the pupils. It is evident for instance, that several teachers are beginning to recognise the power of computers so that the pupils’ research in history and geography and their designs for packaging in design and technology are now enhanced by the use of new technologies.
22. The school has recently encountered difficulties in recruiting teachers who have been trained for the Foundation Stage. The current teaching is successful in helping the children settle quickly into the routines of school and provides a reasonable blend of relevant learning experiences, especially in relation to the development of literacy and numeracy. However, there is an over reliance on formal worksheet

activities and too few opportunities for the high quality play and self-initiated learning that would accelerate the children's progress in all the areas of learning. **This is a key issue for action.**

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

23. The school's curriculum has improved and now has satisfactory breadth and balance. There is a strong and appropriate emphasis on both the pupils' personal development and their academic development. The curriculum is enhanced for many pupils through the good range of extra-curricular clubs and activities and the number of visits and visitors to school.
24. The curriculum planning has improved considerably since the last inspection and is now securely established in all subjects. Many of the subject policies have been successfully updated and sensible use has been made of the national guidance to create curriculum frameworks. The use of cross-curricular themes in subjects such as history, geography and science helps many pupils make useful links in their learning. Many themes from the locally agreed syllabus for religious education are successfully integrated within the curriculum for personal, social and health education, including the new requirements for the teaching of citizenship.
25. The school follows the national frameworks for literacy and numeracy. However, the use of number skills in other areas of the curriculum is more securely established than the application of those for writing. For example, in science, the pupils are too often given worksheets that limit the opportunity for them to express their own ideas and opinions about what they have found out in their experiments. Good use is being made of information and communications technology to support the learning. This was evident, for example, in a Year 3 science lesson on plants and a geography lesson on rivers in Year 6; in both cases it raised the levels of interest and enthusiasm of pupils and led to successful learning.
26. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and the planning is soundly based on the early learning goals for children under five. However, the current provision does not make sufficient use of play and self-initiated learning that would accelerate the children's skills in language and literacy. The opportunities for the children's creative and physical development are also limited in scope.
27. Most support for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is through a mixture of withdrawal and in-class support. These pupils are receiving their entitlement to the full range of the National Curriculum and the schools' provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They also have full access to extra-curricular clubs and activities. However, as at the time of the last inspection, there are inconsistent levels of challenge for the higher attaining groups of pupils throughout school, especially in English, mathematics and science. **This is a key issue for action.**
28. For a school of its size, the provision for extra-curricular activities is good and better than at the time of the last inspection. A wide range of sporting, musical and other clubs take place at lunchtimes and out of school hours. At the parents' meeting, there was appreciation for the efforts of staff and other adults in extending the experiences of a considerable number of pupils. The previous sporting clubs have been retained and augmented by others for music, chess, art and computers. This extended curriculum is also supported by the strong community links that enrich the work of the school. Local ministers take assemblies on a regular basis. The village policeman helps the Year 6 pupils to be aware of the dangers of drugs misuse and has talked to younger pupils about the dangers of playing on the railway line. He is well known and respected by the pupils, who are eager to talk to him on his many informal visits. The school has made good use of funding from the local Educational Action Zone to expand its extra-curricular activities, for example, through an information and communication technology session for higher attaining pupils and lunchtime games. It also makes good use of a wide range of visitors and other local services such as, fire and medical. The local Area Tree Warden has involved the school in a rare tree-planting scheme. Local artists and musicians have led workshops for all age ranges and Year 6 pupils have had a talk on town planning as part of their geography work on traffic in the High Street. Members of the local community use the school hall for events and the school choir makes visits to local homes for the elderly at Christmas and other festive occasions. These and other activities add good breadth to what the school offers its pupils and helps to make them more aware of the importance of community in their lives.
29. The school has good links with its partner institutions. For instance, local playgroups are invited to visit prior to the children starting school and there have been joint planning sessions. Similar good

relationships exist between other local primary and secondary schools. Visits before the end of the year by secondary staff and by Year 6 pupils help them to settle more easily when they move.

30. There has been a significant improvement since the last inspection in all aspects of the schools' provision for the pupils' personal development. The provision for their spiritual, moral social and cultural development is now consistently good. The school has clear values expressed in its aims that are integral to its work. The inspection evidence fully supports parents' views that the school is helping their children to become more confident, responsible and mature. The pupils' spiritual development is promoted well in assemblies and lessons that raise their awareness of values and beliefs, including religious beliefs, and how they influence attitudes and behaviour. In assemblies, the children are given time for reflection on the beliefs of others; in religious education and the personal, social and health education lessons, they have opportunities to consider values and beliefs in wider and different contexts. For example, in a Year 3/4 lesson on village life in India, the pupils were able to consider why people there regard the River Ganges with such high respect. This led to a good discussion of different values and customs about their way of life and death, which was very sensitively led by the teacher. The pupils' awareness of other kinds of values in the world around them was evident in many other ways too. It could be seen, for instance, in the reaction of Year 2 pupils when a butterfly emerged from its chrysalis and the surprise of pupils in Year 1 when the teacher cut out the shape of a heart in a lesson on symmetry in mathematics. All teachers are careful to use styles of teaching that value the pupils' responses and show respect for themselves and others, for example when they are urged to listen carefully to what someone has to say.
31. Similar strengths emerge in the schools' provision for both moral and social development. It provides a clear code of behaviour, which is promoted consistently, and the pupils are encouraged to be aware of their actions and the effects on others. The school has received, and continues to receive, good support from the Behavioural Support Unit. Through its charity work, the school raises the children's awareness of people less fortunate than themselves. The pupils in Year 6 have started charity collections themselves, such as the Blue Peter Appeal, and during an assembly a Year 3 pupil received an award for raising over £40 on a sponsored cycle ride for a local hospice. In many lessons, the pupils' social skills are enhanced by the emphasis on collaborative working, either in pairs or small groups, and the children are quick to support lower attaining pupils, as was seen in a Year 3/4 science lesson. The responsibilities placed on the older pupils in Year 6 when acting as playground buddies for younger children or as play apparatus monitors are helping to develop their sense of community in the school. All classes have a list of rules for good behaviour; the Year 5 pupils have all signed a 'Good Behaviour Agreement' and the Year 4 pupils have their own Playground Code of Conduct. All these are examples of the ways in which the school promotes co-operation, responsibility and an awareness of others and their points of view.
32. The provision for pupils' cultural development is equally strong. Their sense of culture is developed through a range of visits to museums, art galleries and music festivals. The art and music curriculum is particularly good at extending the pupils' awareness of the richness of their own culture, and the work in geography and history helps them to appreciate the diversity of other cultures and beliefs. The school also makes use of the few pupils from other ethnic groups, who occasionally pass through the school to raise pupil's knowledge and understanding of the values, beliefs and customs of different groups of people. However, this is not yet planned in a systematic manner and the raising of awareness of the multi-cultural nature of our own society remains an area of development for the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

33. Taken overall the school makes good provision for its pupils' health, safety and welfare. The health and safety policy clearly informs the school's practice, action plans address the relevant issues and risk assessments are carried out regularly. There are appropriately qualified first aiders amongst the school staff. Records of any accidents to staff and pupils are assiduously maintained and parents contacted promptly. The arrangements for Child Protection are much improved since the last inspection. The headteacher is appropriately trained as the designated person with overall responsibility. All members of staff, including the lunchtime supervisors, are aware of the procedures and any concerns are well monitored and recorded.
34. The school has made considerable strides in the way it uses its test and assessment data to guide its evaluation of the trends in standards and to plan for future improvement. A good example of this are the

tracking sheets devised by the headteacher. They allow him to analyse at a glance the performance of individual children in reading, writing and mathematics from the point of the Year 2 tests to the end of Year 6. The effectiveness of this approach can also be seen in the mathematics co-ordinator's detailed evaluation of the pupils' performance in the national tests. It has clearly improved many aspects of the teaching of this subject. The Foundation Stage teachers provide a satisfactory range of appropriate activities for the children, but their informal assessments of the progress of individual children are not recorded in a systematic fashion. This is particularly so in relation to the children's personal, social and emotional and creative development and their knowledge and understanding of the world. The links between attainment and progress in the Foundation Stage and the early parts of the National Curriculum are not yet established in the minds of all staff.

35. The procedures to monitor and promote attendance are good and provide a strong indication of the seriousness with which the leadership treats this issue. The registers are completed accurately and consistently and the data stored for analysis on the administration computer. Attendance is well monitored at all levels, by the class teachers, headteacher and education welfare officer. There are rigorous procedures for establishing whether or not absence is authorised. The arrangements for contacting parents immediately on the first day have improved the level of unauthorised absence. Parents and children are reminded regularly of the effect of good attendance on standards and progress. All of these procedures demonstrate the strong ethos of care within the school.
36. The monitoring and promotion of good behaviour has improved considerably since the last inspection and is now effectively implemented by all the staff. A strong system of reward and celebration has been developed, and has had a very positive effect on improving behaviour throughout the school. In all classes, the pupils receive regular praise and encouragement and are rewarded with a variety of stickers, stars and certificates for good work and behaviour. The procedures to monitor and eliminate bullying, racism and any oppressive behaviour are also strong and any inappropriate behaviour is dealt with promptly and effectively. Effective use is also made of the expertise of the local authority's behaviour support teacher who visits the school on a regular basis.
37. The teachers know the children well. They speak knowledgeably about individuals and in the case of the pupils with special educational needs are careful to ensure sound provision in line with the targets suggested in the individual plans. The systems for recording the pupils' personal development are mostly informal, but the strong links between teachers, pupils and most parents ensure the effective communication of success as well as any concerns.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

38. The school's partnership with parents is good and is much stronger than at the time of the last inspection. The parents are very satisfied with their children's progress and are overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school. The majority of parents feel that the school works closely with them and they are comfortable about approaching the staff with questions or to discuss concerns. The school welcomes parents and positively encourages them to help in school and to work with their children at home. Most parents support the work of the school well and provide good additional help at home by listening to reading and assisting with homework and special topics. A minority of parents find it difficult to sustain a partnership and feel unable to support their children's learning at home. Most parents feel that the amount of work which pupils are expected to do at home is sufficient. Homework is well organised and includes reading, learning spellings and multiplication tables and researching special topics. All pupils have home/school reading diaries that many parents use as a means of communication with the teachers.
39. The parents speak highly of the school's induction arrangements to ensure that they are well informed and help their children to settle quickly into the Reception class. The parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed about individual education plans and their children's progress. They are invited to attend review and assessment meetings and most support their children well. The improved links with parents has made a good contribution to the work of the school and advanced the pupils' progress.
40. A small number of parents provide valuable regular help in classrooms by listening to reading and assisting with activities and resources. More parents help when pupils go out on visits and also assist in

the organisation of special events. Parents and members of the community are welcomed into school to talk to pupils about various topics; this extends pupils' learning experiences and enriches the curriculum. The Friends of Gobowen School (FOGS) is an active group of parents who organise regular fund-raising events. Their activities are well supported by parents and members of the community, and provide the school with a range of additional learning resources, such as books, computers and subsidised visits.

41. The quality of information for parents is good, and has improved since the last inspection. The headteacher has succeeded in making communications more interesting and helpful to the parents and most of them now feel well informed. They receive regular friendly newsletters that contain helpful briefings about the organisation and events. Each term, the class teachers provide the parents with a list of topics that the pupils will be studying with suggestions of ways in which they can help. Although the curriculum evenings have not been well attended by parents, a wide range of leaflets and other guidance are available which provides them with helpful assistance in supporting their children's learning at home. In addition, the parents receive a copy of the school's behaviour and discipline policy and the homework policy. The majority of parents have signed the home/school agreement and the regular consultation evenings are usually well attended. The headteacher and staff are readily available to speak to parents informally at the start and end of the school day.
42. The annual written reports to parents are satisfactory and cover all subjects of the National Curriculum and the Foundation Stage. They provide sufficient information about the pupils' progress, but neither targets for improvement nor a clear indication of attainment against national levels are included. Many parents contribute well to the reports by acknowledging receipt and including their own written comments. The prospectus and the governors' annual report meet the statutory requirements and provide a good amount of helpful information about the school, its organisation and curriculum.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

43. Since his appointment four years ago, the headteacher has brought about considerable improvement in the ethos and the climate for learning in the school. Many parents, governors and teachers spoke with the inspectors about their views of the school and in almost every case pointed to the headteacher as the catalyst for important change. He has brought about improvement through a blend of thoughtful consultation, effective communication and a strong personal example. The inspectors agree with their views and find that the school community is fast developing a clearer view of its priorities and an increasing commitment to raising standards.
44. A key feature of this progress is more effective school management. The previous inspection report identified several weaknesses in this area, most notably the absence of proper staff appraisal and coherent professional development, weak budget management and a governing body that lacked a proper oversight of the work of the school. There has been a thorough and effective response to all three issues. For example, the headteacher and the governors have made a good start to the introduction of Performance Management. As a result, each teacher now has a clear understanding of their job and the specific targets that are agreed each year in relation to their role and responsibilities. This process has been extremely helpful in developing the influence of the subject co-ordinators across the school. All the co-ordinators are now responsible and increasingly accountable for the standards being achieved in their subjects. They analyse samples of the pupils' work and are starting to help the other teachers with their assessments. However, one or two teachers carry a significantly heavy load of responsibilities and this sometimes leads to difficulties in sustaining improvement. For instance, one senior teacher is responsible for special educational needs, the Foundation Stage, English and mathematics. This is too much for one person.
45. The governing body has a much-improved oversight of the work of the school. It contains a good range of experience and expertise, and is well led by its chairman. The relationship between the governors and staff is increasingly positive because each governor carries a variety of responsibilities and many make regular visits to classrooms to learn at first hand about the quality of education offered at the school. Reciprocally, the subject co-ordinators are frequently invited to attend the governors' meetings in order that they might make presentations about the school's curriculum or fresh initiatives to improve the teaching. As a result of such regular contact, the governing body is increasingly confident in its ability to

provide both strong support and an appropriate challenge when questioning the decisions being taken to improve the school.

46. The strength of the staff and governor partnership is also evident in the thorough approaches taken in the design, monitoring and review of the school improvement plan. The priorities of this document form the basis for all the major actions and spending decisions taken each year and are referred to regularly by the teachers and governors alike. In the past significant sums of money were carried forward at the end of each financial year, but the governors and senior management team now strive to get the best value they can from their small annual budget by spending it to benefit the pupils currently at the school. A further good example of the way the school attempts to get the best possible deal for its pupils is through its committed partnership within the local Education Action Zone. For instance, it has been used to provide in-service training for the staff, curriculum events and support for projects to improve attendance. The proposed refurbishment and extension of the Foundation Stage provision is also being jointly funded as a result of Surestart's involvement with the Education Action Zone.
47. The school's staff contains a good mix of appropriately qualified and experienced teachers whose expertise successfully covers the vast majority of the subjects of the National Curriculum. The teachers are increasingly well supported by a good number of teaching assistants, many of whom have been well trained, especially in the support of the pupils with special educational needs. The school meals staff also have a good understanding of their important role over the mid-day break and, with the help of the teachers, are vigilant in ensuring that meals are taken in an orderly fashion and that playtimes are safe and enjoyable for all of the pupils.
48. The school's accommodation is adequate; there are attractive and spacious grounds, but internal space is tight. A proposed new extension will provide space for a new library and group-teaching room, which in turn will allow more efficient use of the school's small computer suite. The reorganisation of the demountable classrooms for the Foundation Stage will also offer more coherent provision as well as the opportunity for the development of a dedicated safe area for outdoor play.
49. The school community works hard to arrange good displays of the children's work that enliven the learning environment in classrooms and corridors. The levels of educational resources vary considerably from subject to subject, but taken overall they are satisfactory, with some strength in science, information and communications technology, music and art. There is a reasonable range of children's literature, but the library provision for non-fiction contains much stock that is out of date. Following a recent audit by the school's library service, it is proposed that the current stock is sorted and re-classified once the new library has been built, when further investment will be made.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

50. In order to improve still further the quality of education provided by the school and the standards achieved by the pupils, the headteacher, staff and governors should now:
 - (1) Implement the proposed plan for improving the pupils' writing with particular focus on:
 - increasing the opportunities for personal writing, accounts and stories, especially amongst the younger and lower attaining pupils;
 - establishing more consistent approaches to providing feedback to pupils about their writing; both oral and written;
 - developing greater writing stamina amongst the older and higher attaining pupils by offering more opportunities for the pupils to draft and polish their work, focussing upon the exciting use of language and writing structure in addition to such features as spelling and grammar.Paragraphs 2, 5, 19, 27, 70, 71
 - (2) Build on the proposed improvements for the learning environment for the Foundation Stage by:
 - providing specialist training for all staff working in the Foundation Stage;
 - increasing the extent to which the teachers make use of play and other more open-ended learning activities initiated by the children themselves;
 - expanding the range of creative and physical activities for the children.Paragraphs 22, 52, 62, 64

- (3) Incorporate more consistently in their lesson planning tasks designed for the higher attaining pupils that will enable them to reach the higher levels of attainment of which they are capable in all subjects of the National Curriculum. Paragraphs 6, 20

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	46
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	6	20	18	2	0	0
Percentage	0	13	43	39	4	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 more than two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YRec – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	222
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	39

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YRec – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	39

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.82
National comparative data	5.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.62
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	17	24	41

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	14	16
	Girls	18	20	22
	Total	31	34	38
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	76 (79)	83 (79)	93 (93)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	14	14
	Girls	20	19	21
	Total	33	33	35
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	80 (83)	80 (90)	65 (93)
	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	11	19	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	7	8
	Girls	14	12	18
	Total	20	19	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	67 (64)	63 (59)	87 (79)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	7	7	9
	Girls	14	14	17
	Total	21	21	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	70 (77)	70 (67)	87 (82)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	194
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: YRec – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Average class size	28

Education support staff: YRec – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	94

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3.7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3.7
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.5
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	1	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000-01
	£
Total income	393,275
Total expenditure	398,483
Expenditure per pupil	1,811
Balance brought forward from previous year	20,180
Balance carried forward to next year	14,972

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	222
Number of questionnaires returned	80

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	61	35	1	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	63	36	1	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	40	52	3	3	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	60	8	4	3
The teaching is good.	59	40	1	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	50	39	6	5	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	21	0	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	26	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	46	40	10	4	0
The school is well led and managed.	64	33	3	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	38	1	3	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	56	30	8	0	6

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

51. Taken overall, the provision for and the teaching of the children aged five are satisfactory. The children start school in the term they become five so that there is a new intake at the start of each term. Currently, there are twenty children in the reception class, and seven who entered in the autumn term are placed in a Year 1 class. Most have had some pre-school playgroup experience. Nevertheless, the results of the assessment tasks that the children take on entry to the reception class show that their attainment is generally below average in their personal, social, emotional development, speaking and listening and early literacy and numeracy skills.
52. The school has experienced difficulty in recruiting an appropriately trained and qualified teacher to work in the Reception class. The co-ordinator who carries many other important responsibilities has also had difficulty in getting training in the Foundation Stage curriculum. However, it is evident that the headteacher and governors recognise the crucial importance of the Foundation Stage and for that reason are making a significant financial commitment to improve the coherence of the school's provision. These developments will involve closer links with the local playgroup and a refurbishment of the internal and external learning environments for all children in the Foundation Stage. However, at the moment, the use of play as a medium for learning and the limited range of creative and physical opportunities provided to enhance children's education **continue to be issues for action.**

Personal, social and emotional development

53. The children enjoy a positive start because the teaching is mostly successful in fostering their development in this area. The teachers are polite and friendly and take a keen interest in what the children have to say about themselves and their work. Before the children start school, the teachers have already amassed a good deal of useful information about them through the well-considered induction processes carried out with their parents and the local playgroup. Through the daily routines, the adults strongly foster the children's abilities to form positive relationships, to feel confident and begin to accept responsibility. As a result, most of the children are aware of and sensitive to the needs and feelings of others and have formed positive relationships with other children and adults outside the immediate family. The teachers emphasise the importance of listening to each other when giving answers to questions at group time and most show respect for each other's responses. The majority of the children share amicably and ask politely, for example, when they need the scissors or the glue stick. However, some of the younger reception children are unable to dress and undress themselves independently before physical education lessons and have difficulty in using a knife and fork at lunchtime.
54. Boys and girls play happily together, and when their work is finished they tidy away competently before the next task. There are no significant differences in the responses of boys and girls because the adults are careful in avoiding the encouragement of stereotypical behaviour. As a result, all the children are becoming increasingly confident, they enjoy their learning; they work well on the set task either independently or within a group. Even so, the organisation of the activities sometimes inhibits the children's need for independent choice, exploration, enquiry, and self-discovery. For example, they have insufficient opportunity to plan some of their own learning and to report back on what they have done at the end of the session, except in the set literacy and numeracy sessions. Open-ended learning activities, such as role-play and outdoor play, are too infrequent.

Communication, language and literacy

55. On entry to the reception classes, the children's spoken English and listening skills are below average. As a result of satisfactory teaching, they make steady gains in their spoken English, but are not likely to reach the targets set out in the national foundation guidelines by the time they start in Year 1. The children's response is often very limited in terms of vocabulary and the grammatical structures they employ. Many cannot speak clearly, but they either have or are gaining confidence to speak to the adults in the group literacy sessions. Here, the discussions are beginning to enrich their spoken English. A contributory factor to the children's below average attainment is that the adults do not provide enough

opportunities for them to use the role-play areas regularly, and do not interact with them in the play settings in order to advance their language development. However, most children's listening skills have improved at a faster rate and are approaching the expected levels. This is because the adults place a strong emphasis on encouraging them to listen to instructions, stories and songs and to heed each other during the more formal activities, such as the group reading sessions.

56. It is evident that children enjoy books and reading. They find listening to and sharing stories a source of pleasure, and have a growing understanding of the written word. Most are attentive during the shared reading sessions and enthusiastically join in the repetitive chorus lines, for example, 'I'm not scared' from the story 'Going on a Bear Hunt'. When reciting the alphabet from a puzzle on the carpet, a group of three children followed it well and spontaneously burst into singing the letters. The children are beginning to recognise occasional words on signs and notices and they are getting to know the sounds of letters well. This work on the teaching of phonics is good, and the higher attaining pupils profit from this when it comes to the guided reading session. They can follow the script and sound out the initial letters and recognise isolated words such as 'the' 'on' and 'a' fairly accurately. They know the author of a book, and that a story has a beginning, middle and an end. They can identify the characters and the sequence of events, and can recall quite confidently, for example, what happens when on the Bear Hunt. However, this work is then undermined by worksheets where the activity changes to simply colouring pictures with no adult interaction on the original purpose and no development of artistic skill. More attractive book areas within the classrooms would enhance and stimulate a greater interest in books and reading.
57. The writing skills of the vast majority of children are below the expected level. A few higher attaining pupils know that the simple short sentences they have copied from the board must begin with a capital letter and have a full stop at the end. They are beginning to form both upper and lower case letters correctly because the teacher pays good attention to pencil grip and correct formation of the letter as it is being written. However, the children have insufficient opportunities to become independent and creative writers. For example, there are missed opportunities in role-play for the children to write independently a shopping list, a prescription for their pets and telephone messages, and simply to have time to write their own stories in their own way. At present, the writing activities are too teacher-directed and the worksheets limit the children's response. Sometimes a greater emphasis is placed on the 'colouring in' rather than on the development of the written content.

Mathematics

58. From a low starting point, most children are making steady gains in their mathematical learning. However, despite the focused teaching of numeracy, by the end of the reception year only a few children are likely to reach either the goals described in the national foundation guidelines or those that dovetail into the early levels of the National Curriculum.
59. In the numeracy sessions, most children can count to twenty, recognise numbers to ten and put them into their correct order, but still have difficulty in counting backwards from nine. A few of the higher attaining, autumn-born children are able to record simple addition and subtraction to 10. The spring and summer-born children can orally do simple additions, such as $2 + 1 = 3$, but as yet are unable to record their answers independently. Most use a worksheet and beads to complete the responses. The less able pupils are not able to distinguish between numerals such as six and nine and cannot recognise some basic shapes. The children tackle the set tasks well and sustain concentration for good periods of time. Their behaviour is good.
60. In the group activities, the teachers use accurate mathematical language and helpful resources to reinforce the learning. This is evident, for example, when they ask the children to "add on one more" by using either counters or a number line. However, the teaching could be further improved by the use of displays by which the teacher can reinforce still further the children's subject specific vocabulary. Greater adult interaction in the play activities, in both the indoor and outdoor learning environments, would also enhance the children's learning. This is particularly the case in the use and application of mathematics to everyday situations and areas that were identified on the baseline assessments as having specific weakness, such as recognition of shape, space and measures.

Knowledge and understanding

61. Suitable foundations are being laid in design technology, science and computer technology. This is because the adults use good questioning skills to assess and extend the children's knowledge and understanding of, for example, scientific terminology and to foster their use of this vocabulary in an appropriate context. A good example of the use of practical activities to promote the knowledge and understanding of the world around them occurred following the designing and making of a boat using a range of material. The teacher then took the children to a water tray and posed questions, such as, "Do you think this boat will sink or float? This attracted the attention of many other children who converged on the water tray. Although it was not planned, this extension of the initial activity provoked their interest and aroused their curiosity. It offered exploration and discovery through first-hand experience, and was an example of good teaching. The children also derive great deal of pleasure from working in the computer suite where they treat the equipment with respect. All are able to turn on the equipment, use the mouse, the cursor and load the programme from a range of icons fairly competently. Clearly, the necessary skills are being soundly taught and the appropriate language is being introduced and used. No historical or geographical activities were observed during the inspection, but a planned lesson later in the week indicated that early mapping skills were being introduced through the use of the story 'Going on a Bear Hunt'.

Physical development

62. For the most part, the children's physical skills are being developed appropriately and most of the children are on course to reach the age-related expectation by the end of the reception year. They are confident at using a range of apparatus and equipment, such as the bicycles, with increasing control. They handle tools safely, and use construction equipment creatively. They cut and tear materials such as wool, cloth, paper, and card competently and confidently, showing pleasure in their achievements. However, the school's policy and planning does not yet make sufficient reference to the use of the outdoor environment as a means of improving the children's physical skills and as a resource for other areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Currently, this facility is significantly under-used and the opportunities for outdoor play are too infrequent. For instance, the children have few chances to be creative and imaginative with large-scale construction equipment and to run, climb and balance. **This is a key issue for action.**

Creative development

63. Since the last inspection the teacher's planning and provision for imaginative and structured play has not improved sufficiently to meet consistently the demands of the Foundation Stage curriculum. As a result, the children's overall creative development is below that expected for their age. The absence of role-play activities in the school's policy document for the Foundation Stage and in the teachers' planning records was reflected in a lack of observable evidence to suggest that there is adequate provision in this aspect of curriculum.
64. The pupils' work in artwork is restricted mostly to the basic skills of drawing, colouring and collage work, such as cutting and sticking. Although the children's progress is satisfactory, there is a marked absence in the use of paint and three-dimensional work. This curriculum is too narrow and does not sufficiently challenge the children to higher levels of enquiry, exploration and discovery. For example, there are few opportunities for the children to experience and explore various media through a range of activities, such as finger painting, printing and using malleable materials like play dough. A wider range of large construction equipment would also enhance the children's imaginative play. No specific musical activities were observed during the inspection, and no musical instruments were available to the children for independent music making, either in either the indoor or the outdoor setting. The children enjoy singing during assembly and many were seen trying to follow the words attentively and to sing along with the Key Stage 1 pupils. The staff recognise that children's creative development needs a review in line with the national guidelines in order to widen their knowledge and understanding and to improve their acquisition of basic skills. **This is a key issue for action.**

ENGLISH

65. Standards in English are below average at the end of Years 2 and 6. Although the standard of reading is in line with the levels expected of seven and eleven year olds, the development of the pupils' writing is slower and standards in this aspect are well below average.
66. A significant number of the children entering the school have below average skills in speaking and listening and need encouragement to make more than two or three word utterances and to widen their vocabulary. The majority of the teachers are skilful in presenting the correct use of language and in asking the sorts of questions that encourage the pupils to speak more extendedly. In every subject, there is solid evidence of the teachers using technical vocabulary and expecting that the pupils do the same. For instance, by the end of Year 2 many of the pupils talk about the features of books such as the "contents," "index" and "blurb." In information and communications technology, they speak about the "hard drive," "screen" and "mouse." By the age of seven, most pupils show increasing confidence as speakers. However, throughout Years 1 and 2, there needs to be a greater emphasis upon helping the children to listen to each other. A few shout out responses rather than wait to be asked, and occasionally this obstructs the development of constructive discussion and debate and hinders their learning. The teaching in Years 3-6 builds successfully on a promising start and the use of an additional teacher to create smaller teaching groups in Years 3 and 4 based on the pupils' prior attainment is very effective. For instance, the higher attaining pupils rose to the challenge of the teacher's high expectations when discussing what to include in a letter to travel agent and responded positively to her demands for elegant phraseology. By the same token, the teaching of the lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs is well matched to their different needs. The teacher knows the pupils very well and her quiet but firm manner has established an ethos where they listen carefully and respond thoughtfully when talking about their work. The majority of the Year 6 pupils are increasingly confident conversationalists, and they speak readily about their lives, hobbies and school. When discussing their work, their levels of commitment and enthusiasm vary, but all are developing a secure ability to listen carefully to questions and in most cases to respond thoughtfully.
67. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels in reading at the end of Years 2 and 6 is broadly average, but the numbers exceeding these are less than is found nationally. The successful adoption of the national literacy strategy has provided a secure foundation for the teachers to promote reading. During the course of the inspection, they were observed making effective use of a good variety of texts, including stories, travel brochures and newspapers. This interests the pupils and is helping them to become familiar with a range of writing styles. In Years 1 and 2, there is a helpful emphasis upon teaching the children the sounds of letters. The teachers do this in a variety of ways, including the use of some entertaining games at the start of the literacy hour and by checking the children's knowledge when discussing text. The benefits of this thorough approach are evident when the children come across an unfamiliar word because they attempt to work it out using their knowledge of the sounds of letters. In the case of the lower attaining pupils, this might only be the initial sound, but for the higher attaining pupils a combination of the letter blends and the context of the word often results in a correct reading. Consequently, the higher and average attaining pupils generally read accurately and willingly express opinions about the key events or favourite characters in a story. For instance, one pupil took delight in sharing a part of the story, "Not like that, like this", when a father gets his head stuck in some railings.
68. By the age of eleven most pupils are reading an increasingly wide range of material and the teaching concentrates appropriately on encouraging them to tackle increasingly complex texts. Many read the local newspaper and some buy magazines. Through their work in English, they have developed knowledge of the work of authors such as Roald Dahl, Dick King-Smith and Anne Fine. The films of "Lord of the Rings" and "Harry Potter" have encouraged a few of the higher attaining pupils to try the books. The most discerning readers not only read fluently, but also know how to develop a conversation. "Shall I explain what has happened so far?" enquired one pupil who had selected a favourite passage to share with the inspector. Another analysed with acuity the strategies used by an author to grasp the attention of the reader in the opening sentences of her latest book.
69. Discussions with the pupils throughout the school reveal that for a significant proportion reading is seldom a first choice of leisure activity. The teachers promote the importance of reading by sending home

books in reading bags along with a reading diary in which the children and their parents can exchange information with the school. These are generally well used, but closer analysis shows that those who struggle with reading are often the ones whose diaries suggest that they have less frequent practice at home.

70. The teachers recognise that the standard of the pupils' writing is improving less rapidly than in other aspects of English. This year there has been a concerted and successful effort to improve the presentation of the children's work. As a result, most exercise books are well maintained and independent work has a title and a date. The way that the pupils practise their spellings and handwriting before morning registration is also helpful in reinforcing these key skills. An analysis of the children's exercise books shows a steady improvement in the grammatical features of their work, but less progress in their abilities to formulate thoughts, ideas and responses of increasing complexity. One of main reasons for this is the over use of worksheets that constrain the pupils' response by requiring only one or two word answers. This is a particular problem in Years 1 and 2, where it is evident that the average and lower attaining pupils do not get enough opportunities to compose stories and personal accounts that motivate and contribute to the development of greater writing stamina. **This is a key issue for action.**
71. In Years 3-6 the pupils write for a greater range of purposes and activities such as letter writing, the analysis of persuasion in advertising and the re-telling of events from history clearly motivate pupils of all abilities. The teachers mark the pupils' work regularly, make encouraging comments and point out corrections to spelling and grammar. However, there is less evidence of marking and commentary that requires the pupils to think about the structure of their work and demands that they experiment more adventurously with their vocabulary. **This is a key issue for action.**
72. It is evident that the recent rigorous analysis of the pupils' performance in mathematics has led to improvement in the teaching and the standards achieved by the pupils. A similar scrutiny of the results in English is now needed, in order that the content of the pupils' writing can be improved.

MATHEMATICS

73. At end of Years 2 and 6, standards in mathematics are broadly in line with the national average. Scrutiny of the previous work of all age groups shows that the attainment of the majority of pupils is in line with the national averages. The recent trend of rising attainment has been maintained. The very good analysis of pupils' performance in mathematics is a significant factor in the raising of attainment. The teaching is characterised by some sharp, well-targeted questioning and effective use of technical vocabulary. Most pupils are making appropriate progress except for higher attaining pupils, whose work often lacks sufficient challenge for them to extend their knowledge and understanding at the level of which they are capable.
74. Analysis of the national test and assessment data suggests that in Key Stage 1 the boys perform better than the girls, although girls are beginning to catch up by the end of Key Stage 2. Observations of lessons, discussions with the pupils and analysis of their work found no bias in the teaching methods and a generally positive attitude to the subject that spanned both genders. In numeracy lessons, the teachers take great care to involve both boys and girls and match their questions accurately to the abilities of the pupils. Those with special educational needs are effectively supported and make similar progress to other groups.
75. The school has successfully implemented the National Numeracy Strategy. In all the lessons seen, there was a good balance of mental calculation, written work and individual and group activities. Overall, the teaching is good and motivates and enthuses pupils to work hard. The planning of work has improved in both key stages and provides precise objectives that are made clear to the pupils, so that they are aware of the aims of the lessons. The pupils continue to achieve well in number work as they did at the last inspection. Most lessons are characterised by good planning and management of the learning situation, clear objectives and very good questioning that enables all pupils to contribute in a meaningful way. The pupils settle quickly to their tasks and maintain a good pace to learning. For example, in a Year 1 lesson on the lines of symmetry in shapes, very good questioning and instruction allowed all groups of pupils to say why some shapes are symmetrical and others are not. The pupils were led carefully to consider that symmetrical means 'exactly the same' and by the end of the lesson all could use the term correctly in a

range of contexts. The lower attaining pupils were well supported by a Learning Support Assistant using butterfly cut-outs and paint to make symmetrical wings. The average and higher attaining pupils recorded their work using pegboards and graph paper. At the end of the lesson, all groups were able to talk sensibly about what they had learned.

76. Discussions with Year 2 pupils and a scrutiny of work show that by the end of the key stage most have secure attainment in number, shape, space and measures. For example, they can correctly identify and name common two-dimensional shapes, such as circle, square, rectangle and pentagon. However, their work on three-dimensional shapes, such as cone, cube, cylinder and cuboids, is less well developed. Most pupils have a sound grasp of numbers up to 1000, but the higher attaining pupils have not yet extended this to numbers up to 1000. The work on data handling is restricted to a few simple block graphs and there is no evidence of pupils collecting data and recording it in tally form.
77. Well-targeted questioning and effective use of technical vocabulary enables all groups of pupils to contribute to discussions and mental calculation sessions. For example, in a Year 5 lesson on reflective symmetry in regular polygons, the pupils' previous knowledge was built upon very effectively by careful questions such as '*What do you mean by regular?*'; '*Why is this shape not regular?*' and '*Where is the pattern between the lines and shapes?*' This enabled all groups to build up their knowledge and understanding securely. Many teachers also make good use of time limits to focus their pupils' concentration and the lesson is broken into manageable sessions that match the pupils' attention span. This helps to maintain interest and commitment so that the pace of learning remains high. For example, in a Year 3 / 4 lesson on angles, it was the pupils themselves who had to stand and turn in varying degrees. They then recorded different angles in terms of degrees and numbers of turns. This lesson was a good example of the kind of different activities that enable higher attaining pupils to achieve satisfactorily because they were better challenged than simply following the same work as all other groups. However, this is not a consistent pattern across all classes and differentiated work that sufficiently challenges the higher attaining pupils remains an area of development for the school.
78. A noticeable feature is the good mental calculation session at the start of the lessons that engages and enthuses the great majority of pupils. This is particularly strong in Key Stage 2, and by the end of Year 6 most pupils are secure in their use of mental calculations. Scrutiny of their previous work shows that this knowledge is used well in problem solving, but most pupils are not so secure in their understanding of calculations with fractions and decimals. Good use is made of displays to support learning. For example, most classrooms have a key word vocabulary display to which the pupils are referred during the lesson. Some have displays of correct recording methods so that all pupils are always aware of what is expected of them. However, a scrutiny of pupils' books shows that in marking work the teachers make supportive and encouraging remarks, but seldom write comments to tell the children how their work might be improved.
79. The leadership and management of the subject are good and are having a positive effect on raising achievement. The co-ordinator has a secure insight into the current standards in the subject, which could be improved still further through more involvement in the direct monitoring of the teaching and learning. The charting of the pupils' performance in national tests and assessments in Key Stages 1 and 2 has improved considerably, and the information is being used purposefully in the planning of subsequent improvement. The assessment of pupils' achievements in mathematics is very good and an example for other subjects. The mathematics resources have benefited from the regular upgrades and are being used well to help improve standards.

SCIENCE

80. At end of key stages 1 and 2, standards in science are broadly in line with the national average. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards were judged to be below average at the end of Key Stage 2. The test results for 2001 showed that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level was above average, but the proportion reaching the higher levels was well below average. This was also reflected in the teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1, which were below the national average. The current inspection evidence, however, shows that in both key stages the attainment of most pupils is in line with the requirements. The rise in standards continues the trend of the past three years. This has

been brought about by an improvement in the teaching, particularly in Key Stage 2, and the use of a new scheme of work that is securely based on national guidance.

81. The inspection evidence also shows however, that the school has not yet successfully addressed the issue of the attainment of higher attaining groups of pupils. Scrutiny of previous work across the school shows attainment to be broadly in line with expectations for lower and average attaining pupils, but the work for higher attaining pupils in both key stages continues to lack sufficient challenge for them to attain at the levels of which they are capable. Planning of different tasks for various groups of pupils, especially the higher attaining groups, is needed to address this issue. This remains an area of improvement for the school.
82. By the end of Year 2, most pupils are achieving a satisfactory depth in their scientific knowledge and understanding. They can recognise and name correctly the main parts of a plant and know the conditions necessary for its growth. Year 1 pupils can correctly sequence a series of diagrams of the life cycles of a frog, a chicken and themselves. All groups of pupils can identify the two main forces of pushes and pulls in a number of everyday situations, but only the higher attaining pupils are able to describe the effects of friction in slowing down a toy car as it moves over different surfaces. Where the teaching is good, pupils are interested and enthused by the activities. This was particularly evident in a Year 2 lesson on life cycles when, to great excitement and wonder, a butterfly hatched from its pupa right on cue! After its release in the school grounds, this event was then developed very well by the class teacher through the use of reference books and the telling of the story of 'The Hungry Caterpillar'. This was used well to show the pupils the differences between moths and caterpillars and successfully developed their knowledge and understanding. Where the teaching is less successful, however, it is clear that the level of work is the same for all groups and is not challenging pupils to attain beyond the expected level for their age.
83. A similar picture emerges in Key Stage 2. The majority of pupils are secure in their work at the expected level for their age, but there is little evidence of challenge for them to achieve beyond that point. For example, by the end of Year 6, most pupils can separate the solids and liquid in a solution by sieving and filtration and can identify reversible and non-reversible changes in materials. They can recognise the main organs of the body and state their functions. For instance, discussion with the pupils shows they have a secure knowledge of the purpose of the skeleton. The work of higher attaining groups of pupils, however, shows no evidence of either the use of keys to classify animals or an understanding of food chains. Moreover, they cannot describe the functions of the various organs of a flower in the reproduction process. The pupils are clearly enthusiastic about science when the lessons are practical. For example, in a Year 3 / 4 lesson on the ways plants grow, the pupils were able to consider the relationship between the growth of roots and the number of leaves through good questioning by the teacher and the very good use of a computer and microscope. The pupils were enthused by this, but the task required only a simple recording of measurements of growth and was not taken to a more challenging level.
84. Overall, the teaching of science has improved since the last inspection and in Key Stage 2 it is now satisfactory with some good features. Its strong features lie in the way that the teachers' planning in both key stages has improved and the precise lesson objectives that are made clear to the children. The teachers' secure subject knowledge is shown in the way in which they question the pupils and encourage them to explain and expand their ideas in correct scientific language. Good use is made of resources, such as computers, to interest the pupils and extend the learning. The teachers now need to provide more opportunities for the higher attaining pupils to plan and conduct their own experiments. Furthermore, all groups of pupils should be allowed to write their own conclusions rather than following a set recording sheet. The teachers should also be more consistent in marking work so that the pupils are clear about what they have achieved. All books are marked regularly and the teachers make supportive and encouraging remarks, but they rarely make written comments that tell the children how their work might be improved. Most teachers provide interesting activities for the pupils to investigate, but they are often too closely directed. The pupils, especially higher attaining pupils, do not develop enough independence in planning, organising and recording their investigations by the time they leave school.
85. There is a good emphasis on collaborative learning in many classes, especially in Key Stage 2. In conversation, the pupils make clear that they value this method of working for the support it gives them. It not only encourages them to work together and cooperate in the use of resources, but also develops well

their social skills. A striking example of this occurred in the Year 3/4 lesson when a pupil with special educational needs was well supported by other members of the class.

86. The leadership and management of science are good and are beginning to have positive effects on the raising of achievement. The co-ordinator has a secure insight into the current standards in the subject and is aware of the need to develop the monitoring of the teaching and learning in a more systematic manner. Recent additions to the resources have helped teachers to plan more effectively and are used to provide interesting activities for most pupils.

ART AND DESIGN

87. During the inspection, only one class lesson in Key Stage 1 was observed. No lessons were seen in Key Stage 2. A wide range of displays and a collection of the children's past work were scrutinised. The work shows an improvement in the depth of the art curriculum since the last inspection, but the standards achieved by the pupils have remained at a similar level. They are in line with the expected levels at the end of both key stages. The teaching is effective because there is an appropriate emphasis on the progression of basic skills when using, for example, pastels, paint, charcoal, pencils, textiles and clay.
88. The pupils have studied the use of colour in the work of Van Gogh, considered shape in the work of Kandinsky, researched information from the web sites on these artists, and created three-dimensional forms using clay and tapestry work. The results demonstrate that the pupils are successful in a wide range of experiences using a variety of materials, tools and equipment. The involvement of a local artist has been particularly successful. The younger children have designed a school logo based on the local features of the village, for example, the train standing at the station. The artist has helped them combine these individual pieces into a large mural that is to have pride of place on the school wall. In the lesson observed, the younger children continued with individual designs for their own sculpture on the same theme, using a very wide range of man-made materials. This followed on from some previous work where they made good progress in the use of natural materials in a sculpture. The pupils really enjoyed the lesson and during the explanation of the task by the teacher one little voice piped up saying, 'I can't wait to get started'. The pupils sustained good levels of concentration and produced work of good quality. This was because they interacted well with the adults using subject specific vocabulary, and there was good emphasis on the improvement of their skills.
89. In discussion, the pupils revealed their enthusiasm for art and stated that they enjoy illustrating their work in other subjects, such as literacy. For example, they used pastels and crayons to produce tints and tone in their illustration of scenes from stories, such as 'The Hungry Caterpillar'. At Key Stage 2, the pupils' work demonstrates a breadth of experience, including that provided at a very popular after-school art club. The teaching is effective because there is an appropriate emphasis on the progression of basic skills when using pastel, paint, charcoal and pencil and in acquiring knowledge of the work of famous artists, including some from non-European countries.
90. The school has given priority to art on its school improvement plan for 2002 and the co-ordinator has taken a very active lead in emphasising the development of the basic art skills. She has supported the teachers' planning, given advice and led in-service training and is scheduled to produce an overall policy for art before the end of this term. She plans to introduce sketchbooks for the older children and to collate a whole school portfolio of samples of artwork. This is helpful because the accompanying notes should state why each piece of work is considered to be a good example of the development of skills, techniques and creativity. These positive initiatives are likely to improve on the standards currently already being achieved.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

91. From the work on display around the school and examples of completed work, it is clear that the provision and standards in design and technology have improved significantly since the last inspection. At that time, standards were deemed to be below the age-related requirements, but are now in line with the expected levels at the end of both key stages. The pupils have experience of designing, making and evaluating, and they make good progress in all areas of the curriculum. No teaching was observed at Key Stage 1 and only two lessons were seen at Key Stage 2.

92. The work in Key Stage 1 shows that the pupils are acquiring appropriate skills in designing and making. In Year 1, they are developing their technical knowledge and understanding of sliding mechanisms. They had strips of card in the shape of a snail and used a fastener as a pivot inside the card to make a moving picture. The children talked confidently and competently about this process, using words such as, pivot, lever and bridge accurately and in their appropriate context. This work had been successfully achieved with the support of a visiting design technology specialist.
93. At Key Stage 2, the work demonstrates the children's ability to join, fix, and combine a range of materials, for example, when making shadow puppets. The different techniques used to strengthen a range of hats are further clear evidence of the way that the pupils have thought through their designs and their use of materials. However, some of the work on food technology, for instance, is less challenging when pupils are given worksheets that require them only to match the listed words that suitably describe the texture, taste, flavour, smell and appearance of a sandwich. The oldest pupils were seen to be working collaboratively on designing a biscuit, baking the biscuits with the help of the school cook, evaluating the outcomes and recording their findings in a variety of ways. The importance of hygiene and safety were paramount at all times and pupils were aware of this. This design technology lesson was very stimulating and all the pupils were actively involved and very diligent. Their behaviour was very good. The teacher showed considerable judgement in allowing the children to work things out for themselves and intervened only to give support and guidance when necessary. The good interactive display on the walls helped to give the pupils the ideas and subject specific terminology needed. The opportunity for the pupils to design the packaging for their biscuits challenged them to even higher levels of creativity.
94. The subject is well led by the co-ordinator who has worked hard to raise the profile of the subject across the school. The introduction of the guidelines to support the planning and the provision of in-service training for staff are also significant factors in the improvement made since the last inspection. It is evident from the finished products that the pupils make good progress and take a pride in their work.

GEOGRAPHY

95. Currently, standards in Year 6 and Year 2 are in line with those expected nationally. Most pupils are making satisfactory progress as they move through the school. These are reflections of the findings of the previous report. A scrutiny of the teachers' planning shows that all the strands of the National Curriculum are being tackled. Only two lessons in Key Stage 2 were seen, and these were both good. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous report.
96. The school continues to make good use of the local area for field trips. This starts with a walk around school by the younger pupils, who can identify particular features for improvement. For example, the Year 1 pupils produced some telling posters on litter and identified different types of houses. In Year 2, the pupils' sense of place was further developed through a study of 'places very near and very far'. Discussion with the pupils shows that they have a satisfactory knowledge of places; they can identify and name the main countries of the British Isles, but are not so sure of the capital cities other than London. Many have recorded their travels with 'Barnaby Bear' through postcards around the world and these are recorded on a world map in a bright and colourful display.
97. The pupils' mapping skills are developed further in Key Stage 2 through local studies of Gobowen and Oswestry. The Year 6 pupils have studied the local River Perry as part of their topic on rivers and used the Internet and CD-ROM's to research rivers around the World. In one lesson, these pupils made very good use of computers and digital photographs taken on the field trip to review and consolidate their knowledge and understanding of the main features of rivers. This was a very good lesson that interested the great majority of the class. However, all groups were presented with the same task, and it did not sufficiently challenge the higher attaining pupils and allow them the freedom to expand their ideas. Conversations with the older pupils also showed that they were familiar with maps and recording information in the form of keys, but they could not name the main continents and oceans of the world. In the other lesson seen in Key Stage 2, the pupils were able to make good use of photographs and books to find information about places abroad and compare them with their own environment. In both lessons, the teachers were good at engaging the pupils in discussions that helped to broaden their understanding of different places.

98. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory, but at present there are no systems for assessing the pupils' achievement in geography. Recent additional resources have contributed to the teaching and learning and good use is made of field trips to develop the pupils' knowledge and understanding of physical geography. Older pupils have visited such places as Llandudno (a seaside environment), Lake Vyrnwy (water services) and a local Country Park for map work and orienteering.

HISTORY

99. It was not possible to see any teaching of history during the inspection because of the way the subject is timetabled. The following judgements are, therefore, based on a scrutiny of the pupils' previous work, an examination of the teachers' planning records and discussions with the co-ordinator and pupils from Years 6 and 2.
100. By the end of both key stages, standards are in line with those expected for pupils of this age. At the previous inspection, standards were judged to be above average. The inspection evidence shows that most pupils are making satisfactory progress, but the higher attaining groups of pupils are insufficiently challenged by the work presented and are not able to reach the standards of which they are capable. Too many worksheets are used and, in many cases, take the place of the learning instead of supporting the learning.
101. The youngest pupils in Year 1 have compared toys of the past with their own and listed the differences between them. By the end of Year 2, they have a sound understanding of 'times past' and 'times now'. In discussion, they show that they have some knowledge of famous people, such as Samuel Pepys and Grace Darling, and can readily recount great events such as the Great Fire of London. They have all contributed to and take great pride in a class book of the story of Grace Darling. In Years 3 to 6, the pupils study such topics as the Romans, the Ancient Greeks and the Aztecs. They know why invaders such as the Romans and the Vikings became settlers. They have also learned about famous events of the decades since 1950, such as the first moon landings and the story of the Beatles. However, all groups of pupils are given the same work and use the same worksheets. This restricts the achievement of higher attaining groups of pupils, whose work shows little evidence of independent research or writing. This is an area of development for the school.
102. The subject is well led by the co-ordinator, who is maintaining the profile of the subject across the school. She is aware of the need to develop systems for assessing the pupils' achievement in history. Recent resources have helped the teaching and learning in the subject and good use is made of visits and visitors to the school. Visits to Erdigg Hall (Victorians), Chirk Castle (Tudors) and the Blist Hill Open Air Museum help to bring the subject alive for many groups of pupils. Older pupils have also visited Chester and Bath in connection with their Roman topic and visits by theatre groups as Greek and Tudor musicians have also extended the pupils knowledge and understanding.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

103. Since the last inspection, the school's provision for this subject has improved. A new computer suite has been created with sufficient equipment to allow groups of children to be taught new skills and techniques. In addition, the teachers have started to receive additional training so that they can make the most of the available equipment. As a result, standards have improved throughout the school and are now in line with those expected of children aged seven and eleven.
104. In Years 1 and 2, there is strength in the way that the pupils are starting to apply the power of new technologies more effectively in an increasingly wide range of settings. Word processing is introduced from an early age in order to support the children's writing. In a Year 2 lesson, the children were swift to get to grips with using the "Amazing Dictionary" program in order to find the answers to a series of questions provided by the teacher. They showed a secure understanding of how to load the program and to click on buttons and icons in order to navigate their way to the answers required. The classroom displays reveal that the pupils are also starting to use equipment, such as the digital camera, to record news and events from around the school. At other times of the year, use is made of programmable electronic toys, so that the pupils know how to enter commands to determine their movement. In the best

lessons, the teachers identify precisely what the children are going to learn and make sure that these objectives are reinforced at regular points throughout the session. However, in one unsatisfactory lesson the teacher's lack of clarity about the objectives meant that the children had a lot of fun using the computers, but made only limited gains in their skills and understanding.

105. In Years 3 to 6, the breadth of the pupils' knowledge increases markedly. These pupils are using the computers to word process their writing, sort and analyse data in mathematics and carry out research in history, science and geography on CD ROM and the Internet. For instance in Years 3 and 4, the pupils are using the program "Publisher" to create newspaper article about the effects of the monsoon on an Indian village. They are increasingly adept at creating frames for their writing and linking these boxes so that text flows from one to another. The Year 5 pupils are using the computers to help them to design containers for the biscuits they have made in design and technology. They make sensible choices in selecting fonts, text and colour and have a good understanding of the need to "flip" and reverse text so that it reads correctly on opposite sides of the container template. By the age of eleven, the pupils are making extensive use of the computers and the Internet as a valuable tool for research. For instance, they are currently finding out about the life and work of the novelist Anne Fine accessed through the interviews held within the program "Espresso."
106. On the basis of the few observations made, the overall quality of the teaching is satisfactory. The co-ordinator is doing a good job in building the staff's confidence and expertise. He is familiarising the teachers with an increasing number of programs and developing their understanding of how computers might be used across the full breadth of the National Curriculum. As a result, the teachers are, for the most part, planning appropriate work and have sufficient knowledge to ensure that the pupils learn what is expected.
107. The use of new technologies is regularly applied across the curriculum. For instance, in one very effective science lesson, the quality of the pupils' research was considerably enhanced because the teacher made extremely effective demonstration of the root system of plants using the projector and electronic whiteboard. This process clearly motivated the pupils who concentrated and worked hard. Throughout the school, the children clearly appreciate the opportunity of using the school's computers. They treat the machines carefully and understand that they are costly to repair and replace. At the moment, most pupils have to share a machine, but their levels of co-operation are good and they take turns sensibly. Whilst watching the pupils at work, it is evident that those who have computers at home are generally far more confident and competent than those who do not.

MUSIC

108. During the inspection, three class lessons, musical performances by the pupils and individual instrumental teaching were observed. The standards achieved at the time of the last inspection have been maintained and there are significant improvements in some aspects of the music curriculum offered to pupils.
109. By the end of both key stages, the pupils' overall achievements in music are in line with what is expected nationally. The standards in the older children's individual instrumental work and in their singing are well above that expected of this age group. The quality of the singing is very good in the assemblies. In the practice sessions, good emphasis is placed on the basic skills of singing, such as posture, breathing, diction, dynamics and basic rhythmic pattern. Good attention is also given to the melody contour of the song and to pitch accuracy. The younger children sing enthusiastically and with enjoyment. In the Key Stage 1 class music lessons, the children produced sounds on un-tuned percussion instruments that were beginning to be musical in nature. They also had some control over rhythm and duration, and confidently followed the agreed signs and symbols on graphic scores conducted by the adult. In the one Key Stage 2 lesson, the children sang well-known songs and played the recorder clearly, thereby demonstrating positive attitudes towards music. Their behaviour was good in all lessons observed and from discussion it was clear that they look forward to their music lessons each week. In all cases, the lessons were well constructed to ensure that the pupils understood the planned learning experience. However, more attention to the listening and appraising elements of the music curriculum both in class lessons and assemblies, the inclusion of music from non-European countries and the acquisition of non-European musical instruments would strengthen the music curriculum.

110. Individual lessons provide the older pupils with a very good foundation in the theoretical aspects of music and in the mastery of their instruments because the teaching is very good. A significant number of these pupils have reached very high standards in external examinations.

111. Music has a high priority profile on the school improvement plan for this year. This has enabled the music co-ordinator, appointed since the time of the last inspection, the opportunity to lead and have a positive influence on the quality of the music curriculum and the status of the subject within the school. She not only actively supports the non-specialist classroom teachers in their preparation and presentation of music lessons, but also has provided a wealth of opportunities for the pupils to perform to a very high standard under her direction at competitions and concerts out of school hours.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

112. On the basis of the two lessons observed during the inspection and from watching the children at play at mid-morning break and lunchtime, their levels of physical co-ordination, space awareness and ball skills are in line with those expected of seven and eleven year olds. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards in Key Stage 2 were unsatisfactory. The vast majority of the children appear to enjoy their physical education lessons and a good proportion joins in the after school sports clubs provided by the teachers.
113. The teaching observed during the inspection was satisfactory. In one rain-affected lesson with Year 5 pupils, the teacher demonstrated good subject knowledge and flexibility in adapting his outdoor cricket lesson to the confined spaces of the school hall. He modified activities to ensure that the children worked safely, and successfully enabled them to practice and refine the accuracy of their throwing and catching. The Year 1 teacher made reasonably effective use of a tape-recorded dance lesson. She had changed into appropriate clothing in order that she might join in and this was helpful because it provided the pupils with an additional source of ideas. The children worked hard, co-operated well and exercised vigorously. However, the pace of their learning could have been increased if the teacher had identified more precisely in her planning the types of movement she expected the children to develop and indicated how she might help them achieve this.
114. The co-ordinator's helpful curriculum framework shows that the school is offering the full range of the National Curriculum programmes of study, including swimming for ten sessions each year. Of the current Year 6, 80% are able to swim the expected 25 metres.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

115. By the end of Years 2 and 6, standards are in line with those expected by the locally agreed syllabus. Throughout the school, the pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve as well as expected. This reflects the findings of the previous report. Although only one lesson was seen in Key Stage 2, the following judgements are supported by a scrutiny of the teachers' planning, the pupils' previous work, discussions with the co-ordinator and pupils from years 2 and 6.
116. Themes based around the idea of 'special' are studied in Year 1 and the pupils are able to identify special friends and special people who help them in school and the local community. The Year 2 pupils study 'our special world' and have learned about special symbols, such as the Christian cross. By the end of Year 2, they are able to record their feelings about what is fair and how to make choices in order to do "the right thing". In discussion, the older pupils show that they have some knowledge of other religions, such as Judaism, Sikhism and Islam and are aware of their different beliefs and customs. They know about such festivals as Diwali and the Chinese New Year and have studied Buddhism and the Bible stories of Jesus. Aspects of religious education are also referred to in assemblies, for instance, when the headteacher talked about how Muslim fathers whisper a prayer into the ear of their new born babies as they give them their names. A number of pupils in following assemblies had found out the meanings of their own names and explained them to the other children. Good opportunities are taken in other subject lessons to develop the pupils' awareness of the beliefs of other cultures. However, their work would benefit from extended opportunities to write their own feelings and opinions about what they have found out rather than simply completing prescribed worksheets.
117. On a limited evidence base only, the teaching of the subject appears satisfactory overall. The teachers have secure subject knowledge and their lesson planning is generally good. In the lesson seen on the Hindu belief of ritual bathing in the River Ganges, the teaching was good. The pupils were interested and

involved in discussions that were guided well by the class teacher. The teachers' planning has been improved by the adoption of national guidance, and more resources for teaching and learning have helped to raise the profile of the subject across the school. At present, the leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory, but the school is aware of the need to develop some form of assessment of pupils' achievement.