

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **HOLT VC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Trowbridge

LEA area: Wiltshire

Unique reference number: 126329

Headteacher: Valerie Henstock

Reporting inspector: Geoff Burgess  
OIN: 23708

Dates of inspection: 29<sup>th</sup> April to 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2002

Inspection number: 195219

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	The Gravel Holt Nr Trowbridge Wiltshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Neil Evans
Date of previous inspection:	June 1997

## Information about the inspection team

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9487	Frances Hurd	Lay inspector		Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development Personal welfare & care Partnership with parents
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Holt Voluntary Controlled Primary School serves a wide spectrum of families of mainly British heritage with most coming from owner occupied housing in the village itself. Few children join or leave the school other than as four and eleven-year-olds and the number of pupils on roll is currently over a hundred with growing pressure on places. Very few pupils are entitled to free school meals and the school has recently stopped providing hot meals because the take-up was so low. Most of the twenty-nine pupils on the special needs register have low level needs and none has a statement of special need. Attainment on entry is above that found in most schools.

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

This is a good school, well led and managed, where good teaching is enabling pupils to achieve continued high academic and personal standards when they leave. With a somewhat favoured intake but low levels of funding, the school provides good value for money.

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

- Good and sometimes very good teaching in Key Stage 2 is helping pupils to make very good progress and achieve high standards by the time they leave
- Behaviour is often exemplary and always very good in class and around the school and boys and girls get on very well together
- Pupils' social and moral development has a high priority in the school
- Staff take good care for boys and girls in their charge and formal arrangements for their safety and welfare are very good
- It has established a very good working relationship with parents and they in turn make a very good contribution to their children's learning and the life of the school
- The head, staff, governors and parents have all made a major contribution to helping the school achieve its present healthy position.

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

- The curriculum for the youngest pupils is not planned to stretch their developing skills, knowledge or understanding towards the early learning goals and beyond
- Pupils are not achieving as well in Key Stage 1 as they are in Key Stage 2
- The school does not have a planned programme for developing pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education to ensure adequate coverage and consistency

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

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

Standards achieved by pupils in their last year have improved a great deal since the school's last inspection in 1997 from average to well above average in the last published results. However, in year two, results have only just kept up with the general trend of improvement. Current standards remain high in year six but follow the much lower, average trend in the younger classes. The quality of teaching is much improved and staff and governors regularly monitor classroom practice. A considerable investment has been made in improving provision for information technology and assessment procedures are much better. Overall improvement is good but more work needs to be done on assessment and on improving achievement in the younger classes.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				<b>Key</b>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
English	A	A*	A*	A	well above average A
mathematics	A	A*	A	A	above average B
science	C	A*	A*	A	average C
					below average D
					well below average E

The school's results in national testing improve dramatically from below average in 1998 to featuring in the top five per cent of schools in English, mathematics and science in 2000. Although the impact of individual pupils in the small year group meant results were not quite as good in 2001, English and science were still in the top five per cent with mathematics well above average. Results in reading, writing and mathematics in year two have not been as good, usually a little above or below the national average as was the case in 2001. Current standards reflect the above results with pupils making very good progress in Key Stage 2, much slower progress to achieve the early learning goals in the foundation year and sound progress in Key Stage 1. Pupils' attainments in information technology are improving throughout the school with much better provision but are still not as good as in most schools. In other subjects except design technology where standards are low, attainment is appropriate for the ages of the pupils concerned. Pupils who have some difficulties with learning are making the same sort of progress as their classmates.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils enjoy the security and structure provided by school and they work hard at the tasks they are set. They listen attentively, persist with their work and respond well to questioning in a restrained way but animated responses and spontaneous enthusiasm are less evident than in many schools.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good behaviour all round the school makes a very significant contribution to the standards achieved and the happiness and wellbeing of its pupils. Exemplary behaviour is not unusual. Adults very rarely have to intervene but when they do, pupils react quickly and positively.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships throughout the school are very good and this is a key factor in the calm, ordered feel of lessons and playtimes. Pupils act in mature and sensible ways, are very polite and thoughtful, and carry out any responsibilities they are given with meticulous care. They work very well together in pairs and groups but, with few opportunities, rarely make choices or contribute their own ideas.
Attendance	Boys and girls are happy at school and attendance and punctuality are good

Boys and girls make a very good contribution to their own learning by the very good way they get on together and do whatever they are asked to do sensibly. However, many are unusually reticent in their responses and youthful exuberance is a scarce commodity.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	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.

Almost all teaching is at least satisfactory with most good and some very good. All teaching in Key Stage 2 is at least good. The quality of teaching is associated more with the person taking the lesson than with individual subjects but all literacy lessons were good or very good. Learning support assistants make a good contribution, especially in various 'booster' classes. In the one unsatisfactory lesson, a lack of specific planned learning objectives meant that the levels of challenge were poor. Pupils' often exemplary behaviour and application enhances learning but in many lessons, their hesitant and often muted contributions to discussions and questioning slows things down. Teaching strengths are the management of pupils and the use of homework. Expectations are high in years three to six but not high enough in the other classes.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Most pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 have equal access to a broad range of learning experiences with literacy and numeracy suitably emphasised. The taught curriculum in the foundation year is not as well developed and is not always appropriate for the needs of bright young children. Planning is usually based on national or local schemes of work, which ensure good coverage and progression in the mixed age classes. However, where this is not the case, as in design technology (DT) and in the foundation stage, the curriculum provided is weaker.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Children who show signs of not achieving as well as hoped are identified early and the school has good systems in place for assessing and meeting their needs and monitoring progress. Parents are fully involved in the process and appropriate and attainable targets in pupils' individual plans are updated regularly. Provision and support is good and pupils with special needs make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Staff make good provision for promoting pupils' personal development especially in the development of their social skills and attitudes and moral awareness which is good. Curricular provision for pupils to study and appreciate their own cultural heritage and celebrate the cultural diversity of others is satisfactory but insufficient attention is given to helping pupils to reflect on the more spiritual aspects of their growth.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Teachers and other staff know the children well and take good care for their safety and well-being. School procedures for these aspects are very good. Attendance and behaviour are monitored carefully to ensure that very good standards are maintained. Current assessment arrangements are adequate to keep an eye on academic progress and guide planning in the core subjects but information on other subjects is not recorded systematically. Staff keep an informed eye on pupils' personal development but few records are kept.

Parents are very appreciative of the work of the school and especially the high standards of attainment and behaviour it achieves. They feel very comfortable in their formal and informal dealings with school and make a very good contribution to its life and their children's learning. The general information provided for parents by the school is good but reports could be improved.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership & management by the headteacher & other key staff	In her final term in charge, the head is to be congratulated for handing on a school achieving high standards, with a stable staff, a healthy budget and a strong reputation in the community. Achieving this has taken some time and a lot of determination in dealing with difficult circumstances but she has been much helped by the staff team who have fulfilled their responsibilities well. Leadership and management are good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very supportive and keen for the school to succeed. They have appropriate arrangements for fulfilling their responsibilities, know the school well and are very aware of its strengths and limitations. Good quality reports are made as a result of classroom monitoring. The head and staff ensure that governors are fully involved in agreeing what needs to be done to improve and as a group and individually they are providing the school with necessary practical and moral support.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Much better use is being made of information from tests and other assessments to see where the school needs to improve but current data available is not detailed enough to track the progress of groups or individuals through the school. Classroom practice and planning is monitored regularly by the head and governors and all staff are involved in drawing up priorities for the school development plan.
The strategic use of resources	An historic lack of funding combined with a laudable decision to keep the staffing levels necessary for four classes plus high supply costs, has meant that the school has had to be very frugal in its spending. The situation is improving and the development plan ensures that funds are being targeted on what the school considers to be its priorities. Plans for enlarging a small class area and developing the unused kitchens will much enhance the learning environment. Teaching levels are adequate but budget constraints mean that fewer classroom assistants than usual are employed. Resources are generally sufficient except in design technology.

The head, well supported by her deputy and the governing body, deserves great praise for guiding the school through a difficult phase with much disruption and uncertainty to a position where stability has been achieved and where the oldest pupils achieve high academic and personal standards

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• their children enjoy going to school</li> <li>▪ teaching is good and their children are making good progress</li> <li>▪ the school is helping pupils to grow up sensibly and behaviour is good</li> <li>▪ pupils are expected to work hard and do their best</li> <li>• the work children are expected to do at home</li> <li>• the staff are very approachable and the school works very closely with parents</li> <li>• the school is well led and managed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The range of activities in addition to lessons</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with all positive comments made by parents and also that the range of activities provided in addition to lessons is less than in many similar schools.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Although the last inspection report said that standards at the top of the school were 'broadly in line with national expectations' in 1997, the school's results in national tests in English, mathematics and science were all well below average. Since then, results for school leavers have improved immensely to feature in the top five per cent of all schools in all three subjects. This is a remarkable achievement. The report also said that test results in year two for reading, writing and mathematics were 'broadly in line'. They were and have remained 'broadly in line' with small movements up and down ever since. Progress was said to be slow in the middle of the school.

2. Current standards in all aspects of literacy, numeracy and science match those noted above being well above average in English, mathematics and science in year six and broadly average in year two. With boys and girls entering the school with attainments above average this represents barely satisfactory standards and achievement in these aspects of the foundation stage, satisfactory in the core subjects in Key Stage 1 and very good in Key Stage 2. Similar progress per key stage is being made by pupils with special needs, most of which are low level. While a large percentage of pupils are working at higher levels in Key Stage 2, many fewer are doing so in Key Stage 1, especially in writing. Standards in speaking and listening are good throughout the school though many pupils are reticent to use their oral skills in class and need to be prompted. Progress in the middle of the school is no longer a problem.

3. In other areas of learning, children in the foundation stage make less progress than expected. Despite coming into school above average, they are only average in most aspects of their personal, emotional and social, creative and physical development and knowledge and understanding of the world when they finish their foundation year.

4. Several factors contribute towards the marked difference in results in national testing at seven and eleven years over the past few years. These include:

- assessments made soon after boys and girls start school underestimate what they already know, understand and can do
- not enough is expected of children in their first year and they are not challenged or motivated sufficiently to stretch their learning. For some, this continues into year one.
- with no other information to guide her, the inexperienced part-time Class 2 teacher has built on pupils achievements when they join her and they make sound and sometimes good progress in her lessons. However, this means that expectations are still too low.
- difficulties with staffing have meant that pupils in Class 2 have had a series of temporary or supply teachers for at least part of many weeks
- a lack of funds has meant that the school has not been able to afford very much extra classroom support in the infant classrooms while national initiatives have funded a good deal more in the older classes
- the cramped teaching area in Class 2 inhibits learning especially for younger pupils

5. Information technology has been a recent priority with the purchase of a greater number of more up to date computers and an investment in staff training and pupils' knowledge and skills are improving. However, overall standards are still below those seen in similar schools and ways need to be found to increase the amount of time individual pupils spend learning new techniques for them to catch up fully. With the school's rolling programme of development in the non-core subjects and shortage of funds, design technology has been somewhat left behind and standards are below what might be expected. In all other subjects including religious education, pupils are achieving at levels generally appropriate for their ages. However, in the case of older pupils this is some way below what they are achieving in the core subjects and the small group of year one pupils in Class 1 are not doing as well as the rest of year one.

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

6. Pupils' behaviour is very good, in and out of the classroom. Behaviour in class was never less than good and often very good and teachers spend virtually no time on class management. Children are extremely courteous and respectful towards adults and their manners are very good. They hold doors open without being asked and carry out any specialist tasks assigned to them, such as laying out the hall for assembly, with meticulous care. They respect their school and its equipment and treat their surroundings with care. Behaviour at lunchtime is very good. Pupils understand the routines, carry them out sensibly and are completely silent and motionless in assemblies, listening attentively and responding appropriately if they are asked questions. The whole school moves in and out of the hall with total precision and in silence. In conversation with individual pupils the inspection team found them to be polite and friendly, although hesitant about expressing their opinions. No child has been excluded in the past year.

7. Boys and girls have good attitudes towards school. They listen carefully to instructions and quickly settle down to work. All invariably concentrate well and try their best to carry out the tasks given them, even when faced with practical difficulties, as was the case when Class 3 were asked to draw on a plate with a waxed surface which was extremely resistant to crayons. Comments which pupils made on their annual reports show that they want to succeed at school and understand the importance of learning. Pupils spoke with pleasure of the school being 'like a family'; 'everyone gets on and we all know each other'. They are often compliant, rather than enthusiastic about learning: for instance they showed very little interest in the unusual objects from Sudan the vicar brought in to show them in assembly.

8. Pupils' personal development is good. They show respect for other people, listen courteously and cooperate extremely well, in class and in the playground. Children's relationships with members of the school community are generally very good, particularly with each other. At playtimes the whole school mixes well together. Boys and girls of all ages join in football games. Pupils are affectionate towards each other and are anxious to help friends if they suffer a minor injury. A group of older pupils expressed a strong desire to have a school council, with representatives from the different year groups. They felt that this could act as a body to give a lead in pupil fundraising activities like the Blue Peter appeals, present assemblies and help with playground disputes. They also wanted to have more say in school life; for instance they commented that the noticeboard for children was seldom updated and that they would like to make their own contributions to it. Older girls are particularly caring towards younger children, and enjoy playing games with them. Some older pupils said they would like to run activities for younger ones. They tend to be hesitant in putting forward their opinions, as distinct from answering factual questions, in and out of class.

9. Attendance is good, being above the national average in 2000-2001 (94.5% as against 93.9%); unauthorised absence was below (0.1% as against 0.5%) and authorised absence was also below (5.4% as against 5.6%). Pupils arrive punctually in the morning, put their coats away and quickly settle down to quiet activities in their classrooms.

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

10. In 1997, inspectors noted 'unacceptable variations' in teaching across the school with good teaching in the youngest and oldest classes and unsatisfactory teaching in the middle class described as a 'serious weakness of the school'. Although weaker teaching was not related to particular subjects, overall planning was said to 'lack coherence' and little use was made of assessment throughout the school.

11. With over two thirds of lessons now at least good, three of which were very good, and just one unsatisfactory lesson, teaching is much improved especially in the two older classes where all teaching is good and better. Several factors contribute to this including:

- good appointments of new staff by the governing body
- the decision to move from three to four classes to reduce class sizes and the age spread in each class

- the resolution of problems with pupils' behaviour so that it is very easy for teachers to manage their classes which they do very well
- the impact of the implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies on teaching styles through the focus on learning objectives, balance of whole class and group teaching and use of the final summing up session
- much improved planning and day to day assessment in literacy and numeracy and its use in modifying planning to match work to group and individual needs
- the contribution of teaching assistants has been much enhanced by training and the establishment of more focused group and individual teaching roles
- the impact of performance management as a spur to the more systematic evaluation of teaching by senior staff and its impact on planning for improvement and professional development

12. Boys' and girls' contribution to their own learning is a real mixture. On the positive side, hardly a minute was lost during the week by teachers having to deal with misbehaviour or to 'nagging' pupils to get on with their work. In fact, pupils' ability to concentrate on whatever was going on and to apply themselves to any task is very good. Good examples of this were observed right across the school from reception children busily filling their time in self-chosen tasks to years five and six coping with the potentially embarrassing topic of growing up as 'sensibly' as asked for. On the other hand, pupils' muted response to teachers' explanations and questions, and to opportunities for them to discuss and make suggestions, often made these sessions laboured and much less interesting or productive than usual. For instance, when on a visit to the fire station, children were offered the chance to put on a helmet, only two hands went up, much to the fireman's surprise. A planned 'discussion' in a very good literacy lesson actually only amounted to a question and answer session because pupils only responded to the teacher and not to each other's contributions.

13. The main difference between the best and least good teaching was in the match of the work provided and the expectations the teacher had for the quality and quantity of work her pupils produced. In very good literacy and numeracy lessons in the top class, the teacher planned meticulously to stretch individual pupils learning in the area being studied. In the numeracy lesson, this meant a whole range of groups with focused tasks, very good support for those who needed it and an implicit expectation that everybody would (and could) do their best. This ranged from consolidating work on adding decimals, to being given the area of shape which involved decimals and calculating the possible lengths of sides this would imply. The very good use of extra help was also in evidence in these sessions with the well-trained teaching assistant supporting groups working on an old 'SATs' paper in the numeracy session and learning -ence and -ance words in similar ability groups in literacy.

14. In contrast, in one of a series of largely unstructured afternoon session in the youngest class, children were presented with a series of activities, some of which had the potential for real learning such as the 'Fire Station' role play area, but none of which placed any demands on their learning or personal development. Children played happily on low-level tasks one of which involved a teaching assistant with an art background helping a small group to cut out materials to stick on a cut out fireman. In several good, very well planned, prepared and managed lessons, all that was missing to make them very good overall was an 'ounce' of energy and motivation to make the learning process more stimulating and fun, and encourage pupils to be more confident and animated in their responses.

15. An important extra feature in the teaching/learning process is the very good use made of homework in Key Stages 1 and 2. Many examples of constructive and useful work being set and the very good response of pupils and their families were observed. Very good home/school reading records are a good example of this with evidence of very regular reading and lots of constructive and encouraging comments from home and school.

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

16. The curriculum for the foundation stage is unsatisfactory. Although the school is fully

aware of the nationally agreed foundation curriculum and areas of learning for young children, it has not developed a scheme of work based on the stepping stones to the Early Learning Goals. In the absence of a structured scheme of work for this stage the progression of skills required to achieve targets in their learning cannot be easily identified and progress is difficult to track. The resources for play are very good but play is rarely planned with a clear purpose and often fails to challenge children. Since the last inspection the school has developed its outdoor play resources but currently these are under used and children have too few times when they can engage in vigorous physical play.

17. In the rest of the school the National Curriculum and religious education are satisfactorily covered in most subjects, although coverage of design and technology has suffered from a lack of resources and by not having a plan of work consistently followed throughout the school. Good emphasis on the teaching of English, maths and science and the literacy and numeracy strategies ensures these are well developed aspects of the curriculum. Pupils have well planned opportunities to use literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects such as history, geography and art, when they make their own reference type topic books on subjects such as India and the Aztecs and create mathematical patterns in art.

18. Most subjects have policies in place, but some foundation subjects do not have planned schemes of work that every one follows. The impact of this is particularly evident in Key Stage 1 where year one pupils are divided between two classes. Without schemes of work and in the absence of joint planning between the two teachers, year one pupils do not always cover the same things or have the same learning opportunities and progress between the two classes is inconsistent.

19. The school does not yet have a policy or a programme of work for pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education. Consequently, this important part of their learning is not well covered with little development to pupils' knowledge and awareness of things such as drugs and too few times for pupils to discuss significant things which affect their lives. The school has already taken some steps to address the weaknesses in this area of the curriculum. Boys and girls have equal access to the curriculum and the few pupils who find learning difficult are suitably supported and included.

20. Holt Primary School provides a limited number of extra curricular activities; currently there are football and recorder clubs after school. It has tried to provide other activities after school such as French, choir, sewing and athletics but after initially being well supported, enthusiasm has waned and clubs have had to be cancelled because of lack of support. Pupils often make visits to places of interest both locally and further away to support work in a variety of curriculum areas. They have recently visited Trowbridge museum and fire station, the seaside at Weymouth, and year five and six have a residential visit every two years to a centre in Cornwall. The school also benefits from regular visits from musicians and theatre groups.

21. Links with the local community and with other schools in the area are good. People from the community often come into school to talk about their jobs, or share a particular interest or skill. Recent visitors have included a vet, a nurse, policeman and a retired judge. The school has very good links with the local playgroup and pupils take part in a wide range of activities with other local primary and secondary schools. Each year all small schools in the area take part in a music production organised and hosted by one of the feeder secondary schools and this year the school is taking part in a dance festival as a combined secondary / primary project.

22. Arrangements for developing pupils' social skills and awareness are good. They are frequently expected to work cooperatively, in pairs or groups as assigned by their teachers and also regularly cooperate with other small schools for creative and sporting events. The school is very much part of the wider village community: its events are central to village life, the local clergy play important roles, most of the pupils live within walking distance, and the school gets involved in local charitable appeals. The school strongly promotes regular fundraising for national charities, for instance for Red Nose Day, Barnardos, and the Children in Need appeal. In addition, after a member of staff visited Sarajevo to work with the charity 'Homes and Hearts' a special link was

established with this charity. Provision is made for pupils to understand something of the world of work: for instance during the inspection younger pupils were focusing on 'People who help us' like firemen and nurses. However, they have few opportunities to exercise leadership and take responsibility.

23. Provision for pupils' moral development is good. A clear code of conduct for pupils is prominently displayed about the school with a strong expectation from their earliest days in the school of teaching them to know right from wrong. Examples of good behaviour or helpfulness are publicly rewarded through the awards system. Teachers provide good role models through their relationships with each other and with pupils. Assemblies and religious education lessons deliver clear messages about moral issues. For instance, a religious education lesson for reception and year one pupils centred around the story of the lost sheep clearly explained that we are all special and everyone matters. However, the structuring of assemblies, particularly the fact that they are all whole-school events, militates against pupils having any opportunity to debate. Lessons are often very teacher-directed, with pupils expected to listen and give factual responses rather than express their views or consider difficult ethical and personal issues.

24. The school makes satisfactory provision for developing pupils cultural awareness. It follows approved programmes of study for art and music and boys and girls are given opportunities to study some works by great artists such as Picasso and Henry Moore, and to create their own works in imitation. They take part in Christmas productions presented alternately by the infants and the juniors, the most recent being the Russian folk tale 'Babushka'. Pupils have enjoyed visits from travelling drama groups and a puppet theatre. Opportunities are given for them to develop their creative writing skills in English and when pupils from the oldest class entered a national poetry competition, nearly all their entries were selected for publication. The school tries to provide opportunities for boys and girls to learn about other faiths and cultures; for instance, they study Judaism and Islam in religious education. Two local residents have talked about their experiences of life on a Pacific island and in the Sudan; and two parents, one from Thailand and one from India, have talked about aspects of their home culture. A Holocaust Memorial Assembly, based around the story of Anne Frank, was held on Holocaust Memorial Day. However, few multicultural books are available in the school, particularly fiction. Pupils have limited opportunities to experience the art and music of other cultures. An older group said they would like to see more pupils' work displayed around the school, and to be able to spend more time doing art and music.

25. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. The school aims include respect for Christian values while stressing need for toleration of other races and faiths, and pupils study Islam and Judaism as well as Christianity. A small display in the foyer includes the artefacts used in assembly (such as a candle and a Bible) as well as pictures of the former church school buildings and a vase of flowers. Assemblies, while fulfilling statutory requirements, were not occasions for joy and celebration of the Christian or other faiths. Pupils play a mainly passive role in them and their limp uninspired singing went unchallenged. They have few moments for reflection in assembly or in the classroom. The school does not seek opportunities to stimulate, amaze and excite pupils with the wonders of the natural and man made world. Thus when pupils found a bird's nest in the grounds, they were simply told to put it on one side; no effort was made to demonstrate the nature of its manufacture, which could have contributed to children's scientific or artistic development.

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

26. Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupil welfare are very good. The headteacher as the child protection liaison officer has had appropriate training and has had good support from Barnardos pre-school outreach service. New staff are briefed verbally on this issue and are also given written guidance. Staff provide a good level of supervision at playtime with only one class using the adventure play area at a time and two first aiders on the staff, both have up-

to-date qualifications. The school follows local authority procedures for more major accidents involving health professionals. Specialist treatments for individual pupils, such as an epipen, are kept in a locked cupboard in the headteacher's room and administered following local authority guidelines. The school does not administer other medication. A first aid cupboard is sited in a classroom by the playground but there is nowhere for sick pupils to sit away from public view, which pupils say that they do not like.

27. The governors carry out an annual full risk assessment using a local authority checklist. Termly checks are made to ensure action has been taken on any perceived hazards, and class teachers submit written assessments of their classrooms. The school has no caretaker and any repairs are done by outside workmen. All cleaning equipment is kept in a locked cupboard. Electrical items, physical education equipment, fire fighting equipment and other items are checked annually by appropriate contractors. The fire alert system is checked weekly. Bells inside and outside the school alert pupils and staff and the fire brigade is satisfied with the school's provision. The school has a security entry system installed through the good offices of a governor, with security lights outside. Neighbours keep a close eye on the premises out of hours. Although local children and teenagers play on the site out of hours and during school holidays, the school has never suffered any damage, vandalism or burglaries.

28. Good procedures are in place for monitoring and improving attendance and punctuality. The school uses an electronic system to record and monitor attendance and the administrative officer will telephone parents if a child is absent without explanation, but this is rarely necessary. Staff are happy to help if family difficulties such as illness are making a child late for school. Most pupils walk to school from within the village and unpunctuality is rare. The school works closely with the educational welfare service, and has found it very helpful as a means of liaising with other outside agencies.

29. Procedures for monitoring and improving behaviour, and for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour, are good. The school has high expectations of its pupils' behaviour which, combined with their very good knowledge of them as individuals, enables them to manage behaviour very effectively. Staff use a consistent system of sanctions and rewards as outlined in the school's behaviour and discipline policy. The school code of conduct, which consists of ten Golden Rules agreed in consultation with pupils, is prominently displayed around the school and in all classrooms. Habits of good behaviour are so well instilled into pupils that teachers need do very little on a day-to-day basis to control them.

30. The school makes satisfactory provision for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development. Annual reports include comments on pupils' personal development which show that staff have a very good personal knowledge of their pupils. A prominently displayed awards board in the school foyer has an accompanying book which gives details of the reasons why pupils' names are displayed, whether for academic achievement, helpfulness, good behaviour or effort. They are encouraged to play cooperatively by the provision of a range of playground toys including a giant draughts set and skipping ropes. The school nurse gives the oldest pupils information on growing up and the changes brought about by puberty. Circle time sessions are used occasionally, particularly amongst the younger pupils. However, this is irregular because there is no planned scheme of work for personal, social, health and citizenship education. Monitoring of personal development is entirely informal with no formal recording systems. Although pupils are given a range of tasks around the school such as delivering registers to the office, or setting out the hall for assembly, older pupils have few recent or regular opportunities to develop their independence and sense of responsibility; to express their views on school life, for instance through a school council; to work with younger ones, such as through shared reading or through organising a club; or for pupils to choose and plan their own fundraising activities. Few opportunities are offered to them in lessons to make choices, experiment and develop independence in learning.

31. Satisfactory procedures are in place for assessing pupils' attainment and progress which is an improvement since the previous inspection when they were judged to be unsatisfactory. Since then, the school has concentrated on improving assessment in the core subjects of

English, maths and science but has not yet adopted any formal assessment procedures for the foundation subjects. The school now has an assessment policy and a programme for further development. In English, pupils undertake a standardised reading and spelling assessment task every year and two writing assessments are carried out each term. These are kept and moderated against national curriculum targets. They provide a very useful record of pupils' progress in writing and teachers generally use this information well to help pupils improve. All teachers keep a record of pupils' progress through the reading scheme but few make any comments which would help to identify where and why pupils may be having problems. In Maths and science pupils carry out a task each half term which assesses their knowledge and understanding against key learning objectives in these subjects.

32. Provision for assessing children's progress and attainment in their foundation year is not well developed and although they undertake a base line assessment at entry this often under estimates what they know and can do. The reception teacher has recently done some training related to assessing children against the progressive steps towards the Early Learning Goals and is about to review assessment procedures for children in their first year in school.

33. Most teachers know their pupils well with good examples of teachers using day to day assessment in lessons to plan individual help for pupils who are finding some idea or skill difficult to learn. Since the last inspection the school has developed a marking policy and pupils' work is regularly marked but few comments are written on their work which suggest how they can improve. Most pupils work hard and are anxious to improve but they are not set individual targets for their learning and therefore are not sure how they can get better. While arrangements for assessment have got better there is still a need to develop procedures further to ensure that there is enough information to track the progress of groups and individuals throughout the school in all subjects and that all pupils are receiving a curriculum appropriate for their learning needs.

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

34. Parents' contribution to children's learning at school and at home is very good. They are extremely supportive of their children's learning. Virtually all parents hear their children read regularly in the younger age groups, and many continue to do so in later years. They willingly provide artefacts, baking materials or other items to support learning as requested by teaching staff. Many parents give their children access to computers at home and support their learning in information technology.

35. They also have a very good impact on the work and life of the school. The energetic Holt School Association organises a stream of social and fundraising events throughout the year, which involve many villagers apart from parents. Fundraising events include Christmas and summer fairs, a Strawberry Cream tea, a race night, cake sales for each class, and a sponsored 'Spring Clean' of the village. Social events include children's discos and an Easter egg hunt. Parents are kept regularly informed of association activities by its newsletter. During the seventeen months prior to September 2001 the association had given the school over £7000, including the funding for the adventure play area. A number of parents come into school on a regular basis to help with reading, and parents are always available to help with offsite visits such as, during the inspection, the fire station. Parents accompany pupils to weekly swimming lessons on a rota basis.

36. The school works hard to maintain its very good links with parents. Many parents have long-established relationships with the school through older children who have now left the school, and most live close to it and bring their children on foot. This informal, community feel is greatly valued by parents. Staff are readily accessible before and after school and parents can consult the headteacher at short notice. Parents are given clear guidance on how to complain and who to complain to in the prospectus. A home/school/child agreement spells out everybody's obligations clearly, and the school will always consult parents at once if they have any sort of concern about a pupil. More formal links include all pupils having reading record books, and older ones having homework diaries as well, with parents invited to write comments or queries in either. Parents are also invited to make written comments on their children's reports.



Questionnaires on various projects are sent out to parents and their responses are used to modify school development plans. Parents of children with special educational needs are kept well informed of their progress and of any changes in their individual educational plans.

37. Information for parents is of good overall quality. The prospectus and the governors' report fulfil statutory requirements. They give parents clear information in a good format and are nicely illustrated by pupils' drawings. The prospectus offers clear guidance to parents of pre-school children on how to prepare them for school, gives good information on the curriculum and details of homework. Two parent consultation evenings and one open day are held per year. The monthly newsletters give a good picture of school activities past and yet to come and include curriculum information for all classes at the start of each term. A numeracy workshop evening was well attended, and the school holds meetings to inform parents about the statutory assessment tests for years two and six. A parents' noticeboard gives details of local play activities and childcare, as well as copies of the latest newsletters. Reports are of a satisfactory standard. They include comments from pupils, parents, and the headteacher, as well as an assessment of personal development by the class teacher. Targets were intelligible to pupils, for instance 'learn the four times table'. Comments on English, mathematics and science gave some idea of pupil attainment, although no information was given to show whether children were working at an appropriate standard. Comments on other curriculum subjects were often the same for different children and tended to refer to the content of the study rather than to pupil attainment.

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

38. In 1997, inspectors concluded that there were 'weaknesses in the overall management of the school by the headteacher, staff and governors', following an unsettled period with frequent changes of staff. This was crystallised as a need to 'introduce more systematic and rigorous monitoring of classroom provision and the implementation of curriculum policies by senior managers and governors' in the issues the school was required to address. 'Failure to ensure a consistent level of satisfactory teaching' was described as a serious weakness.

39. Good leadership and management has led to the present very healthy position of the school in the community, the good quality of education it provides and the high standards achieved by school leavers. This has taken a good deal of resilience and determination by the headteacher and the governing body, who, in substantially improving the environment of the school and the education it provides while dealing with a series of staffing and funding issues, deserve great praise.

40. Since the last inspection, the head has focused the attention of the school community on driving up basic standards by concentrating on improving teaching and learning. As the staffing difficulties have been resolved, she has made good use of the expertise of the largely new staff in working for this improvement. Notable in this has been the contribution made by the deputy head in the areas of assessment and numeracy, and the literacy coordinator in her role. Both strategies were well implemented and sensible decisions were made about managing the rest of the curriculum. However, with most other issues resolved, this is an area which is ready for more concentrated attention.

41. The governing body now acts as a considerable force for good in the school. This has been very important over the past few years where they have provided very necessary practical and moral support for the head. Many bring considerable expertise to the governing body and all are very keen for the school to succeed. They have a well defined and understood structure of committees and individual responsibilities and a clear programme related to the priorities identified in the school development plan. The curriculum committee ensures that they take their monitoring role very seriously, visiting regularly and giving and receiving feedback to and from the head and staff on the effectiveness of various developments. Very good lines of communication are maintained with staff and the parent body. A good example of their efforts on the school's behalf is the very strong case they are making with the local authority to make the Class 2 room big enough for the number of young pupils it houses.

42. Classroom and other monitoring was noted as an area for improvement at the last

inspection and a great deal more time and effort has been put into regularly evaluating planning, teaching and what pupils are doing. However, this has understandably concentrated on English and mathematics and there is a need to extend classroom monitoring to other areas of the curriculum. This has been enhanced by the implementation of the performance management programme. The deputy head helps staff and governors to keep a close watch on standards and trends by analysing information from national and other assessments. Through this, staff are becoming increasingly aware of what is necessary in their own class and throughout the school to continue the improvement in pupils' achievements. Taken together, this has helped staff to identify ways to make the developments through the school development plan (SDP) that have resulted in ever improving provision. The current SDP continues to provide a practical agenda for the school with all the necessary elements.

43. Overall financial planning to support the school's educational development is good. Funds have been tight in the past few years as the school paid off a budget deficit and continued high supply costs have not helped. However, the school is now in the black and has the scope to make many more choices. The arrangements for financial control and administration are good and audit recommendations have been addressed. Effective financial procedures provide valuable support to the headteacher and governing body. Good use of information technology by the administrative staff supports the management of the budget and specific grants are used for designated purposes. The school administrator provides a very friendly and efficient service to the whole school community and the day-to-day running of the school is managed very effectively with a minimum of fuss and much good humour.

44. Teaching staff are suitably qualified for their roles and teaching assistants are mainly well used, especially in the area of special needs and in supporting designated groups. However, the budgetary constraints noted above have meant that, especially in the two younger classes, teachers have received much less of this support than in similar schools. Another consequence of the shortage of funds is the fact that resources in several subjects are reaching their sell-by dates and the possibility of directing funds to these areas will be very welcome. Design technology is particularly under-resourced while information technology has benefited from a considerable investment in equipment and training. Although the room which houses Class 2 is too small for the numbers it contains, the rest of the buildings are more than adequate for most areas of the curriculum. Recent improvements to the outside area have considerably improved the play and work environment for children.

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

45. To build on the consistently high standards achieved in national testing and ensure that pupils achieve well throughout the school academically and personally, the governors, headteacher and staff of Holt VC Primary School should:

- (1) Ensure that boys and girls in their first year in school are involved in challenging, well planned activities designed to move them across the stepping stones to the early learning goals and onto the National Curriculum as soon as they are able by:
  - assessing accurately what children understand and can do in relation to the agreed stepping stones and using this as a basis for planning work which challenges and motivates
  - developing a structured scheme of work for the foundation stage based on national and local guidelines

- planning weekly and daily activities with a clear stated purpose and precise learning objectives for children’s learning in all areas
- providing many more opportunities for pupils to make choices and decisions and plan what they do and how and when they do it to achieve the agreed objectives.  
(Paragraphs 14, 16, 47,49 , 50, 53, 54 & 55)

(2) Make it possible for boys and girls to achieve well in literacy, numeracy and science throughout the school and not just in Key Stage 2 by:

- formally accepting that most children are capable of reaching much higher standards in years one and two than they are at present
- developing existing assessment arrangements so that the information relates to known standards and can be better used to track the progress of individual pupils and set learning targets which can be shared with them
- providing pupils with stimulating and challenging work at their own levels based on this information and expecting them to rise to the challenge  
(Paragraphs 4, 56, 59, 62, 63, 65, 71, 72 & 78)

(3) Develop a planned programme for supporting pupils’ personal, social, health and citizenship education to ensure that they all cover the recommended areas in a coherent and progressive way by:

- revisiting and reviewing the school's audit of existing good practice
- using National Curriculum non-statutory guidelines to create a framework of knowledge, skills and understanding for each year group
- fitting current good practice onto this framework and evolving activities and strategies to fill in the gaps this leaves
- developing an uncomplicated way of monitoring pupils’ progress in this area using the agreed framework  
(Paragraphs 30)

#### **OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL**

- the non-core subjects are not as well developed as the core  
(Paragraphs 5, 18, 40, 42, 84, 85 & 88)
- pupils have few opportunities to exercise leadership or take real responsibility  
(Paragraphs 22, 23 & 48)
- current arrangements for recording assessment information do not lend themselves to monitoring the progress made by individuals or to setting individual targets  
(Paragraphs 31, 33, 64, 69 & 89)
- pupils' often subdued responses in class inhibits learning  
(Paragraphs 6, 7, 8, 12 & 57)
- few multicultural books are available in the school  
(Paragraph 24)
- pupils' annual reports do not relate to national standards and are not sufficiently specific in non-core subjects  
(Paragraph 37)

#### **PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS**

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

Number of lessons observed

24
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Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

16
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##### ***Summary of teaching observed during the inspection***

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number		3	13	7	1		
Percentage		12	54	29	4		

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR– Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		103
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		29

#### English as an additional language

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

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.4
National comparative data	5.1

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	9	8	17

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	7	8	8
	Girls	6	7	8
	Total	13	15	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	76 (86)	88 (86)	94 (86)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	8	9	9
	Girls	7	7	6
	Total	15	16	15
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (86)	94 (86)	88 (93)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	7	6	13

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	7	7
	Girls	6	6	6
	Total	12	13	13
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	92 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	7	7
	Girls	6	5	6
	Total	12	12	13
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	92 (100)	92 (100)	100 (100)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	1
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	85
Any other minority ethnic group	

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

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

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

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

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y6**

Number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.4
Average class size	24.75

#### **Education support staff: YR– Y6**

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	27

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001
	£
Total income	232019
Total expenditure	220314
Expenditure per pupil	2295
Balance brought forward from previous year	-11448
Balance carried forward to next year	257

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0.6
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	103
Number of questionnaires returned	53

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	72	23	6		
My child is making good progress in school.	60	38	2		
Behaviour in the school is good.	57	42	2		
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	51	40	9		
The teaching is good.	70	26	2		
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	57	11		
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	25		2	
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	36			
The school works closely with parents.	53	42	4		2
The school is well led and managed.	49	40	9		2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	62	34			4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	33	17	8	4

### Other issues raised by parents

## **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**

46. Children start school at the beginning of the academic year in which they are five. Currently fifteen children are in their foundation year in a class with five year one pupils. They are now in their third term in school and many are already five. The school has close links with the village playgroup and other pre school providers and this, as well as regular pre school visits, helps to ensure that children settle into school well. The reception class benefits from having a large attractive space to work in, with easy access outside. The class teacher has worked hard to create a bright, well resourced and carefully organised classroom and has valuable part time help from classroom assistants, parent volunteers and students.

47. Attainment at entry is above that expected of most four year olds and the majority will achieve the targets set nationally by the end of their foundation year. The school is fully aware of the nationally agreed foundation curriculum but has not yet developed a planned programme of work based on this. Planning is imprecise. Activities rarely have a clearly stated purpose or precise learning objective and it is not clear how children's knowledge, understanding and skills will be extended or what the intended outcomes are. This lack of precise planning and challenge hampers progress for many children, especially those who start school with already well developed skills and concepts. In the absence of a structured scheme of work, the progression of skills required to achieve targets in their learning cannot easily be identified and progress is difficult to track and assess. This is a weakness in the provision for the foundation stage. The previous report did not identify any weakness in the provision for this stage.

#### **Social, personal and emotional development.**

48. Boys and girls have well developed personal and social skills. They work and play happily together, strive hard to please and most listen carefully to adults and other children. Most respond well to tidying up and are very well behaved, helpful and prepared to share resources without fuss. Many are able to comment appropriately on the social and moral aspects of the bible story 'The lost sheep' understanding the idea that we all matter and the ideal is for everyone to live happily together. Boys and girls sit quietly and attentively in assembly times. Most look after themselves but occasionally they are too dependent on adults such as in fastening up aprons. Some suitable opportunities for children to make choices about what they will do and record their choices on a job board are given but activities are often over directed by adults. Children have too few opportunities to take responsibility and decide what they will do and how they will do it. This was particularly evident in art activities.

#### **Communication, Language and Literacy**

49. Boys and girls make progress in their reception year and most will achieve the goals set nationally for children of this age, but despite their above average attainment at entry to school, few will achieve beyond this. Most children speak very clearly and are very good at expressing themselves when they are motivated by an interesting topic. In whole class discussion times, most are confident in making contributions and give clear, precise explanations, as in the case of the child who clearly described the role of the fireman and the safety rules that he must adhere to in his work. However, adults do not always give sufficient time for children to talk at length about what they are doing or what they understand and feel. Boys and girls are beginning to form recognisable letters and most can write their names but many writing tasks are tightly directed with not enough opportunities for the children to experiment with their own invented writing. Although a well set up writing area has been arranged in the classroom, few children were seen to choose or were prompted to use it.

50. A significant number of children show a good knowledge of the names and sounds of letters and display a growing awareness of how books are organised. They confidently point to the front cover and title. Some know the illustrator creates the pictures and the author writes the



story. A number can read simple texts. They obviously enjoy listening to stories being read to them by adults. The teacher has created a very well resourced, attractive book area and a good display of books related to the current topic 'People who help us'. However, children were not observed choosing to use the book area to browse through books on their own or with a friend or looking at the topic books on display.

### **Mathematical Development**

51. Children's attainment in mathematics is satisfactory. In the introduction to numeracy lessons children demonstrate that they can count and recognise numbers to ten. They enjoy singing and playing well rehearsed number rhymes and games that involve adding and subtracting. Most know the names and properties of basic 2D shapes and some know some 3D shapes. The numeracy lessons seen revised this already secure knowledge of shapes and there was little evidence of any new learning taking place. Some follow up group activities, such as colouring in workbooks and sticking tissue squares to make pictures, lack a clear learning intention and have little challenge for the majority of these children.

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

52. Boys and girls are making steady progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world in which they live. Children make good progress in their understanding of the role of people who help in the community, when they make a well-organised visit to Trowbridge Fire Station. On their return they talk eagerly about oxygen masks, walkie-talkies, the role of firemen, firemen's tools, lights and climbing on the fire engines. They are enthusiastic and highly motivated by the visit. The role play area is very well resourced as 'Holt Emergency Centre' and children, mostly boys, are keen to play out what they have seen and learnt. The teacher made a good photographic record of the visit and some children look at the photographs and successfully recall aspects of their visit. Others write thankyou letters to the fire station, colour in pictures of a fireman and a small group make a large collage type picture.

53. However, other learning opportunities from this visit are not well exploited. No opportunities were planned, for example, to design and make fire appliances and equipment with construction kits, plan and layout routes or explore the use of hoses and pump. Children did look at a picture of an old fire engine with their teacher and make some comparisons between the old engine and a new one and this made a positive contribution to their understanding of time past. The room contains a wide variety of construction kits and a big area for children to build and make things in but, with no specific planning for this area, children rarely undertake a task which will challenge their technological skills.

### **Creative development**

54. The range of opportunities for children to respond in different ways to experiences and express and communicate their feelings through art are limited. A very well prepared art area has been set up with a wide range of materials carefully labelled and accessible to the children. However, adults closely direct all activities in this area and children were not observed making their own choices and decisions about what to do and what to use. The paint is ready mixed and other materials such as tissue paper are pre selected by the adults, consequently children rarely make their own personal responses to what they see, know and feel. They enjoy singing and moving to music. The class teacher plays the guitar well and uses this skill suitably to encourage children to sing rhymes and jingles on a daily basis.

### **Physical development**

55. Many classroom activities give children the chance to practise and develop skills with their hands. They have ample opportunity to handle small tools for cutting, sticking, colouring, drawing and writing. Most are developing good control and show increasing skill in this, although a few still have problems with their cutting skills. They enjoy the times when they are able to use the hall for movement lessons but some of these lessons are too tightly controlled by the use of pre-recorded tapes. Children have few opportunities and not enough time to respond creatively or test, challenge and develop their skills further. At the time of the last inspection little provision was made for outdoor play but there is now a good selection of large outdoor toys and wheeled vehicles. However, these were not seen in use during the inspection.

## ENGLISH

56. When the school was last inspected in June 1997, standards at the end of both key stages were said to be 'in line with national expectations' though in fact the results in national testing for eleven year olds that year showed standards to be below the national average. Since then, test results have shown a massive improvement in standards in reading and writing in year six but almost no improvement in year two. Current standards in the two year groups reflect this trend with eleven year olds achieving standards in English well above average while the standards of seven year olds are average overall but with reading better than writing. The minority of pupils with relatively low-level special needs are making the same sort of progress as their classmates, that is satisfactory in years one and two and good and very good in the older classes.

### Speaking and Listening

57. When talking to pupils individually or in small groups, they show themselves to be articulate and to possess a wide vocabulary if not as confident as expected. In class, they are certainly good listeners and have no problem concentrating or in interpreting what they are being told. Working with classmates they talk about their work animatedly and willingly share ideas. However, most of the time, their spoken responses to questions or when giving opinions in whole class or group sessions are much more muted and hesitant with the teacher having to work quite hard to draw out contributions. This was well illustrated in a sharing assembly where boys and girls of all ages celebrating their work were very reticent and subdued in their responses to prompts from their teacher and the head. However, in reality, pupils' oral skills, though sometimes hidden, are better than those found in most schools for the ages of the pupils concerned.

### Reading

58. Overall standards in reading by the end of year six are well above the national average, and a significant number of pupils read very well. Most boys and girls in years three to six read confidently and accurately for a range of purposes, talk about their books and offer opinions about them. All can identify at least one author and most are able to make comparisons between a number of different authors. Along with their year five classmates, year six enjoy analysing texts as part of their literacy work as when they compared two accounts of dreams noting similarities and differences. If anything, reading standards in year five are even higher with some pupils confidently stating that they prefer one text because it is active and includes speech. Pupils in years three and four are developing their reading skills systematically, making good progress and achieving above average standards with some very fluent readers. A regular quiet reading session at the beginning of the afternoon encourages them to try a variety of literature including their reading book, a library book or a comic and they enjoy the opportunity. Pupils in the older classes use information from research well, understand how the library is organised and make good use of the computers to gather information through the Internet.

59. Pupils in Class 2 are heard to read regularly (as are pupils in the two older classes) both at home and, with the valuable help of parent volunteers, in school. Reading materials are well matched to their needs and they are very aware of strategies such as the use of phonics and the context to work out the meaning of words they have not come across before. They are operating at broadly average levels with some very able and some less able readers. The small group of year ones in the class are making even better progress and are all ahead of where they might be expected to be. However, the group of year ones in Class 1 is some way behind.

### Writing

60. The work in year six pupils' books shows that they cover a good range of writing and regularly practice ways of improving the accuracy and style of their written work. The teacher, who is very aware of what it takes to show improvement, is very good at making constructive comments on pupils' work and ensuing work shows the impact this has. Year fives working alongside their older classmates more than hold their own and their work shows that they have made very rapid progress over the year. In the lesson observed, it was hard to tell year five from year six from the lists of similarities and differences between the two 'dream' texts being studied, with all responses at a high level. An important additional factor in this class is the very good

contribution made by the teaching assistant in working with small groups at specific literacy tasks.

61. In Class 3, pupils work shows a good improvement from the beginning of the year. A middle ability year three child progressed from 'I was at the seaside and I was jumping waves' in print style with little punctuation to well presented, joined up writing using a range of connectives and punctuation including speech marks and commas. In suggesting that 'wretched', 'annoying' and 'horrible' would be better adjectives than bad, and by knowing that adding '-tion' or '-sion' to verbs creates nouns, they show that they have a good understanding of parts of speech. Work in the books of year two pupils in Class 2 is much less well presented and in most cases, barely what might be expected with more able writers still using poorly formed writing, inconsistent punctuation and simple sentence structures. However, year ones in the same class show good ability to write instructions clearly, in some detail with good attempts at spelling. Year ones in Class 1 have not made the same progress though recent good input from a teaching assistant is helping them to catch up a little.

62. Standards of handwriting and presentation of work are good in the older classes but not as good in the younger classes. Pupils practise forming their letters correctly but writing is not joined legibly in many cases until year three. Older pupils continue to develop the school style using a pen. Spelling is increasing in accuracy and pupils refer to wordbooks and dictionaries independently. Good strategies are in place to continue to raise the standard. Pupils are taught and learn spelling rules systematically, practise spelling and develop the use of words. They are encouraged to identify and use common spelling patterns and recognise words within words.

63. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is consistently good in Classes 2,3 and 4. All lessons observed were at least good with one very good in the top class. Teachers manage the classroom very well and create a calm working atmosphere where pupils can learn effectively. Lessons are brisk and teachers are continually assessing pupils' knowledge and understanding. In a good writing session in Class 3, the teacher adapted her lesson when she realised that her pupils were interested in synonyms for 'bad'. Work is matched to the needs of pupils and good use is made of additional support staff during lessons. Teachers share lesson objectives with the pupils to help them focus and return to them at the end of the lesson to assess understanding. However, not enough is being expected of the small group of year one pupils in Class 1 and they are making much slower progress.

64. Sound assessment procedures support teachers in planning and good marking helps pupils know what they can do and what they need to do to improve which is helping them to do better. Test results, carefully analysed by the deputy head teacher, are used well to set targets for the whole school. However, there is scope for developing ways of setting down pupils' achievements that can be used to evaluate progress and set individual targets. Resources are satisfactory and library facilities have improved since the previous inspection. The management of English is good and the coordinator is working hard to support her colleagues in raising standards in the subject throughout the school.

## **MATHEMATICS**

65. Evidence from this inspection indicates that eleven year olds will get the same very good results in their tests as last year and that the continued improvement at Key Stage 2 since the last inspection has been remarkable. However, less progress has been made in Key Stage 1 and pupils are expected to get results similar to last year and similar to those at the time of the last inspection. The very good progress in Key Stage 2 is largely the result of high teacher expectation, improved teacher knowledge and expertise, regular analysis of gaps in children's learning, and a new scheme which regularly tests pupils' achievement. However, standards in Key Stage 1 remain too low..

66. Most boys and girls in Key Stage 1 make satisfactory progress and by the end of year two most seven year olds know their 5 and 10 times tables. They add two digit numbers and deal with simple division sums. Most understand that a fraction is part of a whole number and can deal with

halves and in some cases quarters. Higher attaining pupils work on doubling numbers and finding the difference between two digit numbers, but have difficulty when presented with a problem such as 'Find a pair of numbers with a total of forty and a difference of four.' Year 1 pupils, in the same class as the seven-year-olds, benefit from taking part in mental maths sessions with the older pupils and many accurately answer questions aimed at their older classmates. The written tasks for the six year olds, sometimes lack challenge, for example, they too quickly and too easily complete a worksheet which requires them to take away numbers from ten when they are clearly already very competent at doing this. However, year ones in Class 1 have not made the same progress and are well behind year one pupils in Class 2.

67. In Key Stage 2, pupils are making very good progress. Lessons start with brisk, challenging mental warm up sessions where children show a very good ability to recall multiplication and division facts, double and half numbers and play games such as 'countdown'. The main part of lessons involves the pupils in lots of good, well-matched activities to teach and reinforce ideas and skills being taught. Years three and four pupils thoroughly enjoy a function machine game, which requires them to quickly subtract 10 from two and three digit numbers or in the case of higher attainers, subtract multiples of ten. These pupils show a very good understanding of mathematical vocabulary and are well able to explain ideas such as partitioning and minus numbers. Years five and six pupils work with decimals. The work is very well matched to their differing abilities and while some work on adding and subtracting decimals, other higher attaining pupils use decimal calculations to solve problems relating to mathematical ideas such as area.

68. Mathematics teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and with some very good teaching in Key Stage 2. Planning is thorough and systematic with learning outcomes clearly identified. Mental maths "warm ups" are brisk, pacy and fun. Pupils are well managed and clearly know what is expected of them. All classes include two year groups and consequently a wide range of abilities with a few children who find learning difficult, but teachers know their pupils well and work and questions are generally very well matched to the needs of all individuals. However, in Key Stage 1, some work is insufficiently challenging for the youngest children and just occasionally some tasks for the higher attainers are too difficult. This is largely because the teacher is newly qualified and as yet has not had enough experience teaching the subject. Resources are well prepared and teacher's expectations are high in Key Stage 2. Well presented displays in classrooms help reinforce learning and remind pupils of relevant mathematical vocabulary.

69. Boys and girls have very good attitudes to their work. They respond particularly well to practical activities and to the regular opportunities provided for them to apply their mathematical skills and knowledge in games and other relevant situations. All are well motivated, work hard and are exceptionally well behaved in lessons. Pupils work well together and share equipment without fuss. They help one another when appropriate and try hard to please their teachers. A number say that mathematics is their favourite subject. The standard of presentation of pupils work in Key Stage 2 is very high with many examples of very neat, careful work well laid out in pen in their maths books. However, pupils in Key Stage 1 record most of their work in mathematics on work sheets, prepared and set out by adults. They have few opportunities to learn to set out their maths work for themselves and take pride in what they have done.

70. The curriculum is well planned and is firmly based on the National Numeracy Strategy with a commercial scheme to support and extend it. Good examples of maths being used in other curriculum areas were observed such as in art where years five and six explore the properties of 3D shapes when designing containers and years three and four make intricate designs with patterns. Assessment arrangements have improved since the last inspection with an assessment task carried out by all pupils to assess their learning against the key objectives for the half term. This information is suitably analysed to assess current standards and identify strengths and weaknesses. However, at the moment pupils do not have individual targets based on these assessments for improving their own performance and consequently they are not always sure about what they need to do to improve. All pupils regularly take work home and most have weekly table tests. Work is regularly marked and marking sometimes includes constructive comments to help pupils recognise how they can improve, but this is not a regular feature of most

teachers marking.

71. The coordinator has considerable expertise in the subject and is making a good job of leading in maths. Her clear targets for the subject include developing information technology links with maths and further improving assessment. She monitors teachers planning carefully and has had some useful time to monitor teaching and learning. However, there is now a need to ensure that standards in Key Stage 1 match those of Key Stage 2 and that she is able to support teachers who are less confident and experienced in the subject.

## **SCIENCE**

72. In the last report, standards were said to be 'average' with uneven progress across the school directly related to the quality of teaching. However, the results of national testing conducted the month before the inspection said that standards in science were well below average! Overall improvements in teaching as noted in the teaching section plus the adoption of the local authority scheme of work in two year rolling cycles to provide structure and progression has seen a massive improvement in standards at the top of the school. In the past two years the school has featured in the top five per cent of all schools for its year six results and current standards are just as high. Pupils are achieving well in years three and four and very well in years five and six. However, in common with English and mathematics, standards in year two remain broadly average. Year one pupils in Class 2 are making good progress and achieving well but those in Class 1 are not. The achievement of year two pupils over the past year has also been good with pupils making good progress from a low base.

73. There is little evidence of focused scientific activity by year ones in the reception class although boys and girls covered the topic of 'Green plants and the environment' last term. However, in Class 2, years one and two have covered the full range of the agreed curriculum in some detail and work in their books shows good progress over the year with work on electricity including circuits; light, dark and the solar system; the properties of materials including an investigation and fair testing; and work on waterproofing materials and its use in buildings. In the lesson observed, pupils were planning an investigation on the impact of water and light on plant growth. Younger pupils worked with the teacher to set up an investigation and older pupils using a plan with headings such as 'This will be a fair test because' do it on their own. For some, the idea of finding if a plant needs light or water by not giving it any is difficult to 'see' but all understand plants need both. In the summing up session, good ideas for depriving plants of water included 'just keep it inside and leave it'.

74. Work in books from pupils in Class 3 shows that pupils in years three and four have covered a similar range of topics as those in Class 2 but at a higher level. Work on insulation involved an investigation in which the temperature of insulated and uninsulated liquids was taken and graphed over time to show the impact of the cotton wool used. Work on light extended to considering transparent, translucent and opaque materials. In current work matching Class 2, the idea had been extended to a sunflower challenge where pupils tested their understanding by deciding what conditions they would like to provide for their own sunflower seed to grow in. Pupils debate how deep to plant, how much water to use, what will happen if the seed is planted upside-down and what should be measured to judge the 'best' plant. To finish the lesson, they write down what they have done on Day 1 in their 'Flower Power Diary'.

75. A strong feature of work in the books of pupils in the older class is the use of 3\*, 4\* and 5\* scientist self-evaluation sheets to enable pupils to know what they need to learn to improve and to celebrate doing so. Again all the topics covered in the younger classes feature over the two years at the next level. So work on materials includes the effects of temperature on changing the state of materials and whether this change is reversible. Work on plants looks at photosynthesis and fertilisation and on light includes the phases of the moon. During the inspection pupils were exploring food chains. This was a new topic for year five who drew a simple chain using the appropriate vocabulary such as predator while year six took it in turns to use a computer programme to explore food chains or write their own for insects or animals of their choice. All year sixes also have the opportunity to work through a computerised 'mock' test paper in

preparation for national testing in a few weeks.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS**

76. Though in the week of the inspection, pupils in at least one key stage were observed learning in most foundation subjects, the total number of such observations per subject was inevitably small. No design technology lessons or activities were available for inspection. Where possible, evidence from the total of ten lessons observed was supplemented by brief 'snapshot' visits to lessons, the analysis of teachers' planning and work completed this school year, and by discussions with pupils.

77. To avoid repetition and provide a solid base for judgements about teaching and other aspects of provision, art, design technology, geography, history, Information technology, music, and physical and religious education are reported on as a group, with strengths and weaknesses pinpointed.

## **THE FOUNDATION SUBJECTS - ART, DESIGN TECHNOLOGY, GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, MUSIC, PHYSICAL AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

78. Boys' and girls' achievements this year in Classes 2, 3 and 4 are appropriate for their ages in most of these subjects in both key stages with design technology (DT) lower in both key stages and standards in information technology growing through the school but lower than in most schools. Boys and girls are making sound progress through both key stages in most subjects including information technology with slower progress in DT. However, it is important to note that the small group of year ones in Class 1 are not experiencing the same curriculum as year ones in Class 2 and not making as good progress in these subjects. It is also important to note that standards in all these subjects in years three to six are not as good as those obtained by the same pupils in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with special educational needs are routinely included, well-supported and making satisfactory progress, especially in the more practical aspects of the above subjects.

### **ART AND DESIGN**

79. In Key Stage 1, six and seven year old pupils look carefully at the Kodak book 'Children as Photographers'. They learn about using viewfinders and how to look through the viewfinder of a camera. Boys and girls enjoy using a cardboard viewfinder to decide which aspects and angles of their partner's face will make a good photograph. They show soundly developing drawing skills when they represent the 'snapshot' of their friend with a pencil portrait. All pupils get the opportunity to use the digital camera and the composition of many of their photos is very good. Years three and four pupils currently study the work of modern artists such as Mondrian, Riley, Klee, Leger and O'Keefe and there are many good examples of the pupils work in the style of these artists. These include careful intricate black and white designs in pen in the style of Bridget Riley and creative pictures in wool and acetate in the style of Fernand Leger. They have access to a good variety of media and when they look at Georgia O'Keefe's picture of poppies they have a good choice of materials to use. In years five and six the topic is '3D World' and their studies in art relate to sculpture and other 3D art techniques. They talk confidently about their style and the materials used by several sculptors and have made a book of famous sculptors using information researched on the Internet. Currently pupils are working hard on designing and making their own 3D containers in link with design technology and have made careful drawings of how they wish to see their boxes when they are finished.

### **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

80. No specific design and technology lessons were observed and few examples of work in the subject were observed around the school. The five and six year olds in Class 2 have looked at the story of 'Tilleys House' and made a replica of the house and its contents with boxes and other materials such as pipe cleaners, sponge and wood. They are very proud of the finished result and some can talk about how they made some of the furniture. In years three and four some good work is displayed on the design of food packaging. Some designs are computer generated. Years five and six are studying the topic 3D world and are successfully designing and making their own

containers and boxes. In discussions with pupils few are able to talk about significant things they have designed and made in school. The subject does not feature largely in teachers' planning and in the absence of a consistently used and adopted scheme of work progression in the subject is limited without a clear focus for pupils' learning.

## **GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY**

81. Only one history lesson and one geography lesson was seen during the inspection but some good examples of pupils work in these subjects undertaken over the last two terms were noted. The work seen indicates that pupils are making steady progress in these two subjects. Pupils in years one and two are currently looking at the environment around their school. In a satisfactory lesson seen, they were gaining a sound understanding of the term route and their local area, when they plotted their route to school and successfully identified features such as hedges, fences, buildings and the lollipop lady. In Key Stage 2 all pupils have beautifully presented individually made topic books in which they keep and record all their work in history and geography. Boys and girls are very proud of these and very willing to discuss the work in them. In years three and four the majority of the work in geography relates to a study of the Gambia and a comparison of life in the Gunjar region and life in Wiltshire. Pupils have covered and learnt a wide range of geographical skills through this topic and are able to compare the physical and human features of both areas. They have successfully used and drawn maps and researched information using their computer skills. Boys and girls have set up links with the Gambia and written to pupils of their own age who live there. Pupils are keen to talk about this work and recall with pleasure some aspects of the topic. In years five and six, good work in pupils topic books on India shows that they have a sound knowledge of the environment, the people and some significant places. They make careful comparisons between life in India and life here.

82. The one history lesson seen was with years five and six pupils and was well linked to their current topic on the 3D World. All pupils had conscientiously looked for pictures of old and new buildings as part of their homework and presented their findings to their classmates. They commented on some of the features of the buildings and make comparisons as to age, design and purpose. The last major history topic was on the Aztecs. Carefully presented work in their topic books indicate that they have covered a wide range of information about the Aztec civilisation and that they are gaining a sound understanding of time past and the ways in which we find out about it. In years three and four, pupils remember work on the Egyptians undertaken last term. They are able to recount the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb and correctly recall the names of the men who discovered it. They talk with some relish about the process of mummifying bodies and work which they undertook relating to finding out about artefacts. Five and six year olds have done some work on the Victorians and have shared the story of 'Tilley's House'. They made a replica of the house with recyclable materials and some can remember a few facts about that and work on Farleigh Hungerford Castle in preparation for a visit as part of a topic on 'Homes'.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

83. ICT has a much higher profile in the school than it did at the time of the last inspection when it was a key issue. With an infusion of new equipment and staff training, there is a great deal more activity in the subject as already noted in several sections above. Teachers are making much better use of computers as a tool in other subjects such as word processing in literacy lessons, researching the work of Georgie O'Keefe in art and plants and food chains in science. Teachers planning shows other work using a graphics programme to reproduce artwork in the style of Mondrian, database work using 'Junior Pinpoint' in work on plants and the use of a control and monitoring programme linked to numeracy. Standards across the school are obviously much higher than they were in 1997 and are improving over time but with much increased expectations nationally, pupils will need to spend even more time working in this area if they are to catch up. A big advantage in this area is the fact that most children have access to computers at home and are already confident in using them.

## **MUSIC**

84. Music has a low profile in the school with no pupils learning orchestral instruments, only a few learning the recorder and none observed using them during the inspection week, and the

quality of singing in assembly disappointing. However, pupils in each class have regular music lessons some of which were seen during the inspection. The small number of year ones in the reception class have regular opportunities to sing traditional rhymes such as 'Farmers in the Den' and sang a fireman action song they had learned in a sharing assembly. The rest of year one, along with year two, have a really good time selecting instruments to represent the 'secret' weather their teacher asks them to emulate. The rest listen hard and very sensibly make their suggestions as to what the played sounds might represent with the teacher drawing out vocabulary and suggesting different ways of playing the instruments. Plans for year three and four show they are midway through a series of taped programmes entitled 'Omutugwa' with nine songs to learn from different African countries and opportunities to compose and play. The top class work in mixed fours inventing their own notation for a variety of instruments played loud or soft as a precursor to moving on to composition. As ever, they cooperate and share extremely well and, with a lot going on, each group is always in control and productive.

### **PHYSICAL EDUCATION (PE)**

85. A variety of activities were observed during the inspection in the hall, on the field and at a swimming pool in a nearby town. These, and teachers planning for the term, show that pupils are experiencing the full range of the subject; for instance Class 3 will cover swimming, Kwik Cricket and athletics skills this term, and the top class had just finished a series of lessons on tag rugby taken by a visiting coach. However, with the subject identified for action in the current curriculum cycle, the school does not have a cohesive scheme of work and progression in skills and understanding cannot be guaranteed. Years three and four thoroughly enjoyed their final session at the pool; younger infants shared in a movement lesson using a pre-recorded tape and younger juniors practised their games skills. A good example of work in PE involved the oldest class practising their throwing, hitting and catching skills in preparation for moving onto games such as rounders and cricket. By building up from working in pairs to fours and then four-a-side games, pupils had plenty of opportunity to practice the three skills in team then competitive situations. Performance levels for most of these activities looked to be appropriate for the ages of the pupils taking part.

### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (RE)**

86. With the current Key Stage 1 and 2 topic being Judaism, teachers planning and lessons observed showed how this topic is being interpreted at three different levels to match the needs on the pupils concerned. So while younger pupils have been studying the synagogue as a 'special' place, pupils in the top class have looked at the difficult current topic of the three faiths that currently 'share' Jerusalem as a holy place. In a good RE lesson, well matched to the ages and maturity of the boys and girls involved, the Class 3 teacher helped pupils to understand the importance of the Passover meal in Judaism as well as the symbolism of the various items involved. Matzoh bread provoked a good deal of discussion and the homework of roasting eggs was one of the more unusual but more thought provoking seen. Pupils' books show good coverage of the rest of the agreed syllabus, mostly from a Christian perspective such as an interpretation of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm in Class 4 and an analysis of the old and new testaments in Class 3. In addition, moral issues such as an analysis of 'I am David' and a consideration of Fair Trade and a World Charter feature as well as work about Islam at the end of the previous year. An additional positive factor in pupils experience of religion are the regular visits made to the school by local clergy to take part in acts of worship.

### **TEACHING AND OTHER PROVISION IN THE NON-CORE SUBJECTS**

87. Teaching in all the subjects where lessons were observed was almost all good especially in Key Stage 2. At the time of the last inspection it was satisfactory in most subjects with some unsatisfactory lessons so this represents a good improvement. Several factors have contributed to this, many already noted in the 'How well are pupils taught' section, plus in addition:

- the adoption of national and local schemes of work in several subjects has helped teachers to focus their planning more on learning objectives rather than activities
- a big improvement in equipment and staff expertise and confidence in ICT has provided an extra teaching tool and source of information in other subjects



88. With a small staff, the development of non-core subjects has been prioritised within a curriculum management cycle where various subjects are selected for inclusion in the school development plan (SDP) for action or review with others pending. After their year's focus, subjects then enter the monitoring and evaluation phases. Midway through the process, improvements can be seen in those subjects in the front of the queue such as ICT and RE but design technology is a good example of a subject that has assumed a very low profile in the school as it waits at the back. It would perhaps have been better to have formally adopted national schemes of work across the board to ensure some consistency and adequate coverage until such subjects could be properly dealt with. The school's Key Stage 1 and 2 curriculum maps set out the topics to be covered in rolling programmes but there are obvious gaps and with only one history and geography topic each year in Key Stage 2, it is questionable whether this will ensure adequate coverage.

89. A lack of systematic assessment and monitoring systems in the non-core subjects was noted in the last report and this is still the case though the development of these procedures is noted in the SDP. Some materials have been collected but the school has not developed portfolios of pupils' work in these subjects to act as exemplars of good practice and pupil's achievements. As yet, very little classroom monitoring of work in the non-core subjects by coordinators has taken place but governors have had the opportunity to observe a range of activities in action.

90. A long term shortage of funds has meant that resources in most of these subjects have got a little 'tired' though in most cases, with the help of the local library resource service, they are still adequate for the purpose. ICT is an exception with much improved provision being put to good use across the curriculum especially as a source of information. DT is again the poor relation with a real shortage of tools and equipment to motivate teachers and pupils to get more involved in the subject. A transfusion of new materials and equipment in most of the non-core subjects is overdue and, with funding problems resolved, is now possible. The very well developed outside area is an exception to the above with a whole range of recent developments well suited to being exploited in these subjects. This includes facilities for outside PE but, although the school is fortunate to have a large hall for a school of its size, the large equipment installed is not very suitable for young children to use.