

INSPECTION REPORT

St Michael's CE (VC) First School

Stone

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124275

Headteacher: Mrs Mary Gale

Reporting inspector: Mrs Pat Richards
25433

Dates of inspection: 25th – 28th June 2001

Inspection number: 195175

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 – 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Weaver's Lane Stone Staffordshire
Postcode:	ST158QB
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr H Brunt
Date of previous inspection:	March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
25433	Mrs P Richards	Registered inspector	Science Design and technology Religious education Physical education	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well pupils are taught How well the school is led and managed. Special educational needs
9086	Mrs R Watkins	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well the school cares for its pupils How well the school works in partnership with parents
22856	Mrs K Campbell	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Music Geography Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage	
21904	Mrs D Gale	Team inspector	English History Physical education Art and design English as an additional language	Equal opportunities The quality of the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Michael's CE First School is a popular school serving a very mixed socio-economic community, with a good number of pupils coming from outside the immediate catchment area. It is larger than average, with 329 pupils on roll, from 4 to 9 years of age. Nearly all the pupils are of white ethnic heritage, with only a small number from ethnic minority families. Four pupils have English as an additional language but are no longer in the early stages of acquiring English. Children are admitted to the pre-reception class on a part-time basis in the term after their fourth birthday and move to the reception classes in the term following their fifth birthday. Currently, there are 51 children attending the pre-reception class, part-time, and 60 children attending full-time in the two reception classes. Children's attainment on entry to reception is broadly in line with that expected for children of this age. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, at around 8 per cent, is below average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is similar to the national average, but the proportion of pupils with a Statement of special educational needs is higher than the national average and a few pupils have behavioural or emotional difficulties. The school supports pupils from local Special Schools who have a variety of special educational needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school, which serves its pupils, their parents and the community very well. A strong Christian ethos creates a caring environment in which the pupils feel safe and secure. The headteacher's outstanding leadership ensures good teaching and learning, very high academic standards, and a happy family atmosphere. Standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science by the time the pupils are seven. The school is very effective, pupils start school with generally average levels of ability and, as they move through the school, they develop very well, both academically and personally. By the time they leave the school, pupils are achieving well above the national average and have very positive attitudes to learning. This progress represents significant added value. The effectiveness of the school's strategies for educational inclusion is very good. There is a shared commitment to high standards and excellent relationships. The leadership and management of the school is excellent, and the funding allocated to the school is broadly in line with that given to similar schools. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve well above national averages in English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils learn well because of the good teaching, particularly at Key Stage 2, where teaching is very good.
- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and, in partnership with the senior management team and governors, makes sure that there is a very good sense of purpose in the school and that it is led and managed very well.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes towards all their work contribute well to their learning.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of the high quality support they receive.

What could be improved

- The breadth and balance of the curriculum for art and design.
- The promotion of pupils' listening skills.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to all parents, and carers of pupils in the school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 1997, since when it has made good progress in addressing all of the key issues identified in the report. These improvements have had a positive effect on the social and academic standards of the pupils. The fast pace of development in the school is driven by a well-focused and comprehensive development plan that provides a detailed evaluation of the school's long-, medium- and short-term development needs, identifying clear priorities and attainable targets. The schemes of work for mathematics and science are now fully implemented. Information and communication technology has flourished in the school, with greatly improved provision, including a new computer suite, and professional training for all staff. All pupils, from the age of four, have access to computers and other information and communication technology equipment, through a variety of ways, and all groups of pupils are making good progress in this area of learning. A new scheme of work supports teachers in their planning for design and technology and resources for the subject are much improved. There are now more opportunities for pupils to develop their independent study skills. In the Early Years Unit, there has been an increase in the use of out-door and large toys to promote the children's physical skills and plans are in hand to improve provision even further. A new pre-reception class provides opportunities for more children to experience pre-school education. In addition to addressing the issues raised in the last report, the school has

embraced new national initiatives very effectively, such as the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, the new curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage¹ as well as the new National Curriculum. The school has worked very hard to update policies and schemes of work in response to these new requirements. There have been significant changes to the accommodation, with the provision of four new classrooms and outstanding improvements to the school grounds, which recently won recognition with an 'ECO' award.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7-year-olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools ²
	1998	1999	2000	2000
Reading	B	B	B	C
Writing	B	B	C	C
Mathematics	C	A	A	A

Key	
Very high	A*
Well above average	A
above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E
Very low	E*

Results of National Curriculum tests, in 2000, showed that standards in reading were above the national average and in line with similar schools. Standards in writing were average when compared both nationally and with similar schools. In mathematics, pupils' performance was well above average. The number of pupils reaching both average and higher levels was well above average and one pupil achieved the level expected for an 11-year-old. Results of the most recent tests show a further improvement, most noticeably in the number of pupils achieving higher levels. Five per cent of the pupils achieved the level expected for an 11-year-old, in both reading and writing. Realistic targets for both 2000 and 2001 have been exceeded, with a good proportion of pupils attaining better results than test analyses had predicted. Inspection evidence confirms that the present standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science are well above average at Key Stages 1 and 2, and that the overall trend is upwards. All groups of pupils achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, make very good progress with the high levels of support they receive. Pupils at Key Stage 2, identified as more able, receive very good provision and achieve very well. Boys and girls achieve equally well.

Pupils are making rapid progress in information and communication technology and are achieving standards that are in line with expectations for seven-year-olds and above expectations by Year 4. Pupils' achievement in religious education is above the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus throughout the school. Standards in all of the other subjects are in line with expectations, except for art and design at Key Stages 1 and 2, and design and technology at Key Stage 2 where standards are below expectations. There has been an improvement in provision for design and technology since the previous inspection, but the older pupils have not yet had sufficient time to benefit fully from these improvements.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very positive. Pupils love school and are enthusiastic learners.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave generally well in and out of class. They are polite, courteous and well mannered. They play together harmoniously.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships are a strength of the school; everyone in the school community gets on together very well.
Attendance	Good. Attendance is consistently above the average for similar schools.

¹ The Foundation Stage applies to children from the age of three to the end of the reception year.

² 'Similar schools' are defined by the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals; this measure has been found to be significantly related to the levels of attainment normally found in schools nationally.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Very Good

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

The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school and very good at Key Stage 2. Overall, 95 per cent of lessons were satisfactory or better, with over three-quarters being good or better and a quarter very good or better. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good overall. Ninety-three percent of lessons seen were good or better. Teaching in the reception classes is of a consistently high quality. At Key Stage 1, eighty six per cent of the lessons were satisfactory or better, with over half of these being good and a further 14 per cent very good. Three lessons accounted for the five per cent of unsatisfactory lessons, which were all at Key Stage 1. These were due to teachers' minor insecurities in drama, and physical education and, on one occasion, weakness in the organisation and management of a group of lively pupils. At Key Stage 2, 86 per cent of lessons seen were good or better, with over a third being very good or better. One of these was an excellent lesson. There were no unsatisfactory lessons at Key Stage 2. All groups of pupils make good and often very good progress in their learning through the good teaching they receive. Pupils with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, make particularly good progress with the high levels of support they receive. Teachers know the pupils well and their very good use of day-to-day assessment is directly responsible for the consistent way in which work accurately matches the needs of the pupils. Very good relationships are a strong feature of the good teaching, as is teachers' very good subject knowledge. Time and resources are used well and, in the best lessons, not a moment is wasted. Pupils have a very clear idea of their own learning because they all have personal targets for improvement and teachers take care to explain, at the start of lessons, what pupils are expected to learn. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught very well, both in designated lessons and in other subjects of the curriculum. Homework is used very effectively to enhance and extend pupils' learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Literacy and numeracy are provided for well, with particular strengths in numeracy. The school works hard to ensure that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum. Much is done to enrich and extend the curriculum, with a very good range of after-school activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Support from teachers and learning support assistants is of very good quality. Pupils' needs are quickly identified; parents are fully informed and involved. Targets are used well to generate learning activities for lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. The school's spiritual, moral and social provision are particular strengths. Cultural provision is good, although more could be done to strengthen pupils' understanding of multicultural aspects. Much is done to give all pupils self-confidence and self-belief so that they can make the most of what the school has to offer. Pupils are taught that belonging to a community carries responsibilities and this is beginning the groundwork for later in life well.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good, pupils are looked after very well. Each is respected and valued for who they are. Pupils' academic progress is exceptionally well monitored.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school is, justifiably, highly regarded by parents. Parents are particularly appreciative of all that is done to help their children.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides excellent leadership and is ably supported by staff and governors alike. The subject co-ordinators have a very clear overview of the strengths and weaknesses in their respective subjects. Their knowledge, enthusiasm and commitment are major strengths of the school. The files and records kept are meticulous in their detail.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors are astute and work very hard to support the school. There is no complacency; governors have very good systems for checking on the work of the school and are always looking for ways to improve. They have a very clear structure which enables their meetings to focus effectively on the 'big picture', the school's strategic development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The school carefully analyses its national and annual test results in English, mathematics and science to see where improvement is needed. Planning for each year starts with a very careful review of progress made during the last year.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good use of staff and accommodation and its overall strategic use of learning resources is excellent. The finances allocated to the school are always used prudently and effectively in the best interests of the pupils' learning, with careful regard to the principles of best value. Any grants available, for instance for computers, are spent so as to achieve maximum benefit.

The number of teachers is sufficient. Their individual strengths are very carefully used to maximum benefit. The good number of learning support assistants is also deployed well. Accommodation is good, with outstanding outdoor features, which have recently won recognition with an 'ECO' award.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strong leadership given by the headteacher. • The good teaching and high expectations that help their children to make good progress. • Their children like school. • Pupils are helped to be mature and responsible and their behaviour is good. • They feel comfortable to approach the school with enquiries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few parents are unhappy with the amounts of homework. • A few parents would like to be better informed about the progress their children make. • A few parents would like more information on how they can help their children at home.

Inspectors agree with the positive views parents hold about the school. They do not share the reservations expressed about amounts of homework, as there is good use of homework throughout the school. However, the school has plans to increase the flow of information about the homework that is given, and inspectors agree that this would be helpful. Inspectors find that there is very good information for parents about the progress their children make, through informative reports and meetings with teachers. The headteacher readily shares the most recent assessment information with any parents concerned about their child's progress. Inspectors agree that the flow of information about how parents of older children can help at home falls short of the wide-ranging information given lower down the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The National Curriculum tests results for seven-year-olds, in 2000, showed that standards were above average in reading compared with schools nationally and average when compared with similar schools. In writing, pupils' attainment was in line with both the national average and that for similar schools. One pupil achieved a higher level in reading and writing. Standards in mathematics were well above average, when compared both nationally and with similar schools. Teachers' assessments indicated that pupils' attainment in science was above the national average. Results over time show that, despite some fluctuation in results, the overall trend since the previous inspection is upwards. Boys and girls achieve equally well.
2. Although national comparisons are not yet available, test results in 2001, for pupils in Year 2, show an impressive rise in standards overall, most noticeably in the number of pupils achieving higher levels. The proportion of pupils reaching both average and higher levels is well above last year's average in English, mathematics and science, with five per cent of pupils achieving the levels expected for 11-year-olds in both reading and writing. Inspection evidence confirms these high standards. Pupils' attainment in speaking is above average, at the ages of seven and nine. All pupils make very good progress because of the opportunities provided to help them to extend their vocabulary and become confident speakers. Pupils' attainment in listening, however, is only average at both key stages. Weaknesses in this area are particularly marked at Key Stage 1. Most pupils find difficulty in maintaining full attention to teachers' explanations and instructions throughout the lesson and even the best teachers often have to remind pupils of the need to listen. Pupils' attainment in writing is now well above the national average. Writing has been a focus for development within the school this year, and the initiatives introduced to give greater flexibility in the use of the literacy hour and opportunities for extended writing, have proved very successful. Spelling and punctuation are accurate and words are chosen adventurously for effect. Pupils' handwriting is variable and reflects differences in teachers' expectations with regard to presentation of work. Pupils write for a variety of purposes, but displays of pupils work lack the richness of creativity that one might expect from such pupils.
3. Standards in religious education, information and communication technology, history, and physical education, are in line with expectations for seven-year-olds and above expectations by the time pupils are ready to leave the school. In all other subjects, except for art and design at both key stages, and design and technology at Key Stage 2, standards are in line with expectations in both key stages. Standards in design and technology are improving but have not yet reached expectations in Year 4, where pupils have not had sufficient time to benefit fully from the better provision for the subject. In art and design, pupils at the end of Key Stage 1, and those in Year 4, attain standards below expectations, because there is insufficient breadth and balance in the curriculum being taught to ensure the progression of skills, alongside worthwhile opportunities for designing and creativity.
4. Children's attainment on entry is very wide ranging, but similar overall to that expected for children of this age. Children in the pre-reception class make good progress, particularly in their personal and social development, and most enter reception with sound basic early language, literacy and numeracy skills. Children in the reception year achieve well and make good progress. Because of the consistently good teaching that they receive, most children will achieve or exceed the expectations of the Early Learning Goals³ by the time they enter Year 1 and start the National Curriculum.
5. At Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils continue to make good and often very good progress. This rapid progress is due, in part, to the school's very good use of its procedures for assessment. Every child's progress is tracked systematically throughout the school and work matched accordingly to their individual ability. The link between the quality of teaching and the standard of pupils' learning

³ The Early Learning Goals set out what children should achieve by the time they reach the end of the reception year in primary school.

is very clear. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting were very positive about the high expectations and degree of challenge offered to all groups of pupils and the inspection team confirms their views. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress because of the high levels of very good support they receive. The most able pupils are consistently challenged and achieve well. Pupils with English as an additional language receive a high level of very good support and, consequently, make very good progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

6. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour, together with other aspects of their personal development, are very good, as was found during the previous inspection. Pupils come eagerly to school and their attendance is good.
7. In lessons, pupils of all ages and abilities respond well to the enthusiasm and expectations of teachers and of other staff. They are very willing to learn and usually settle down quickly to start work. The very good relationships, which are generally established, mean that pupils are keen to please their teachers by volunteering answers to questions, and also readily help each when this is part of the lesson. They show good concentration on their tasks, helped by the way work is matched to their individual abilities and needs. When teaching is very good, for instance during a Year 3 literacy lesson, where there were really high expectations of pupils' behaviour, coupled with interesting and challenging work, pupils showed great diligence. Attitudes are at their very best among the children in pre-reception and reception classes, who are strongly motivated to do their best. For instance, during a dance session, the children in reception listened carefully to what was required and made good progress in expressing emotions during their role play of a bear hunt, while thoroughly enjoying the physical activity. However, there are instances in various lessons throughout the school, where, despite the friendly relationships and pupils' eagerness to contribute, they do not listen well enough to the teacher, or each other, and this detracts somewhat from their progress.
8. Pupils' very good attitudes to learning generated by the good teaching generally leave little room for any misbehaviour. Exceptions to the usual strong focus on work in lessons are seen most often at Key Stage 1, and arise on a small but significant minority of occasions, where teaching is more mundane. In such lessons, pupils remain mostly willing to learn but, at times, their attention wanders. A few pupils in various classes find it difficult to maintain their concentration, but they usually manage because their tasks are appropriate and they are supported very well.
9. Pupils' behaviour during playtimes and in the dining hall is very good. Pupils are nearly always pleasant and polite to each other as well as to adults. They understand the rules and expectations and know how they should act towards each other. Supervisory staff, including a play leader who works with the younger children, contribute to the amicable atmosphere by the way they positively encourage good behaviour and correct any developing silliness or lack of consideration. This good climate leaves little room for any bullying or intolerance to develop between pupils. However occasional silliness, springing from a lack of understanding, is apparent in conversation when pupils consider cultures in neighbouring communities that differ from their own.
10. Other aspects of pupils' personal development are also very good. As well as a sense of responsibility and independence in lessons, pupils respond very well to other opportunities organised for them. They are keen to attend the various activities open to them at breaks and after school and they join in very enthusiastically, for instance in the gymnastics club and choir. At all ages, pupils cope very well with appropriate responsibilities. They tidy resources and carry out other tasks to help things run smoothly. Pupils in the computer club make an important contribution because of the way they keep the virus checking up to date on the computers they use. Members of the 'ECO' club show a growing sense of responsibility towards their environment as they talk eagerly of their activities, such as when they performed a play about conservation issues to help gain a substantial award from a sponsoring firm.
11. Pupils' attendance is good. It has improved since the previous inspection and is now consistently above the average. Pupils nearly always come to school regularly, and this contributes to their good progress with learning. A significant proportion of absences are due to family holidays taken

in term time. Occasionally, the pace of a lesson has to slow while the teacher helps a returning pupil to catch up. The headteacher is very active in reminding parents of the way absences interrupt teaching and learning and, in response, parents generally limit the length of such holidays.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

12. The high standards in teaching and learning have been maintained and, in many subjects, have improved since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is good overall and very good at Key Stage 2. Ninety-five per cent of all lessons seen were satisfactory or better. Seventy-seven per cent were good or better, with 25 per cent being very good or better. One lesson was awarded an excellent grade. The quality of teaching throughout the Foundation Stage is good, with over 90 per cent of lessons seen being judged good or better. Consistently good teaching practice was observed in the reception year. At Key Stage 1, 86 per cent of lessons were satisfactory or better, 55 per cent were good or better, and 14 per cent were very good. Three lessons accounted for the five per cent of unsatisfactory teaching, which was due to teachers' minor insecurities in drama and physical education and, on one occasion, where the teacher allowed the behaviour of a few pupils to disrupt the learning of the class. Teaching and learning at Key Stage 2 is particularly strong. Eighty-six per cent of lessons in Years 3 and 4 were good or better and over a third were very good or better.
13. At the Foundation Stage, the teaching and support staff are of a high calibre. They have a sound knowledge of this age group and work closely together to ensure a good balance of well-structured, purposeful activities.
14. The chief factors in the good quality of teaching throughout the school are the high expectations teachers set for pupils' work, effort and conduct, and the strong relationships staff establish with their pupils. Teachers' expectations are based on their very accurate knowledge and understanding of each pupil's capabilities. Mutual trust and respect characterise all lessons.
15. Lessons are prepared well and generally well organised. Many now follow the structure of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, beginning with a whole-class session and often recapping on the previous lesson. This reinforces pupils' learning and helps the teacher assess how much they know and understand. In the main part of the lessons, pupils are given appropriate opportunities to work individually, in pairs and in small groups. These opportunities play an important part in the pupils' social as well as their academic development. Activities are usually pitched at exactly the right level to ensure that suitable challenge is provided for all groups of pupils and energetic monitoring of group work, with apt interventions, serve to clear up misunderstandings and move pupils on. Summing-up sessions at the close of lessons are used well to promote pupils' speaking skills but, throughout the school, there is less emphasis on promoting their listening skills. On rare occasions, pupils are allowed to chatter during teachers' explanations and instructions, with the result that some pupils are unclear about the task and the pace of learning is lost. Even the best teachers frequently have to remind pupils of the need to listen and have to wait for them to do so. Skilful management of pupils ensures that the significant minority with behavioural difficulties do not disrupt the learning of others but, very occasionally, organisation is less rigorous and the conduct of such pupils is allowed to slow the pace of the lesson and, as a result, the learning of the rest of the class.
16. Particular features in the very good teaching for older pupils are teachers' very high expectations, very good subject knowledge, the brisk pace to lessons and emphasis on pupils having a go at seemingly difficult tasks and working at a good pace. Such emphasis results in pupils who work hard and strive to give of their best. Direct teaching is of a generally high quality and teachers' very good subject knowledge is used well to increase pupils' technical understanding, particularly in subjects such as English, mathematics, information and communication technology and science. There is an increasing awareness, by teachers, of the importance of using literacy in other subjects, for example, in stressing key words and correct technical language, such as 'crescendo' in music, 'multiples' in mathematics, and 'germination' in science. Clear explanations and instructions, often carefully illustrated with examples, promote understanding and ensure that pupils know exactly what to do, how to do it and how long they have to do it in. Teachers make

very good use of time themselves and often set time deadlines for pupils to complete activities. This ensures a brisk pace to learning. In the very best lessons not a moment is wasted. Teachers' questioning techniques are used very effectively to, draw out and extend pupils' knowledge and to ensure that all have understood. Teachers pitch such questions at the right level for each individual, and care is usually taken to involve as many pupils as possible in oral sessions so that all feel included. In the occasional lesson, however, only those pupils with their hands raised are given the opportunity to respond to questions and others begin to fidget.

17. Teachers' detailed planning, which is based on assessment of what pupils already know, is a particular strength of the school. It identifies very clearly what pupils will learn and how skills will be systematically developed. Teachers evaluate their lessons carefully and if pupils have not made the expected progress, changes are made to the planning in readiness for the next cycle.
18. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught very well throughout the school. Teachers are confident in the teaching of the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies. There is no complacency, and staff work hard to raise the already high standards. Very effective teaching methods that are appropriate to pupils' age and ability, make learning interesting and enjoyable; for example number games that motivate the pupils' interest and increase the speed of their mental recall. These effective strategies are based on highly accurate on-going assessment of pupils' previous work. Many teachers make very good use of role-play situations to promote pupils' self-esteem and their understanding. All teachers try hard to make work relevant to the pupils' own lives, for example in history and religious education lessons, where pupils are encouraged to bring in artefacts from home and to compare given situations with their own life experiences. Pupils are often encouraged to find the answers to their own questions, for example when those in Years 3 and 4 conduct experiments relating to plant growth. In such lessons, pupils listen well and show high levels of interest.
19. Pupils are actively involved in their learning and are motivated to work with sustained effort. They have a good understanding of their own progress. Teachers tell them, at the beginning of the lesson, what they are expected to learn and then discuss with them, on summing up at the end of the session, how well this target has been achieved. Each pupil has personal targets to work to that are drawn from teachers' careful evaluation of pupils' individual progress. Very occasionally, however, the learning target for the lesson contains words that some pupils do not understand and the good practice of telling them what they are expected to learn loses value. Although there is evidence of marking being used profitably to help pupils improve, not all marking is of the same standard. Presentation and volume of work produced are not consistent within year groups and do not always match ability. The discrepancy is most noticeable in samples of pupils' work in Years 2 and 4.
20. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are just below average achieve very well, not only because of the high levels of well targeted support they receive, but because they are made to feel important. Partnerships with outside agencies, such as the local Dyslexia Association, make a strong contribution to their learning. More able pupils achieve very well in response to the challenging work set for them in most subjects. However, this good practice is not always extended into other areas of learning, such as geography and art, where work is sometimes matched less well to pupils' abilities. Pupils with English as an additional language receive a high level of very good support and, consequently, they learn well.
21. Good quality resources are used well, for example in science and information and communication technology lessons, to increase pupils' enjoyment of learning and to ensure that each has the necessary tools, materials and equipment to hand when they need it. Links with parents and homework are used well to enhance and extend pupils' learning, for example, when pupils in Year 2 respond positively to requests for photographs to illustrate their history topic and when parents and teachers communicate through pupils' well-kept home-school reading diaries. The school is currently working with parents with a view to further improvements in arrangements for homework.

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

22. The curriculum provision is good overall. The curriculum is broadly based and well balanced in the range of subjects taught and meets the needs, aptitudes and special needs of all pupils. Provision for all subjects meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. The weaknesses identified in the last inspection have been rectified effectively. The curriculum now increasingly provides opportunities for investigation in mathematics and science. A scheme of work guides planning in design and technology. The improvements in this subject have been seen at Key Stage 1, and are now beginning to show at Key Stage 2. The planned curriculum for information and communication technology is now having a positive impact on what pupils learn. Each subject has a comprehensive policy and a scheme of work, which is regularly evaluated. This ensures that planning is systematic. An appropriate structure of long-, medium- and short-term planning ensures that pupils' skills and knowledge are progressively developed as they proceed through the school. The balance of time allocated to all subjects is appropriate. The school has initiated effective systems for the development of the school curriculum plan, and for the monitoring and evaluation of its implementation. The results of the school's procedures for assessment contribute very well to curriculum planning, and subject co-ordinators take an active role in curriculum development. The one weakness in curriculum provision lies with art and design. A new scheme is being developed based on national guidelines and the school's scheme of work, but current planning is not yet providing a consistent balance between all the aspects of the art and design curriculum.
23. The curriculum for subjects, other than English mathematics and science, at Key Stages 1 and 2, is planned on a block time basis, and careful consideration is given as to how planning should incorporate national guidelines. The school carefully incorporates what is appropriate for its pupils. Good strategies are evident for the teaching of literacy. The school has enthusiastically embraced the National Literacy Strategy, but carefully employs flexibility in planning so that pupils' needs can be met. Opportunities for pupils to work on extended pieces of writing have had a positive impact. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to further develop and practise their writing skills across other subjects, although teachers' expectations for the quality and quantity of work are variable. There are also only a few examples of opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills more widely, through writing for different purposes, and adding a possible interesting dimension to displays. The strategies for teaching the skills for numeracy are very good. Effective use is made of numeracy in subjects such as science, where pupils measure and record their findings. The increasing use of information and communication technology is beginning to have an impact on pupils' learning in other subjects.
24. The provision for equality of opportunity and access for all pupils is very good. The school has a comprehensive and effective equal opportunities policy. All areas are addressed well and ensure that the curriculum is fully inclusive. There is a strong commitment to ensuring equal access to learning for all pupils by the headteacher and staff, who are fully aware of issues regarding equal opportunities. All these measures ensure that the school puts the policy into practice most effectively. All pupils have appropriate access to the full curriculum including activities organised outside the school day. Boys and girls participate on an equal footing.
25. Provision for pupils personal, social and health education is very good. There is a well-considered policy statement. Although the scheme of work has not yet been fully developed, current planning is properly structured by recognised guidelines. Within lessons, pupils consider moral and social themes, such as caring and making the right choices, in a quiet and respectful atmosphere. A flexible approach is taken, so that necessary issues relevant to the pupils and the school can be discussed. For example, pupils in Year 4 are given opportunities to discuss their feelings as they prepare to move to their next school. Pupils' personal, social and health education is also carefully promoted through numerous opportunities for pupils to undertake appropriate responsibilities. All pupils undertake helpful tasks in classes. In Year 4, 12 monitors a day are given special responsibilities. This system ensures that every pupil in the age group plays their part in contributing to the daily life of the school. Health education, healthy eating, and drug education is effectively addressed through the scheme and included in curriculum areas such as science. The governing body has approved an appropriate policy for sex education. Regular visitors to the school further promote pupils' personal, social and health education. Pupils were given, for

example, a talk on safety near the railways, and other visitors include the police, a dentist and the school nurse.

26. A very good range of extra-curricular provision is organised, as was found during the previous inspection. The varied opportunities make an important contribution to pupils' personal development as well as enhancing their skills in different areas. While the majority of activities are appropriately targeted at older pupils, the range of physical education activities includes popular gymnastics clubs for pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2. Other interests are encouraged, for instance, through the karate and French classes, a very successful choir, and very popular chess club, which achieves considerable success in the local league. A particular feature is the 'ECO' club, which has representatives from all age groups and through which pupils learn to value the natural world and to consider problems of pollution and conservation.
27. Links with the local and wider community are very good and continue to add to the breadth of pupils' learning. For instance recent choir activities include singing at the public celebrations when the town's Christmas lights were switched on, and a recent high quality contribution to a charity fund-raising concert. There are very good links with the local church that contribute to pupils learning in religious education and that also add to the Christian atmosphere of the school in other ways. For instance, pupils were able to gain recognition by taking part in a competition to compose their own prayers. Staff are active in encouraging entries in a range of public competitions, and this adds a further dimension to pupils' experiences and has a real impact on their self-confidence. Good links with the two receiving middle schools help pupils to transfer happily to their new school and ensure continuity in their learning.
28. Very good standards have been maintained in the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Good opportunities are offered for their cultural development, as was seen during the previous inspection. Christian values are readily evident in the daily life of the school, for instance in classroom displays that provide a focus for worship. Class and whole-school assemblies offer daily opportunities for prayer and reflection, and additional moments for prayer are found at times during the school day. Christian beliefs are thoughtfully explained and developed through personal, social and health education lessons, as well as in religious education. Pupils are also taught to respect others' beliefs, for instance, when they talk about the holy books of other world religions. In reception, children are helped through discussions about everyday situations, to express their own perceptions to each other, and to consider the idea of talking to God. Throughout the school, 'circle time'⁴ is very successful in encouraging pupils to show respect for others' feelings. Teachers also find occasions in other lessons to explore non-material values. For instance, pupils in Year 1 responded with a sense of wonder to a presentation about the work of Vincent Van Gogh.
29. The provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. Pupils are helped to develop a sense of the difference between right and wrong by developing their own classroom rules as well as through the clearly upheld expectations about their behaviour. An important strength is the way pupils with diverse needs are integrated into a harmonious community, to the benefit of all. Because of the expectations and example of all the adults in the school, pupils know they should care for each other. In addition, fund raising organised for a range of good causes encourages them to care for those in need in the wider community. There are plentiful opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, both in organising themselves to work independently in lessons and also in undertaking a range of duties to aid the smooth running of school activities. An important feature is the way all pupils in Year 4 are regularly expected to act as monitors to help the youngest ones at playtime.
30. The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. They learn about their own local heritage, for instance visiting the Potteries. They find out about the lives of peoples in other times and other lands, as when they consider how their experience compares with life in an Indian village. They are encouraged to research the lives and music of different composers. There are well-

⁴ Circle time is an activity where pupils are able to discuss certain matters as a class, following strict rules about listening to others and taking turns to speak.

documented intentions to equip pupils for life in today's multicultural society but, as yet, this aspect is not firmly enough established. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to gain an understanding of the range of peoples and cultures represented today in their own country.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

31. Staff give high priority to all aspects of pupils' care and guidance. They provide a happy and caring environment, and the vast majority of parents are confident that their children are happy at school. Each one is known and cared for as an individual. Exceptionally comprehensive information is recorded about what each pupil achieves, and excellent use is made of this data to plan and guide their next steps in learning. This all makes an important contribution to their good progress in lessons.
32. Very good induction procedures help children settle down happily when they first join the school. The school is very keen to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities, regardless of academic or physical ability, race or gender. Staff are sensitive to the needs of any who need extra support because of individual personal circumstances or educational requirements, and plan very well to give them the help they need. Attention to this aspect of care is apparent in the way the school regularly liaises with specialist schools and outside advisers to aid its effective integration of pupils with particular educational needs. The good working relationships between the school and the club that operates on the premises to provide care, before and after school, is a further important element in the school's arrangements for the care of its pupils.
33. The procedures for monitoring and promoting pupils' good behaviour are further strengths. There is much positive praise and encouragement, for instance, through the use of team points or stickers, for good behaviour, helpfulness, and hard work. Any misbehaviour is usually quickly corrected. However, there are occasional instances where behaviour management is less effective. The behaviour policy does not sufficiently match and underpin the very good practice usually employed by staff. The caring nature of the school community leaves little room for any bullying to develop. Any unkindness that occasionally arises between pupils is resolved effectively by staff when it is brought to their attention.
34. The monitoring of pupils' attendance is good. Teachers are quick to note and follow up the few instances of irregular attendance. There is appropriate liaison with the education social worker over such problems. The headteacher emphasises to parents the importance of avoiding family holidays in term time, and over-long absences for this reason are not authorised.
35. Very good arrangements are in place with regard to other aspects of pupils' welfare. Good care is taken of any who become sick or injured. Very good health and safety procedures are in place to ensure the safe conduct of school activities. Child protection procedures also receive very good attention. All staff are alert to respond to any such concerns that arise and the headteacher works very effectively with social services whenever this is required to promote a pupil's wellbeing.
36. Excellent systems for assessment and recording, which were a particular strength at the time of the previous inspection, provide teachers with clear and detailed information about each pupil's achievements in all areas of the curriculum. The attainment and progress of each pupil is monitored rigorously by class teachers and the headteacher and records kept up to date. National tests are supplemented with further standardised tests in each year group and the results are used very effectively to track each pupil's progress. Other tests are used regularly to monitor pupils' progress in areas such as spelling and tables. Early identification of pupils whose performance gives cause for concern ensures that appropriate support is made available as soon as possible and that work is carefully tailored to their needs. The school is recognised by the local authority for its excellent procedures for tracking pupils' progress and for its very good support systems for pupils with special educational needs.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

37. The very good relationships with parents noted at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained. Parents hold the school in high esteem and praise many aspects of its work. They value the good teaching and high expectations that help their children to make good progress with learning. The headteacher, governors, and staff, are committed to working closely with parents and take very good practical steps towards this, for instance by regularly considering their comments about various aspects of the work of the school. Pupils benefit, both in their academic achievement and in their personal development, from the resultant good understanding between home and school.
38. When their children first join the school, parents receive much very helpful information about how learning will be organised and how they themselves can be involved. They help through using the mathematics packs and story sacks that children bring home and that parents themselves have helped to produce. Throughout the school, parents are able to contribute regularly by hearing their child read and by using the reading record book for exchanging comments with the teacher about the progress made. This record book includes very helpful guidance about how they can best help build their child's reading skills. However, in other respects the flow of information about how parents of older children can help at home falls short of the wide-ranging information given lower down the school. Each term parents are informed in advance about the topic work their child will be doing. They are invited to assist by supplying resources, or by offering any relevant skills to the teacher, but there is room to also encourage their input by giving hints about ways of helping at home. A few parents are unhappy about the amount of homework. The school has already completed its own survey, which confirms that while many parents are content with the homework given, a small minority consider there is either too little or too much. Good preparations are well under way to take all the views expressed into account and to give parents more detailed information about homework expectations and why it is given. The headteacher is quick to contact parents if their child encounters any difficulties in school. Parents of children with special educational needs are kept well informed and involved in considering how their children are to be helped. Annual reports, especially the most recent ones, give parents a very good amount of information. There are detailed comments about what the pupil has been learning in each subject, with indications of how their performance compares to others and targets for the next stages in learning. Just occasionally, and especially in religious education, comments lack useful subject-specific detail. Formal meetings with parents to discuss what pupils have learnt and to share targets for their further learning are offered regularly and, in addition, parents are happy that they can readily talk to the headteacher or any of the staff about any queries or concerns. The headteacher is always ready to share recent CE assessments of a pupil's progress if parents have any particular concerns.
39. A good number of enthusiastic and capable parent helpers contribute very well to pupils' progress with learning, by their support in lessons and with other activities, such as school trips. A particular feature is the joint parents' and pupils' choir that adds an important dimension to pupils' experience by its impressive and moving performances both in school and at prestigious public events. In addition there is a very successful parents' association that makes a considerable contribution by raising funds that are used to add to the school's resources and facilities. For instance, the association helped with the furnishing of the information and communication technology suite, and equipped the gymnastics club with smart matching kit that enhances the impact of pupils' performance.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

40. The overall quality of leadership in the school is excellent. The headteacher's outstanding leadership is the driving force behind the high quality of teaching and the high standards achieved by pupils. Since the previous inspection, she has instigated a programme of improvements that have had far-reaching effects. She is uncompromising in her determination to provide all pupils with the best education possible in a safe, caring family atmosphere. She has a very clear vision for the school, which she communicates well to governors, staff parents and pupils. She has a significant presence around the school that contributes to the good behaviour of the pupils, who welcome an opportunity to speak to her because they know she will be interested in what they

have to say. There is a good working relationship between the chair of the governing body and the headteacher. Together, with a hard-working team of teachers, they have achieved an excellent ethos within the school, with a total commitment to high academic achievement and excellent interpersonal relationships. The school's aims, which relate to the achievement of high standards in a stimulating, caring, Christian environment, are splendidly reflected in the work of the school.

41. Management roles and responsibilities are very clear and well documented. The role of the deputy headteacher could not be judged, as he was absent during the inspection, but the school has a very good senior management team that supports the headteacher very effectively. These senior managers work tirelessly to ensure that everyone understands exactly how the school functions and what is happening at any given time. This was illustrated during the inspection when, at short notice, the deputy headteacher's responsibilities were quickly and ably shared by the rest of the team, thus ensuring the continued smooth running of the school. Every teacher has an area of curriculum responsibility and action plans for their subjects are of a high quality.
42. The governors, headteacher and staff have responded well to the key issues identified in the last inspection report. The school development plan provides a systematic and detailed evaluation of the school's development needs, clearly identifying long, medium and short-term priorities and attainable targets. Staff, pupils, parents and governors all contribute to this plan, which has driven the fast pace of development in all aspects of the life of the school. Significant steps have been taken to improve the provision for information and communication technology, with a new, well-equipped computer suite and a range of good quality software. Training has been provided for staff and a new scheme of work has been adopted. Pupils are now making very good progress in this area of learning. In design and technology, resources have improved significantly, staff are better trained and the curriculum has improved. Provision for outdoor play for children in the Foundation Stage is much improved, with further developments in hand. The introduction of a pre-reception class has enabled a greater percentage of children to gain pre-school experience. In addition, the school has embraced the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies well and these are now firmly rooted in the curriculum and are making a strong contribution to the rising standards. A considerable amount of work has been undertaken on developing schemes of work to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. There have been significant improvements to the school accommodation, with the addition of four more classrooms, and improvements to the grounds have been outstanding. Standards in English, mathematics, and science, continue to rise, although this has been to some extent at the expense of other subjects, such as art and design, for which there is now less time available.
43. Governors have an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school and fulfil their statutory duties well, often taking the initiative when national issues arise, for instance in relation to educational inclusion. They are proud of the equal opportunities offered to all groups of pupils in the school. Governors play a large part in shaping the direction of the school. They have a good understanding of the standards that pupils achieve and the community the school serves. The strategies for performance management are to the highest standard. The quality of all school documentation is exemplary. Governors have continued to develop the school accommodation over the years. Committees have clear terms of reference and meet regularly, and all governors are involved in shaping the direction of the school. Good strategic planning has prepared the school well for the significant rise in numbers expected next term.
44. The management of special educational needs is good. The school has invested substantially in this area by employing a generous number of learning support staff. The co-ordinator keeps very detailed records to hand and liaises with teachers on all areas of the curriculum. Pupils' individual education plans have specific short-term targets and teachers use this well when planning class work. The rate of progress achieved by pupils is updated on a daily basis and the information used very well in future planning, with the result that many achieve better than the outcomes of tests originally predicted. Arrangements for the withdrawal of pupils for highly skilled extra support are very efficient and care is taken to ensure that these pupils will not miss the same lesson every week. The school has been successful in fully integrating a number of pupils from Special Schools.

45. The school's systems for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress are excellent. The progress made by individual pupils is tracked carefully throughout the school. Class teachers use this information to identify targets that consistently challenge each ability group. Teachers use their own knowledge of pupils' achievements to predict, accurately, the National Curriculum levels expected at the end of each year. Pupils with special educational needs are given very good support and records of achievements and areas for improvement are updated on a daily basis.
46. The school's systems for the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching are very good. The headteacher, senior management team and subject co-ordinators have a very clear view of standards of teaching and learning throughout the school. Staff are confident with the monitoring process and use it well to raise standards. The local education authority has recognised that this deserves merit and the headteacher has been invited, on a number of occasions, to share this good practice with other professionals, parents, and governors, from a variety of schools. Teachers regularly evaluate their own teaching methods and planning and, if pupils fail to make the expected progress, changes are made to the curriculum or teaching methods.
47. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are good overall. Staffing is very good. There are a satisfactory number of teachers, whose skills and experience provide a generally good match to the demands of the curriculum. There is a very good number of very knowledgeable support staff. These make a considerable contribution to teaching and learning, especially through their responsibility for teaching the youngest children and through their very well organised support for pupils with special educational needs. Learning resources have improved and are now good in a number of areas, including English, where they are particularly strong, and mathematics and science. They are at least satisfactory in all other subjects, including information and communication technology, and design and technology, where they were inadequate at the previous inspection. They are generally of good quality and are used to good effect to aid pupils' learning. Use of computers is particularly good. Those in classrooms, libraries and in the recently established, well-equipped computer suite are all used regularly and effectively to develop pupils' skills and knowledge in information and communication technology, and in other subjects as well.
48. Accommodation remains good as was noted at the time of the previous inspection. The grounds are a very notable strength. They are used very well to support pupils' learning in lessons and also to enlarge their experiences, through the gardening club and the planting of tree saplings that pupils will see grow into additional wooded areas. Inside, good library areas are now in place and this is a good improvement from the previous inadequate library provision. Despite the recent addition of extra classrooms, the increasing number of pupils means that, in other respects, the buildings are now, generally, no better than satisfactory. However, plans have been passed for the addition of two more classrooms, which will relieve the pressure on the present accommodation.
49. The good quality of staffing, accommodation, and learning resources, owes much to the outstanding use of financial resources. Governors, well advised by the headteacher, are very astute in their management of all monies made available to the school. They have excellent regard to the principles of best value, for instance, they consider carefully how their spending patterns and pupils' achievements compare with what happens in similar schools. Spending is mindfully linked to the school's priorities, which are determined with full reference to the views of parents, pupils and staff, as well as of governors. Beneficial reference is also made to local and national educational initiatives. As a result of all this, the annual budget allocation is deployed with a very clear focus on supporting standards of teaching and learning, to enable all the pupils to achieve to the best possible extent. For instance the valuable input from non-teaching staff follows from deliberately high allocation of funds for such support. Similarly, spending on the new computer suite was very successfully planned to meet identified development needs. In equipping the suite, advantageous use was also made of specific grants, and, as a result of the new facilities, pupils now make good progress in information and communication technology. Similarly, other grants obtained by the school are employed well for their specific purposes. Lettings of the premises are very well considered and benefit pupils and parents directly, for instance, through the club that provides child care facilities before and after school. In addition, such lettings generate extra income for the school and this is used prudently. For instance, a specific sum has been

earmarked for use as matched funding, to allow an application to be submitted for 'Seed Challenge'⁵ money to partfund scheduled developments.

50. The governors have full regard to costs that may arise in future for particular projects, such as the projected staffing and resources costs associated with the planned growth of the school. They have ensured that they keep appropriate financial reserves to meet these costs. The excellent strategic management of the budget is backed up by careful procedures for routine management of finances, implemented with very good support from administrative staff. Governors regularly receive reports of expenditure and also monitor the work of the school to see 'policies in action', so that they can evaluate the outcomes of spending.
51. The funding allocated to the school is broadly in line with that given to similar schools. When account is taken of the very effective way pupils are supported to make good progress; very good progress in the case of those with special educational needs, and the high standards that the school enables pupils to attain, both academically and in their personal development, the school provides very good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

52. St Michael's CE First School provides a good quality of education for its pupils and does very well overall. To help make this very effective school even better, the governors, in partnership with the headteacher and staff, should:
- θ Raise pupils' attainment in art and design by improving the breadth and balance of the curriculum for the subject.
(Paragraphs 3, 20, 22, 42, 67, 100, 103, 104)
 - θ Introduce strategies designed to improve pupils' listening skills.
(Paragraphs 2, 7, 15, 58, 71, 75, 87, 98, 110, 136, 138)

Other issues which should be considered by the school for inclusion in the action plan:

- address inconsistencies in teachers' expectations for the volume and presentation of work, *(paragraphs 2, 19, 75, 86, 96, 110, 116, 134)*;
- find ways to increase pupils' knowledge and understanding of other cultures in their own country, *(paragraphs 9, 30, 145)*;
- incorporate information and communication technology into schemes of work for each subject, *(paragraphs 105, 116, 124, 126)*.

⁵ 'Seed Challenge' money is a government grant for a specified amount (the seed), which the school has to match with the equivalent amount (the water to make the seed grow).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

64

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
1	15	33	12	3	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for parttime pupils)	329
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	27
Special educational needs	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	11
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	69
English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	30
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.9
National comparative data	5.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.4

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	34	23	57

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	31	30	34
	Girls	19	20	22
	Total	50	50	56
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (90)	88 (88)	98 (100)
	National	83(82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	30	31	33
	Girls	17	19	22
	Total	47	50	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	84 (88)	89 (100)	96 (90)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	98.8
Any other minority ethnic group	1.2

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y R – Y 1

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	30
Average class size	30

Education support staff: Y R – Y 1

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	143

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
	£
Total income	502,745
Total expenditure	528,780
Expenditure per pupil	1,607
Balance brought forward from previous year	57,590
Balance carried forward to next year	31,555

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	300
Number of questionnaires returned	183
Percentage of questionnaires returned	61

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	68	27	3	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	60	34	4	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	55	42	1	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	50	9	2	2
The teaching is good.	69	28	2	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	56	31	12	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	77	21	2	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	72	25	2	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	56	37	6	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	72	25	2	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	61	37	1	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	44	39	8	2	7

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

53. Overall, the provision for children from the age of three to the end of the reception year is good. These children currently achieve well and make good progress. The vast majority of children are on course to reach standards in communication, language and literacy, and mathematical development that are at least in line with expectations for children at the end of the reception year. A significant proportion of children are capable of achieving higher levels.
54. The school has made good improvement in its provision for children in the Foundation Stage since the previous inspection. The introduction of a pre-reception class has enabled a greater percentage of children to gain pre-school experience. Much work has been done to ensure the successful implementation of the new curriculum guidelines for children from three to the end of the reception year. Greatly improved information and communication technology facilities for the youngest children has ensured computers are now a regular feature of most lessons. Outdoor play equipment has been supplemented and further development of play areas is planned to enhance provision further.
55. The commitment of high quality staff, the good standards of teaching and the excellent procedures for monitoring progress and achievement make a strong contribution towards enabling children to achieve high standards.

Personal, social and emotional development

56. Teaching of personal development throughout the Foundation Stage is very good. The vast majority of children enter the pre-reception class with well-developed skills. Most are confident and enjoy working on their own or in a group. Some are less secure. They do not like new situations and need constant reassurance when trying activities for the first time. A few still prefer to work on isolated activities.
57. Teachers and support staff set very good examples. Relationships are very strong and most children are totally at ease with both adults and other children. Pre-reception staff use praise and encouragement well and great emphasis is placed on independence in all activities. Routines are well established. In a dance lesson, for instance, staff worked together effectively as a team, encouraging children to fold their clothes as they undressed and praising those who succeeded. Reception staff build on secure foundations and create a feeling of mutual respect. All children are very aware that they belong to a secure, caring community. In a good reception class discussion about feelings, children knew what made them happy or sad and they valued each other's opinions. Children of all abilities, including those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress because they learn to work well together, wait their turn, share and become increasingly independent. Most exceed the Early Learning Goals by the time they move into Year 1.

Communication, language and literacy

58. The quality of teaching in the pre-reception class is satisfactory and, in the two reception classes, it is always at least good and often very good. Children make good progress overall and they attain standards above expectations by the end of their reception year. Although there is a wide range of ability, most children enter the pre-reception class with adequately developed speaking and listening skills. One or two have difficulty expressing themselves and some display speech impediments. These children are supported well and comprehensive documentation is maintained on all children with special educational needs, ensuring they make progress similar to that of other children. Work is well matched to individual ability. In one lesson linked to the topic of Teddy Bears, for example, the nursery nurse created interest as she read the story of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'. All children successfully began to identify speech bubbles as they looked at the pictures; about a quarter of them wrote their names unaided, and one or two were beginning to

make recognisable attempts at writing words from the story by themselves. However, although they had many opportunities to talk together in group work, children tended to sit passively listening to the story and not enough emphasis was placed on developing their speaking, listening and early writing skills.

59. Children enter the reception classes with sound foundations for future language development. Approximately a quarter of the children currently in reception, display levels of attainment that are above expectations for their age. The high quality input of teaching and support staff makes a major contribution to children's success. Independent reading and writing activities are used effectively to develop literacy skills well, although more could be done to interest children in early 'writing' activities in the prereception class. In one very good lesson seen, linked to the National Literacy Strategy, all children were very clear about what they had to achieve by the end of the lesson. Basic skills were taught very well and the more able children received a high level of challenge as they tried to sort out words to make sentences about the story of 'The Three Bears'. Others, at various stages of development, worked on improving their handwriting. Children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language succeeded because they were supported well and work was matched very accurately to their needs.
60. In a discussion about reading, children of all abilities showed a genuine interest in books and perceived themselves as competent readers. They laughed as they discussed the humour of pictures and were keen to predict what might happen next. A less able child confidently substituted words and attempted initial sounds; a more able child read 'The Dragon Tree' with impressive accuracy, and displayed a good understanding of the story

Mathematical development

61. Most children enter the prereception class with levels of mathematical understanding that are similar to those expected for their age. Through good teaching, children of all abilities make good progress. During one discussion a child, building a house for 'Daddy Bear', counted 23 bricks in his construction and announced, unprompted, that one more brick would make 24. Not all children display such well-developed skills but most understand the language of mathematics. They know 'bigger' and 'smaller', 'more than' and 'less than' and count to ten, and often far beyond.
62. In reception, the quality of teaching is consistently good and occasionally very good. Children with special educational needs, and those with English as an additional language, receive a very good level of support and are able to contribute fully in lessons. A rich variety of interesting activities enables children of all abilities to make very good progress. The teaching and support staff promote mathematical language effectively and give clear concise instructions. In response, children listen carefully and know exactly what they have to do. In one lesson seen children began to understand how to divide numbers up to ten into two groups, as they allocated blue or red teddies to the seats on the bus. Although not always consistently able to write numbers correctly, children display a very sound grounding in basic numeracy skills. Approximately half the children currently in reception are on course to reach above average levels of attainment by the end of Year 2.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

63. Children in the prereception class have a good basic knowledge of the world around them. Through good teaching, these children make good progress. Lessons involve opportunities for children to experiment with a range of equipment, including construction toys. They develop good independent computer skills. Activities are purposeful and effectively linked to topic themes. In one lesson a group of children talked excitedly about making sure they left enough water in the container because the shells they were collecting needed water to grow. In information and communication technology, pairs of children demonstrated good skills in using the mouse as they tried to dress the teddy. Another group was overheard discussing how many brothers and sisters were in their families. All children have a growing awareness of the world in which they live.

64. In the reception classes a similar pattern of knowledge emerges. Again activities are productively linked to topic work, teaching is of very good quality and children demonstrate very clear development of skills. In one lesson seen, children selected appropriately sized bricks in their construction of houses for the three bears and manipulated play dough well as they made furniture for Goldilocks' house. At another time, they used a computer program to design logos. Children were justifiably proud as they showed the finished designs on their-shirts to the headteacher. By the end of the reception year a significant proportion of children have already exceeded the Early Learning Goals in this area of development.

Physical development

65. Children reach standards that are above expectations in both pre-reception and reception classes. By the end of the reception year, they exceed the Early Learning Goals and their progress is good. The quality of teaching is also good throughout the Foundation Stage and, occasionally, very good in reception. The introduction of large play equipment has helped children make good progress in the development of their physical skills. During a well-structured outdoor play session children followed each other round a simple route, showing careful consideration for others, changing direction and controlling speed well.
66. Children in the reception classes are already aware of the importance of warming up before starting exercise. In a physical education lesson on improving throwing and catching skills, about half the class demonstrated good control and accuracy. Well-established routines for dressing and undressing ensured children displayed a high level of independence. Teachers always pay careful attention to safety and children have a good understanding of a safe space. Language skills are developed very successfully in these lessons. Children also handle pencils, scissors and glue spreaders with increasing confidence and skill.

Creative development

67. Although children have good opportunity to develop their creative skills adequately through music, dance, role-play, and a range of free choice activities, opportunities to develop artistic skills are not as well promoted. There are attractive examples of children's artwork on display in all the Foundation Stage classrooms. However, there is only a small amount of evidence that children are given sufficient opportunity to explore texture, form and shape in two or three dimensions using a widening range of materials and tools.
68. Children enter the pre-reception class at various stages of development and make steady progress overall in this area of learning. In the few lessons observed, teaching of dance was always good and enabled children to grow in confidence and creative imagination. In a good dance lesson for children in the pre-reception class, for instance, staff enabled children to interpret how each of the three bears would move successfully. Numeracy skills were incorporated well as children counted the strides of Daddy Bear. In an equally good reception dance lesson, children improvised a 'happy dance' expressively and offered ideas and opinions about others' movement. They interpreted emotions such as sad and calm effectively. Children of all abilities thoroughly enjoyed the exercise and engaged in the activities with great enthusiasm.
69. Children in the pre-reception class develop sound musical skills through a range of nursery rhymes and songs appropriate to their age. They sing about Goldilocks as they get changed from their dance lesson and they are familiar with 'Five Little Speckled Frogs'. Musical development continues to be steadily developed in the reception classes. Good opportunity is taken to incorporate a song about 'The Bears on the Bus' to consolidate learning during a good numeracy lesson. By the time children leave reception they have achieved the Early Learning Goals.

ENGLISH

70. Results of the National Curriculum tests for seven-year olds in 2000 were above average in reading, when compared with all schools, and average in comparison with similar schools. Standards in writing were in line with the national averages when compared both nationally and

with similar schools. One pupil achieved a very high level in reading and writing. Over the last five years, standards in reading have been consistently above the national average. Standards in writing have been rising since 1997, but fell in 2000 from above average to average. This was due to the higher percentage of pupils with special educational needs within the year group. Results of the most recent tests show an impressive rise in standards in English, particularly in writing. Five per cent of pupils achieved levels normally expected for seven-year-olds in both reading and writing. The inspection finds that, by the end of Key Stage 1 and the end of Year 4, standards in reading and writing are well above average and higher than they were at the time of the previous inspection. There are no significant differences between the achievements of boys and girls. Pupils of higher ability perform well, with an above average percentage of pupils achieving the higher Level 3, and five per cent achieving above this. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in English in relation to their prior attainment, owing to the careful analysis of their needs and the positive support they receive in lessons.

71. Pupils' attainment in speaking is above average by the ages of seven and nine. All pupils make very good progress because of the opportunities provided to help develop these skills. At Key Stage 1, pupils speak in clear sentences and have a wide vocabulary. They answer questions carefully using the correct vocabulary needed for descriptions and explanations. In a lesson in Year 2, for example, when pupils listened to the sounds of the seaside, one pupil described what he heard as 'curling waves crashing on the cliffs'. Skills of spoken English are developed carefully at Key Stage 2. In a lesson in Year 3, when pupils talked about their hobbies, they showed an ability to speak with confidence. Opportunities for worthwhile discussion and role-play, at both key stages, encourages the pupils to speak and extend their vocabulary. Year 2, pupils use the puppets of a Punch and Judy show to present a play to the rest of the class. The many opportunities for performance further helps them to refine their skills and their achievements are very good. Pupils' attainment in listening, however, is only average at both key stages. Weaknesses in this area are particularly noticeable at Key Stage 1. Most pupils listen attentively during quiet sessions at the beginning of a lesson, but find difficulty in maintaining full attention to the teachers' explanations and instructions throughout the lesson. They need many reminders of the conventions of listening to teachers and to each other.
72. By the ages of seven and nine, pupils' attainment in reading is well above the national average. All pupils make very good progress, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Pupils build on the good start they receive in the reception classes. They are introduced to a wide range of authors and books, and throughout the school the majority of pupils show a joy in reading and an enthusiasm for books. By the age of seven, the most able pupils show a good understanding of a range of texts. They read unfamiliar text easily with good expression and attention to punctuation. They are positive in their reasons for choosing a particular book and are confident in identifying their favourite parts of a story. They carefully consider the context of what they are reading to help them understand the new vocabulary they meet. They are developing good library skills and understand how to use contents and index to find information. Pupils who find reading more difficult have a very good basic sight vocabulary and carefully use their knowledge of the sounds of letters to tackle unfamiliar words. By the end of Year 4, pupils read a range of books eagerly and with expression. They have an appropriate knowledge of authors suitable for their age group, avidly discuss plot and characters, and discuss the merits of fiction and nonfiction. Although the library for pupils at Key Stage 2 is relatively new, pupils show that they know how to find the information they require to help them with their research. Teachers' excellent diagnostic assessment of pupils' reading ability, and clear and evaluative records also accelerate pupils' achievements. The reading record books ensure there is a good two-way partnership between schools and parents. In both key stages, the books pupils read are matched well to their ability and provide appropriate challenge.
73. Pupils' attainment in writing is now well above the national average. Writing has been a focus for development within the school, in order that standards in writing should meet those in reading. The initiatives introduced to give greater flexibility in the use of the literacy hour and opportunities for extended writing have had the necessary significant impact. Consequently, pupils of all abilities are able to make very good progress. At the age of seven, pupils show a very good understanding of how to structure their writing. They write interesting and lively stories, fluently and with good expression. They show they have the necessary vocabulary to convey the feelings of a story, and

use descriptions, such as 'Hespoke in a muffled voice'. Their stories contain dialogue, which is correctly punctuated, and they frequently use a range of good words to replace, for example, the word 'said'. Spelling is accurate and pupils are confident in their use of more adventurous words. This aspect is reflected in the work of those whose spelling is not quite so sound; they attempt to spell more difficult words and even if they are not absolutely correct, the words chosen are recognisable, and add to the dimensions of their stories. The writing of pupils in Year 1 shows clear and structured building of early writing skills. At Key Stage 2, all pupils have experienced an appropriate range of writing, which includes instructions, lists, and stories. Many of them are prolific writers, who use complex sentences and a range of adventurous words, which contributes to the overall quality and content of what they write. Pupils demonstrate original ideas and write sensitively on important issues. This was illustrated well through their writing on the foot and mouth disease, and how farmers have been affected by the consequences. Teachers value pupils' writing and there are examples of pupils' writing displayed in each classroom. However, there is a lack of excitement and richness in the ways in which pupils are able to demonstrate and display that they are able to write for a variety of audiences. There are few examples of books, which pupils have made themselves, or splendid displays of a range of writing for different purposes. Their work is mainly contained in their books or folders. Handwriting and presentation in both key stages is variable. While there are examples of neat and legible handwriting, and carefully presented books, there are other examples of erratically formed letters, and untidiness in presentation.

74. Pupils are well aware of the targets they have to meet in order to improve their work, and this makes a very good contribution to their high attainment and achievement in writing. They are proud to show the targets they have achieved. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. This is because of the very good support they receive. Teachers ensure that the worked plan for them meets their needs, and many have further good support from the additional literacy strategy.
75. The quality of teaching is good overall. It ranges from unsatisfactory to very good. All lesson planning is based firmly on the National Literacy Strategy. The teachers work hard to raise standards in literacy and very good emphasis is placed on the teaching of basic skills. Teachers make very good use of ongoing assessment, and take very good account of pupils' needs. This is a positive strength of the subject, which enables all pupils to achieve extremely well in their learning. Teachers value pupils' contributions and sensitively handle and involve pupils. This includes those with specific difficulties, behaviour problems and higher attaining pupils. In the teaching of English, the school provides a very good example of inclusion. The most effective lessons are very well planned and well structured. They start briskly. The teachers give clear expectations of the concepts being taught and use skilful questioning and discussion to expand and enhance pupils' understanding. Teachers intervene well during group work to ensure pupils understand and learn from their tasks. These lessons are also characterised by very positive relationships between pupils and teachers, with mutual respect between them. This all results in pupils who show eager attitudes, and who try to raise the quality of their work. Pupils are actively involved in their learning and are motivated to work with sustained effort. Overall, teachers provide good focus on pupils' weaknesses, with clear explanations on how to improve their work. Teachers generally have high expectations for attainment, but expectations for pupils' listening and presentation are variable. Instances of insecure class management at Key Stage 1 often result in pupils who become noisy and fail to respond to instructions, particularly at the end of the lesson. There are also some inconsistencies in the expectations for the volume of work achieved within year groups.
76. All teachers work closely with learning support assistants. They provide clear instructions for the tasks to be undertaken and ensure that information is passed between them. The quality of support from learning support assistants is consistently good. It is particularly strong when groups of pupils are withdrawn for additional literacy support, and contributes much to the learning and extension of basic skills. Homework is used effectively to support what pupils learn.
77. The opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills across the curriculum are good. There is evidence of the good use of appropriate vocabulary in science and mathematics. In subjects such as history, pupils have opportunities to research information, record their findings, and devise

questionnaires. Information and communication technology is used very well in all English lessons to consolidate and develop the skills pupils are learning. There is good, solid emphasis on the use of literacy skills across the curriculum, but teachers' expectations for this are not always consistent, and the quality and quantity of work are variable.

78. The systems for the assessment of pupils in reading, writing and spelling are excellent. Difficulties are identified at an early stage, and pupils' progress is stringently monitored. The results of assessment are used carefully to plan the next stage in pupils' learning, to set targets for pupils, and to ensure appropriate planning. The targets are manageable and easily understood by the pupils. Arrangements for monitoring progress are excellent. The headteacher, co-ordinator and class teacher are fully aware of what needs to be done to enable pupils to progress. The subject is managed well. The co-ordinator provides committed, efficient and knowledgeable leadership. There is good liaison between her/the headteacher, and all staff. She keeps a close eye on developments in literacy throughout the school. Teachers' planning is monitored weekly and the co-ordinator has had opportunity to monitor what is happening in the classroom. This is extremely useful and purposeful in establishing good practice. However, the words used to summarise the quality of a lesson observed are occasionally over generous.
79. Resources to support learning are very good. There are newly developed libraries in both Key Stages 1 and 2, and these provide increasing opportunities for pupils to browse and sharpen their skills.

MATHEMATICS

80. At the time of the previous inspection standards were above average and the quality of teaching and learning was good. There were insufficient opportunities for mathematical investigation and the use of information technology within mathematics was under developed.
81. Good improvement has taken place during the intervening years. Standards have risen, the overall quality of teaching at Key Stage 2 is now very good and information and communication technology is an important part of pupils' mathematical development. Although opportunities for investigative mathematics have increased considerably, this aspect of the curriculum is not yet firmly established as an integral part of pupils' learning in every classroom. The school recognises the need for further development.
82. The results of the National Curriculum tests in 2000 indicated that, at the age of seven, the percentage of pupils reaching both average and higher levels was well above average when compared both nationally and with similar schools. Results of the most recent tests show a further improvement, most noticeably in the number of pupils achieving the higher levels. Despite some fluctuation in results, the overall trend is upwards. Boys and girls achieve equally well. In the optional tests for pupils in Year 4, standards well above average are sustained and pupils of all abilities make very good progress.
83. Inspection findings support the view that the standards achieved are well above average overall and pupils' numeracy skills are particularly strong. Although data handling skills are good, there is less attention given to this element of the mathematics curriculum. Standards in investigative mathematics are improving, but have not yet reached the very high standards achieved in mental calculation and basic numeracy skills.
84. The overall rate of pupils' learning is closely linked to the quality of teaching. It is good at Key Stage 1 and very good at Key Stage 2. The National Numeracy Strategy has had a positive impact on standards. Progress in the group work part of lessons is particularly good because work is matched so well to individual pupils' needs and pupils work well together. The few pupils with English as an additional language are supported very well and show good understanding of mathematical concepts. Pupils with special educational needs throughout the school receive a high level of good quality support and make very good progress. More able pupils at Key Stage 2, identified as mathematically gifted, receive very good provision and achieve very well.

85. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' numeracy skills are very sound. More able pupils are confident with three- and four-digit numbers; some understand equivalence in fraction work and apply their knowledge well to problem solving. In a very good Year 2 lesson, entitled 'Half Price Sale', a group of more able pupils devised an interesting range of successful strategies to work out the new price of a computer that had previously cost £1500. They were excited by the challenge and keen to explain their working out. Pupils of average ability count confidently in fives to 100, add amounts of money through quick mental calculation and explain their methods of working clearly. They develop a wide mathematical vocabulary. Pupils of lower ability use apparatus to calculate half and some know that they are unable to work out half of 37p exactly because they do not have a halfpenny coin. Although heavy concentration on the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy has resulted in other areas of the mathematics curriculum being given less attention, there is evidence, from looking at pupils' previous work, of adequate coverage and a good basic level of understanding of topics such as two- and three-dimensional shapes. By Year 4, more able pupils are excited at the prospect of work involving large numbers. They display mature mathematical thinking, can already apply confident understanding of place value to decimal work and calculate two and three-digit multiplication with impressive speed. Other pupils successfully apply their knowledge of basic tables to calculate larger numbers and, although pupils with special educational needs struggle with understanding mathematical concepts, they too develop a sound basic knowledge.
86. Teachers throughout the school are confident with the National Numeracy Strategy. Mental warm up time is of very high quality and makes a significant contribution towards the standards achieved. Sessions at the end of lessons are used very effectively to assess pupils' levels of understanding. Indeed, the quality of day to day assessment is excellent and is directly responsible for the consistent way in which the work set accurately matches pupils' needs. Marking is not as consistently good. Although there is evidence of marking being used constructively to help pupils improve, not all marking is of the same standard. The presentation and volume of work produced are not consistent across parallel classes in a year group and do not always match pupils' ability. This discrepancy is most noticeable in the Year 2 and Year 4 samples of pupils' work. Homework is used effectively to develop pupils' skills further.
87. At Key Stage 1, the overall quality of teaching is good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed; 25 per cent of lessons were very good, and 50 per cent were good. In the best lessons teachers transmit their enthusiasm and have very sound strategies for managing the behaviour of pupils. For example, in a very good Year 2 lesson, pupils of all abilities were highly motivated and determined to succeed. Behaviour was impressively good because pupils were so totally involved. Occasionally, even good teachers allow the pace to slow when the whole class part of lessons is too long. In a few lessons teachers do not always have adequate strategies for controlling difficult pupils.
88. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 2 is higher, with 50 per cent of lessons being very good, 33 per cent good, and 17 per cent satisfactory. The greater degree of challenge, more effective use of time targets, and very high expectations stand out as key factors in the higher standards of teaching and learning. Pupils know what is expected of them. In a very good Year 3 lesson, pupils of all abilities were challenged as they developed their multiplication skills. There was a great sense of urgency and purpose. The most able succeeded in eventually working out 89s 89. Class computers were used very appropriately to consolidate learning throughout the lesson and pupils of all abilities made very good progress.
89. Pupils have good opportunity to develop their mathematical skills across the curriculum. Information and communication technology programs are used well to support pupils' learning in the classroom and the new computer suite is used, very effectively, on a regular basis, to extend pupils' numeracy skills. There are several examples of numeracy links with other topics displayed around the school. In Year 2, pupils produce tally charts and pictograms linked to their work on birthdays and eye colour. Pupils Year 3 use graphs and create a weather database in their geography work. They produce good computer-generated examples of symmetry.
90. Despite the secondment of the coordinator, interim arrangements have ensured that the subject has continued to be strongly led by the headteacher. Teachers have good subject knowledge and

there is a total commitment towards raising already high standards. Very detailed monitoring of teaching and learning has resulted in identifying points for improvement. All forms of assessment, from data analysis to teachers' everyday evaluation of their work, are outstandingly good. It is not surprising that standards are so high when the quality of teaching, the use of assessment, and the shared commitment of all staff are so strong.

SCIENCE

91. The teachers' assessments for seven-year-olds, in 2000, showed that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in science was above average when compared nationally and with similar schools. The proportion of pupils reaching a higher level was also above the national average. These results show that the good standards reported at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained. Results of the teachers' assessments in 2001 show a further improvement, most noticeably in the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels. The school's analysis of individual pupils' attainment over time shows that all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make good and often very good progress. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Inspection evidence confirms that by the ages of seven and nine, pupils' attainment is well above national expectations for their age. The pupils learn quickly, and retain knowledge, which they use well when faced with new situations.
92. Pupils in Year 2 have a good knowledge and understanding of the different elements of science and are developing their investigative skills well. Pupils of average ability make predictions based on their prior knowledge, respond to suggestions on how to find things out, collect data and, with assistance, make their own suggestions. More able pupils express their own independent ideas about finding solutions and make observations, using simple equipment, to measure quantities such as length. Most understand the need to control variables in an investigation, as demonstrated in a lesson on forces in which pupils were finding out whether the gradient of a slope would affect the travelling distance of a toy car. A very able pupil, in considering how to make the investigation 'fair' commented that the floor would have to be quite flat or 'the angle of slope might be increased'.
93. An analysis of displays and pupils' workbooks shows that pupils at Key Stage 1 are gaining a very good understanding of life processes and living things. They recognise that plants require light and water for growth and that exercising and eating the correct amounts of food assists human beings in keeping healthy. They name the external parts of flowering plants correctly, and accurately label their insect models with words such as 'thorax' and 'antennae', basing their work on their observations in the school conservation area and information collected from books. They confidently sort materials into groups according to their properties and describe how everyday materials can alter when heated or cooled. They identify differing light sources and know that pushes and pulls are examples of forces.
94. The results of the teachers' assessments in 2000 showed that, although pupils attained above the national average in the knowledge-based elements of science, their skills of scientific enquiry were only average. Opportunities for investigative science have increased considerably since the previous inspection, but this aspect of the curriculum is not yet firmly established as an integral part of pupils' learning throughout Key Stage 1. Pupils enjoy practical investigations very much and are gaining from their experiences, but many become over excited and sometimes forget what they are trying to find out.
95. By the end of Year 4, pupils have gained a very good body of scientific knowledge. They understand that humans and certain other animals have skeletons and muscles to support and protect the body and assist movement and they confidently name the major organs in the human body. They have made good use of the school grounds to study wildlife and can give reasons for choice of habitats. They accurately describe a food chain and know that virtually all chains begin with a green plant. They are aware that some materials are more thermally insulative and that some materials are better electrical conductors. Through well-conducted experiments, for example on plant growth, they develop their skills of scientific enquiry well, competently employing a wide

range of methods, such as tables, charts and graphs to record their data, which they then use to draw conclusions. Correct use of scientific vocabulary is a particular strength.

96. All groups of pupils make good progress through a carefully structured scheme of work, which is based upon government guidelines for the subject. Areas of knowledge are visited and built upon systematically as pupils move through the key stages, for example, the youngest children sow seeds and observe growth patterns; in Year 2 pupils carry out investigations on the conditions needed for healthy plant growth. In Year 3, pupils investigate this further and examine the functions of leaves, roots and stalks, whilst those in Year 4 pose their own questions for investigation, make informed predictions and offering convincing explanations for the success or failure of plant growth in different circumstances. Pupils' written work is generally well presented, although there are some differences in the amount generated and the quality of presentation within some year groups, particularly Years 2 and 4.
97. The quality of teaching is good overall at Key Stage 1 and very good for the older pupils. Teachers make the focus of the lesson clear to the pupils. They give clear explanations and lessons move at a good pace. Staff have high expectations of pupils' concentration and behaviour and pupils respond by working hard and moving from one activity to another efficiently. Oral sessions at the end of lessons are used well to consolidate and assess learning. Teachers make regular assessments and these are used increasingly effectively to monitor progress towards termly and annually expected levels and to ensure that work is matched well to pupils' individual abilities. For example in a Year 3 lesson on plant growth the most able pupils were expected to measure in millimetres, whilst others were required to record their work in centimetres. The best lessons are highly organised and very well prepared with good quality resources. In these lessons, teachers' subject knowledge is very good and their expectations of pupils' work and conduct are very high. There is a good balance between teachers' demonstrations and pupils' activities, and direct teaching is of a high order.
98. Pupils' literacy skills are extended through very good use of subject related vocabulary, which also deepens their technical understanding. Marking often includes reminders about literacy targets, such as neat handwriting. The subject also contributes well to pupils' numeracy skills, for example when pupils in Year 2 make a graph of their favourite foods and those in Year 4 make a cooling chart to record time and temperatures. Links with other subjects are also good, for example, when pupils in Year 1 link their science investigations on sound with music. Information and communication technology is used increasingly well, for example, for the collection and interpretation of data. The pupils respond very positively to the level of challenge offered and work diligently, cooperating well when working in pairs or groups. Pupils have a good understanding of their own learning, particularly when encouraged to devise and carry out their own investigations. In the one unsatisfactory lesson seen, routines were not clearly established, work was not checked carefully enough to individual pupils' abilities and pupils were allowed to chatter during the teacher's explanations and instructions. Consequently, there was some confusion about the task, noise levels were too high, and many pupils failed to make the progress of which they were capable, some resorting to simply playing with the resources.
99. The science co-ordinator is enthusiastic, very knowledgeable and leads her very subject well. She monitors teaching and learning throughout the school and supports colleagues well with their planning. Her expertise is much appreciated in the school, for example when she recently led each junior class in turn, experimenting with planning and executing the 'Jelly Tower Challenge' observed by the local education authority inspector. Resources are generous, of good quality, and stored for easy access. The school's 'ECO' club and visits to a local outdoor centre enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding.

ART AND DESIGN

100. It was only possible to observe two lessons during the inspection, and these were for pupils in Year 1. From a scrutiny of pupils' work, and discussions with pupils and teachers, judgements can be made on what pupils know and what they can do, and what progress is being made. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Year 4 attain standards below expectations. This represents a decline in standards since the previous inspection. Currently, the curriculum is based on national

guidelines, but wholeschool planning is being evaluated in terms of what can reasonably be achieved in the time available and ways of ensuring the systematic progression of pupils' knowledge and skills. At present, there is insufficient breadth and balance in the curriculum being taught to ensure the progression of skills alongside worthwhile opportunities for designing and creativity.

101. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have a limited knowledge of a range of materials such as paper, textiles, and clay, and of how they can be used to create different effects and designs. They recall their work on self-portraits and printing with enthusiasm, and show they have acquired appropriate skills for these techniques. The extent of the knowledge of pupils in Year 4 is also limited. They similarly recall work on portraits and block-printing, and how they used clay to create models. There are some good examples of perspective paintings in Year 4, where pupils have captured the atmosphere of streets and forests. In both key stages, appropriate use is made of sketchbooks, and some of their drawing shows an ability to create effects using line and tone.
102. In the lessons seen, pupils increased their knowledge of the styles of Monet and Van Gogh. They successfully captured the qualities, using careful observations. The teaching ranges from satisfactory to good, and progress varies accordingly. Teachers provide pupils with worthwhile experiences to motivate and stimulate them into making their own and group pictures. Pupils gasp in wonder as they look at paintings by Van Gogh; they speak in awe of the lilies they observe in the school pond, and sincerely try to capture this in their pictures. The good teaching provides all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, with an appropriate range of experiences and allows for the teaching of different techniques. It also allows for a good balance of demonstration, evaluation and experimentation. Satisfactory teaching is exemplified by a slow pace, so that that time and opportunities for pupils to explore their own ideas are limited.
103. The emphasis in art and design is on the teaching of skills, but some of the work seen does not reflect confidence with the subject. Although art and design is not a focus for many classes this term, there are few eye-catching displays of pupils' work. There is little evidence of bold and adventurous creativity that has involved the use of a range of different materials, media, tools and techniques.
104. The co-ordinator provides sound leadership for the subject and has an action plan for improvement. Art and design is currently taught in blocks of topics, alternating with design and technology. The co-ordinator aims to ensure that the units of the schemes of work are adapted to fit the aptitudes and needs of pupils. The co-ordinator looks at teachers' planning, and pupils are assessed on what they achieve in the areas taught. Although these systems are useful, the overall planning of the units of the art curriculum have not yet had sufficient impact on pupils' fundamental skills for techniques and design, and on creativity. Links are sometimes made with other curriculum areas, for example, the painting of plates in Greek style. The use of information and communication and technology to support the subject has not yet been built into planning. An extra-curricular art club is held on a rota basis for both key stages. Resources are satisfactory, although the co-ordinator has recently purchased some new useful items.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

105. The previous inspection report judged standards to be in line with expectations, for pupils aged seven and nine, despite weaknesses relating to the limited range of materials and tools, which restricted the curriculum. This area for improvement has been addressed well and resources are now adequate, although the subject is not yet well supported by information and communication technology. Evidence from observation of lessons, discussions with pupils and teachers, scrutiny of displays of pupils' work, photographic evidence, and teachers' planning, leads to the judgement that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make appropriate progress throughout the school. Standards are in line with expectations at the end of Key Stage 1, but pupils in Year 4 have not yet had time to benefit fully from the improvements in provision and their attainment in designing and making is below expectations.
106. Pupils in Year 2 use tools safely and experiment with joining techniques to make a winch for lifting a pair of scissors and to make a chassis for a vehicle in links with their science lessons. They build

on this experience to produce a range of moving vehicles. They have designed and made lighthouses lit by electricity. In links with art and science, they have designed and made attractive models of insects found in the school environment, using a range of techniques and materials. They understand the design process well, and try hard to follow their annotated drawings when making their products, with due attention to the finished appearance. They evaluate their work sensibly and talk about what could be done to make their product even better. For example, they explain in their workbooks the difficulties encountered in making their delightful puppets and what they would change to improve their product. Even pupils of below average ability manage this well.

107. Pupils in Year 4 have designed and made a fairground with moving rides and can explain how electricity can be used to power their models. They have used a range of materials and techniques, such as sewing to make purses and pencil cases, and an Indian tabla. However, their making skills are less well developed than normally expected for pupils of this age. For example, in making their instruments, pupils cut the materials 'by eye' rather than take careful measurements. In their keenness to get on with the practical work, many fail to list the stages they must complete or the resources they will need.
108. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by very effective learning support staff and voluntary helpers. The most able pupils are encouraged to develop their ideas a little further. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, a bright pupil chose to use a split pin to join the components of his product. This immediately had the effect of turning it into an articulated vehicle.
109. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, and sometimes good in both key stages. The previous inspection report stated that tasks were often mundane and did not offer appropriate challenge to most pupils. This is no longer the case. Well defined tasks that develop pupils' range of skills, techniques, and knowledge further, are planned for each year group to enable them to build on their previous learning. An improved range of tools and materials, including construction kits offers far more opportunities for pupils to work creatively. Lessons often begin with useful reminders of previous learning and discussion about possible ways round the problems that pupils have encountered. Teachers monitor pupils' progress well during the lesson, supporting, encouraging and asking questions designed to extend pupils' thinking. Questions such as, 'What do you think you should do?' help them to plan their next stage of construction. Pupils learn from each other in summing up sessions at the end of lessons, which draw learning together and offer opportunities for pupils to evaluate their work and that of others.
110. In the best lessons, pupils are encouraged to think for themselves and to make suggestions. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, pupils were encouraged to think carefully about which type of tape to use to join the sides of their vehicles. They decided that masking tape would be best, as it would be easier to paint over and easier to remove when glue had set. Pupils enjoy their design and technology lessons very much and their written work is generally good. However, in their keenness to get on with the practical work, they sometimes fail to listen to instructions. There are differences between classes in the volume of work produced and its quality. In many classes the profile of the subject is raised with designated books for pupils' designs and written work.
111. The subject is led satisfactorily by a new coordinator who has a good understanding of the subject and how it needs to develop. She is keen to support teaching and learning in classrooms throughout the school and this is identified in the school development plan. Because of the school's most recent and understandable focus on literacy and numeracy, there has been less time available for the subject. However, timely blocking of the timetables for art and design and design technology has helped and allows pupils enough time to follow a design project through to its appropriate conclusion. A good scheme of work, linked to national guidelines ensures appropriate progression in all elements of the subject.

GEOGRAPHY

112. No lessons were observed at Key Stage 1 and only one at Key Stage 2. However, evidence taken from discussion with pupils, teachers' planning and samples of previous work indicate that standards are similar to those found in other schools at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. Despite a

reduction in the amount of time devoted to the teaching of geography since the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, the school still provides pupils with a worthwhile experience. Although standards are not as high overall as at the time of the previous inspection, because pupils do not study topics in as much depth, significant improvement has been made in environmental awareness. The school has introduced an 'ECO' club whose work is of the highest quality. The pupils involved display high standards of achievement. The coordinator has made an outstanding contribution to the work of the club and to the improvement of the school grounds. Trees have been planted, butterfly and evergreen bird gardens have been created and a child friendly Nature Conservation area has been developed. The 'Walking Bus' scheme has encouraged many pupils to walk or ride to school. Recycling is an important feature of school life. Even bicycle stands are made from redundant railway sleepers. The work is impressive and the school is justifiably proud that it has recently gained its 'ECO' status award.

113. The recently updated policy and scheme of work are of good quality. They provide the basis for a two-yearly cycle of work. Each topic incorporates activities that develop skills as pupils move through the school. However, the current organisation of the geography curriculum means pupils frequently forget what they have learned when there are excessively long gaps between topics.
114. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have sound knowledge of the local area. They produce simple maps of their route to school, highlighting important landmarks on the journey. Pupils' understanding of environmental issues and conservation is very strong. In discussion, a pupil in Year 2 described the erosion of the ozone layer as 'like the earth wearing a shirt instead of a coat'. Skills are developed effectively through links with other subjects. Younger pupils link their work on 'Our Playground' well to artwork, by creating an attractive playground display in the style of Lowry.
115. At Year 4, pupils have good knowledge of the locality. They produce playground designs and good quality plans of the school. In discussion they remember using the computer to locate their house on 'map tiles'. Pupils' knowledge of human and physical features, such as identifying similarities and differences between canals and rivers, has been recently introduced and their understanding is developing but not yet secure. There is some, but not enough, opportunity for pupils' skills of enquiry to be developed in any systematic way. Older pupils continue to be very interested in environmental issues. The school's regular residential visit to Chasewater Outdoor Centre is used effectively to develop pupils' geographical skills and deepen understanding.
116. Too few lessons were observed to make a judgement on the quality of teaching. Evidence taken from examples of previous work indicates that teachers use the small teaching time allocation well to develop pupils' understanding adequately, but do not allow enough time for pupils to work independently or research information in depth. Very little written work forms part of geography displays. Pupils of all abilities cover the same work, irrespective of their level of understanding and there is not much evidence of information and communication technology being a regular feature of lessons. However, assessment by both teachers and pupils is used very effectively. In the Year 3 work sample a detailed checklist of skills, for pupils' self-assessment, showed precise levels of understanding. Teachers use an adequate range of good quality resources well. These have been supplemented and improved since the previous inspection.
117. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The coordinator scrutinises planning and pupils' work but does not monitor the quality of teaching. Despite this, the school has a clear overview of standards achieved and very accurately prioritises future developments.

HISTORY

118. At the ages of seven and nine, pupils attain standards in line with expectations. Their progress and achievements across both key stages are good, and this repeats the findings of the previous report. All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress.
119. By the end of Year 2, pupils have developed a sound sense of the passing of time. When comparing the seaside now and many years ago, many can identify from pictures and artefacts what is past and what is present. They provide knowledgeable reasons for their opinions and

carefully weigh up the evidence. When looking at pictures and photographs, they pose relevant questions and make careful observations of what they notice. They have a good knowledge of people and events from the past, such as the Fire of London. The learning of all pupils is greatly enhanced by the teachers' knowledge of what is needed to help young pupils develop their understanding of history. They become keen and interested historians. Pupils' own contributions are valued and used to help the learning. For example, one pupil asked his grandparents how they spent their holidays as children. The letter they wrote in reply was read to the class, who were fascinated and listened avidly. A previous query about a motorbike and sidecar resulted in a pupil bringing in a book from home to illustrate this, for all to see. The use of role-play, such as through a 'Punch and Judy' show, contributes to the fun of learning in history. Although no lessons were seen in Year 1, planning shows those pupils experience appropriate learning opportunities through topics such as 'toys'.

120. In Years 3 and 4, pupils build well on previously learned knowledge and skills. By the end of Year 4, pupils have a good sense of chronology and have a good recall of past events they have studied. For example, they talk confidently about the Battle of Bosworth and Henry VIII's quarrel with Rome. They compare Tudor homes with homes today. When asked how they know about the past they describe how archaeology, ancient buildings, fossils and painting helped to tell them more about the different ways of life. Their oral explanations are comprehensive and reflect their knowledge and use of a wide vocabulary. Skills of more formal research are begun effectively in Year 3. Pupils competently devise their own questions on the Ancient Greeks, which are then used as a basis for individual and class research. Tasks such as these provide good opportunity for the use of a range of literacy skills alongside the acquisition of historical knowledge and understanding. At Key Stage 2, pupils are extended further in their work by carrying out an individual research project. This is undertaken at home and based on the current topic being studied. Completed examples of this show a developing ability among pupils to seek and use history information, and to widen their own appreciation of history.
121. Only two lessons were seen in the inspection, and based on these and other evidence, such as teachers' planning and pupils' work, teaching is judged to be very good. In both lessons, teachers showed considerable expertise and had high expectations of pupils. The strategies used to encourage learning were very effective. In the Year 2 lesson, the activities planned for group work were carefully differentiated and matched well to pupils' needs, so that all pupils learned at the appropriate rate for their abilities. The exciting range of activities ensured all pupils maintained a busy and concentrated interest. In Year 3, the quietly led discussion and skilful questioning ensured the rapt attention and interest of all pupils. Planning was structured carefully so that each concept and task was carefully built upon.
122. Pupils' attainment and progress in history is carefully monitored by manageable and effective assessment procedures. A portfolio of pupils' work helps staff to make accurate assessments and to adjust curriculum planning if necessary. The scheme of work is based on national guidelines, but is carefully adapted to ensure it meets the needs of the school.
123. The subject is led very well. A strength of the subject is the coordinator's knowledge, enthusiasm and commitment. The files and records kept are meticulous in their detail. The coordinator ensures that pupils have good opportunities to experience real and enriching history through visits and visitors to the school. A 'Vikings' drama group, and a 'Tudors' group have visited the school and pupils have visited local centres of interest. The coordinator has gathered together an effective range of records, resources and support material to enable teachers to plan their topics. Resources are good. The subject makes a positive and useful contribution to pupils' social and cultural development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

124. Information and communication technology is a much improved subject since the time of the previous inspection. Resources were then judged to be unsatisfactory and raising pupils' attainment in the subject was a key issue. The recent introduction of a computer suite has had a significant impact on raising standards and enhancing provision. Pupils currently at Key Stage 1 make good progress and achieve standards similar to other pupils of their age. The improvement

has resulted from teachers' increased confidence with the subject. Government funded training has been used very effectively to improve teachers' expertise. Basic skills are taught competently. In Year 2, pupils use data they had previously fed into the computer to produce pie charts, pictograms, and bar charts. They had secure keyboard and mouse skills and worked with an impressive degree of independence. This year group has some experience of programming a moving toy, but the control and modelling aspect of the curriculum is not as well developed as other areas such as word processing.

125. Pupils of all abilities continue to make good progress at Key Stage 2 and achieve above average standards by the time they reach Year 4. They are confident in data handling and when using spreadsheets. Work is frequently linked to other subjects. For example, pupils working on constructing shapes by drawing lines and turning angles made very effective use of their numeracy skills as they calculated the number of degrees in a hexagon. They typed, saved and set up their own procedures to form more complex shapes. Most pupils know how to cut and paste; they make good use of their email link with a local school to extend their skills, and members of the computer club display a high level of expertise when using computers for research purposes.
126. Progression within the subject is systematic and well structured, with a good range of activities for all age groups. Classbased computers are in regular use. Independent learning is encouraged from an early age. Children in the pre-reception class already work confidently without adult support. Pupils with special educational needs, who need extra support with basic skills, can frequently be observed working independently in the school foyer. The programs available in the classrooms match pupils' abilities and fit in very well with topics covered in each year group. Numeracy and literacy programs are used very effectively in both the classroom and the computer suite. Although there is an increasing amount of evidence that information and communication technology is being used across the curriculum, more widespread use is still a priority for development. Heavy emphasis has been placed on its inclusion in each subject policy update, but further work remains to be done in this area.
127. Teaching staff recognise information and communication technology as an important part of pupils' learning. The subject is firmly established on each class timetable and is an integral part of school life. In the small sample of lessons observed, teaching and learning was always at least good and sometimes very good. Teachers use the language of computing well. Sessions in the computer suite are organised very well. Time is used efficiently and there is a good level of intervention from teaching and support staff, particularly for pupils with special educational needs. The multimedia projector is put to good effect for demonstration purposes and to assess individual pupils' rate of learning. Lessons are fun and pupils enjoy working together. They are well motivated to succeed.
128. The subject is very well led. The coordinator has had a major influence on raising standards and has provided stability and a clear sense of direction for the subject. Standards are monitored very effectively and areas for future development accurately prioritised. Documentation has been updated and good quality hardware and software have been introduced. Old equipment is gradually being replaced. Much effective work has been done in a short space of time to raise standards.

MUSIC

129. At the time of the previous inspection standards in music were above average and the quality of teaching and learning was good. Extra-curricular provision was above average and assessment was used effectively to monitor pupils' progress. Despite a reduction in teaching time, music is still an important part of school life, and non-specialist class teachers are now more heavily involved in teaching music. Although standards are not as high overall, most pupils in Years 2 and 4 reach average standards and all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make satisfactory progress. Extra-curricular provision remains very strong. Instrumental violin and cello tuition is of good quality and pupils achieve well. Great care is taken to ensure pupils who receive tuition do not miss the same subject each week. Singing throughout the school is of good quality. Members of the school choir achieve very high standards.

130. By the age of seven, most pupils know the names of familiar instruments and discriminate well between loud and soft, and fast and slow, when singing. Some confidently express opinions about their musical likes and dislikes. Music is frequently linked to topics in other subjects. In a good Year 2 lesson about the seaside, pupils of all abilities realistically interpreted the sound of the sea and the breeze, with voices and instruments. They improved and refined their work as they made choices and one pupil commented, 'That's more like it!' when listening to the finished composition.
131. By the age of nine, pupils have improved their singing skills; they learn new songs quickly and understand the vocabulary of composition. In good Year 3 lesson, linked very effectively to their history topic, pupils worked well together in pairs to compose a four bar piece of music, telling the story of Perseus and Medusa, using only one percussion instrument and recorder. Many made good use of their skills in playing the recorder. A few wrote down their compositions in musical notation; most wrote symbols that conveyed meaning. Although there was some confusion about loud music not necessarily being the same as high music, all succeeded in composing, writing down and performing their work during the lesson.
132. An appropriate scheme of work is used that provides support for non-specialist music teachers. The school is fortunate to have several members of staff with musical skills and the vast majority of class teachers take their own lessons. However, the quality of class music teaching is not as high as that of other musical provision and insufficient attention is paid to multicultural music. Some non-specialist music teachers lack confidence and expertise however, they cope well and the quality of teaching is always satisfactory or better. In half the lessons observed, teaching was good. Teachers always try to use correct musical terminology. In a Year 4 lesson, the teacher used her own singing voice well to introduce the lesson. Pupils responded positively because the songs were presented in such an interesting way. Most pupils, including those with behavioural difficulties became totally involved. Every activity moved at a brisk pace and all the pupils succeeded in learning two songs in less than 20 minutes.
133. Assemblies are used effectively to develop pupils' enjoyment of listening to music. Most pupils listen well and are encouraged to research information about the composer. On these occasions, singing by boys and girls throughout the school is joyous, tuneful and enthusiastic. In one assembly, members of the parents' and pupils' choir joined together to sing two songs from 'Les Miserables' that they had previously performed in public. The assembly was truly memorable. Not only was the singing and interpretation of the music of outstanding quality, but also the sense of performance conveyed to the audience was breathtaking.
134. Pupils throughout the school have numerous opportunities to participate in concerts and performances in school and in the wider community. There is an interesting range of familiar and more unusual tuned and untuned instruments. Class teachers receive a good level of informal support. The subject is very well promoted by an enthusiastic, and highly committed co-ordinator. She monitors teachers' planning but has not yet had the opportunity to observe class lessons. Consequently the variations in quality of provision are not always identified and some non-specialist teachers are unsure about the standards pupils can achieve. Assessment is in the process of development and the use of information and communication technology is increasing, but is not yet making a strong contribution to pupils' learning.
135. Many pupils develop a love of music that will remain with them for the rest of their lives. Much of the credit for these positive attitudes is directly attributable to the enthusiasm of the teacher who co-ordinates the subject.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

136. Due to the school's planning for physical education, the main focus for this term is games and athletics. It was possible, however, to see the attainment of some pupils in gymnastics during the extra-curricular gymnastic club. At the age of seven, pupils attain the expected standards for the age group. This represents a decline in standards since the last inspection. At Key Stage 1, insufficient opportunities are provided for demonstration and the evaluation of performance, and this is a weakness. Pupils' progress is frequently hindered by their inability to consistently and

carefully listen to teachers' instructions. At the end of Year 4, pupils' attainment is above expectations, which reflects the findings of the previous report.

137. At the age of seven, pupils show sound control and coordination in dodging each other and their achievement is satisfactory. They throw and catch balls carefully, and with a pleasing degree of accuracy. Younger pupils are gradually building these skills, but do not yet show the necessary control. From the lessons at Key Stage 2, it is evident that pupils are maintaining high standards. In Year 4, they show good skills in the many facets of athletics. They are agile and well-coordinated. They rise to the challenge to better their performance and measure and record their efforts conscientiously. They work well as groups and teams, and show a positive element of competitiveness. Their achievement is good. They show they know how to use appropriate strategies for throwing and catching and striking and fielding skills. In the gymnastics observed, pupils showed poise and grace, and worked with coordination and discipline.
138. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 1, with one unsatisfactory lesson observed. In the satisfactory lesson the teacher demonstrated sound subject knowledge and teaching of basic skills. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, the teacher wisely made use of on-going assessment to change the plans for the lesson, but did not effectively provide alternative learning opportunities. This resulted in unsuitable activities and an unsatisfactory use of time and pace, overall. Pupils lost focus, and achieved very little. In both lessons, some time was lost in waiting for pupils to listen carefully. At Key Stage 2, the teaching is good. Teachers are efficient and well-organised, so that there is clear structure to their lessons. They are firm in ensuring that pupils listen to instructions so that no time is wasted. They encourage pupils to evaluate their performance. Teachers' expectations are good, and pupils respond accordingly. In the mixed Year 3 and 4 athletics lesson, effective use was made of learning support assistants so that no group of pupils was unsupervised, or not focused on their tasks. As a result the majority of pupils put the maximum amount of effort and determination into their work, with a majority showing a keenness to improve their performance. They make consistently good progress within the lessons. Throughout the school, teachers and learning support assistants set a good example by changing into appropriate clothing for the lessons. Teachers remind pupils appropriately about safety issues, and the effect of exercise on heart rate. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support to enable them to be fully included in the lessons. This aspect is very positive and reflects the school's equal opportunity policy.
139. The co-ordinator provides satisfactory leadership for the subject. The new and comprehensive policy for physical education is due to be formally accepted this term. An updated scheme of work is currently being developed by the new co-ordinator, and is based on national guidelines, which are used in conjunction with the school's current scheme. The co-ordinator has had opportunity to monitor teachers' planning, but has not yet had the chance to observe lessons. This is of necessary importance and will be carried out in line with the school development plan.
140. The school encourages pupils' interest in sport through a good range of extra-curricular clubs, including football and hockey. Pupils in Year 3 and 4 also have the benefit of swimming lessons on a regular basis. Pupils are regularly assessed and encouraged to improve their skills through the achievement of swimming and gymnastic badges, and through the nationally recognised athletics awards. The school's work in physical education is effective in promoting pupils' social development, particularly at Key Stage 2. The accommodation, particularly the outdoor grounds, is good. Resources are satisfactory overall.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

141. Religious education makes an important contribution to pupils' education. The high standards reported in the previous inspection have been maintained. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress and, by the ages of seven and nine, attain standards that are above the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. At Key Stage 2, pupils' written work is very good and demonstrates a clear understanding of the relevance of religious education to their own lives. Their factual knowledge is good and they are learning through religion as well as about it. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.

142. Pupils at Key Stage 1 are developing a good understanding of the Christian faith and encounter other religions, such as Judaism and Islam and aspects of Hinduism. Pupils are developing a sense of awe and wonder as they study the plants and creatures in their environment and they are beginning to understand that symbols are often used as aids to worship. They appreciate the religious symbolism of candles and understand the nature of prayer and reflection. Following a visit to the local church, pupils in Year 2 know of the importance of Christian festivals and symbols, such as the cross, the special nature of the Bible and the significance of prayer. Their study of Christianity includes stories from the Old and New Testaments. They have a good knowledge of the life of Jesus and of festivals such as Christmas and Easter. They develop this understanding well when learning about celebrations in other faiths, for example, when considering differences and similarities between the Christian Harvest Festival and the Jewish Succoth. Their retelling of the story of Christmas, from the point of view of the different characters, shows a heightened appreciation of human nature.
143. In Years 3 and 4, pupils appreciate that different faiths have their own sets of symbols and important books, such as the Qur'an, and 'rules of life'. They consider Old and New Testament stories in greater depth and consider them in the light of their own experiences. In an excellent Year 4 lesson, pupils showed a very good understanding that belonging to a group carries certain responsibilities and a requirement to conform to its values. Pupils talked with pride about the different groups and organisations to which they belonged, describing rules that they had promised to keep and the responsibilities such membership carried. In listing the characteristics needed to be a good disciple, they were able to make meaningful links.
144. Good teaching and careful planning enables all groups of pupils to make systematic progress throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress with appropriate support and work that is tailored to their needs. More able pupils express more mature ideas and try to give reasons for their views and feelings. In the reception classes, children listen to the story of the Lost Teddy and talk about what makes them sad. In Year 1 a pupil writes, 'At the top of my beanstalk I would like to find a princess with a kitten in her arms', whilst in Year 2 pupils consider how Mary and Joseph would feel on their journey, using words such as 'anxious' and 'dehydrated'. Pupils in Year 4 write a modern version of the Good Samaritan in which they receive help from an unexpected source. Through writing in the first person, they manage to convey empathy and a deepened understanding of human nature.
145. Pupils are very sincere in their responses to religious education. Most are interested and enthusiastic and enjoy sharing and exploring new experiences and ideas. The concept of helping and being responsible for others is developed well throughout the school. This was demonstrated in a Year 2 lesson when, after considering the contributions made by the teacher and another pupil, in bringing in different kinds of Bibles from home, a pupil remarked, 'That's a nice little bit of teamwork'. A strong sense of family permeates school life and pupils demonstrate a love for their environment and for each other. Through studying world religion they are beginning to develop a respect and tolerance for values and beliefs that are different from their own, although, on isolated occasions, a lack of understanding creates embarrassment and some silliness. The school acknowledges that more could be done in this respect.
146. Evidence from observation of lessons, analysis of pupils' work and teachers' planning, together with discussions with pupils indicates that the quality of teaching and learning is good at Key Stage 1 and very good at Key Stage 2. Planning is closely linked to the locally agreed syllabus which ensures a systematic progression through the subject. Teachers plan interesting activities, which promote meaningful discussion and allow many opportunities for pupils to consider their own feelings and responses. For example, in a very effective Year 2 lesson, drama was used very well to help pupils to understand the parable of 'The Lost Sheep'. In a Year 3 lesson, a more able pupil is put into the 'hot seat' as Moses to answer other pupils' questions, such as, 'Why did God make all the Egyptians die?' Constructive marking of pupils' work by teachers is a strong feature of teaching in most classes; for example, work in Year 1 is usefully annotated to record the level of pupils' understanding.

147. The subject is led strongly. The coordinator has the necessary expertise and experience to support teachers well with their planning. He is keen to ensure that pupils are able to apply their learning to life, rather than simply learn the facts. He monitors teachers' planning and lessons in each year group and analyses pupils' work to ensure continuity and progression. Samples of work at different levels are collected for a standards bank, to which teachers can refer when making assessments. A comprehensive policy, which includes guidance on methods of assessment, provides useful information for teachers. Good resources, including books about different faiths, and visits to the local church and cathedral, enhance and extend pupils' learning. Religious education is supported well through strong links with the local church. The Rector and Curate take weekly assemblies and attend assemblies at the end of term. Pupils recently enjoyed a talk by a Muslim visitor. Close liaison with other local schools provides further support for this rich subject.