

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SQUIRREL HAYES FIRST SCHOOL**

Biddulph

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124062

Headteacher: Jean Betts

Reporting inspector: Peter Kerr

23583

Dates of inspection: 17<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> June 2002

Inspection number: 195367

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Springfield Road Biddulph Stoke - on -Trent Staffordshire
Postcode:	ST8 7DF
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Sue Harper
Date of previous inspection:	10 <sup>th</sup> June 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
23583	Peter Kerr	Registered inspector	Equality of opportunity Mathematics Information and communication technology Music Religious education	Information about the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
19504	Judith Telfer	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
10611	Martin James	Team inspector	Areas of learning for children in the foundation stage English History Geography Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
25433	Pat Richards	Team inspector	Provision for pupils with special educational needs Science Art and design Design and technology	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This Community First School has 146 pupils on roll aged 3 to 9. The nursery and reception classes cater for 79 children, the youngest of whom attend part-time. All but two pupils are of white United Kingdom ethnic background and all speak English as a first language. The school is situated in one of the most deprived electoral wards in the country. Children's attainment on entry is well below average overall and very low in communication and language skills. There are 36 pupils on the register of special educational needs, many of whom have problems relating to Dyslexia. The school is a member of the Dyslexia Friendly Schools initiative. A small number of pupils among the 18 pupils with significant needs exhibit very challenging behaviour. Four pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed and the school has undergone a complete turnover of teaching staff.

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

This is a good school that provides consistently good teaching enabling pupils to make good progress. Standards are at least comparable to those in similar schools at the end of Year 2 and above the national average in writing. Standards at the end of Year 4 are below what would be expected at this stage, but no data is available to compare with similar schools. The school takes exceptionally good care of its pupils and provides very well for their personal, spiritual, social and moral development. The school is well led and there is an excellent team spirit among the staff. The school's resources are efficiently managed and it gives good value for money.

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

- Excellent provision for the pupils' welfare and very good provision for their personal, spiritual, social and moral development very strongly reflect the school's main aims and values
- Teaching is of good quality throughout the school and challenging behaviour is managed very well indeed
- Provision for children in the nursery and reception is very good
- Pupils have very good attitudes, relationships and personal development
- Good learning opportunities are provided with an excellent range of extra clubs
- Leadership is very good and there is an excellent team spirit throughout the school

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

- Standards in mathematics
- The planning of activities to enable pupils of all abilities to make suitable progress

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

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

The school was last inspected in June 1997. The headteacher has ensured that high quality provision for the pupils' welfare and personal development, and an excellent family atmosphere have been maintained during a complete change of teaching staff since then. Good improvements have been made in: provision for pupils' spiritual development; teaching and learning in Years 3 and 4; progress made by pupils with reading difficulties; the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and the role of subject co-ordinators. Of the areas identified as key issues, in the previous inspection report, standards in writing have improved substantially at the end of Year 2, but are still too low at the end of Year 4. Lessons are planned much more carefully, but still do not always cater for the highest attaining pupils. The computer suite and library have greatly enhanced pupils' personal study skills

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	All schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
Reading	D	E	B	A*
Writing	C	C	E	C
Mathematics	D	E	E	D

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

Children enter the nursery with well below average attainment, especially in language and communication skills. They make good progress throughout the nursery and reception, but begin Year 1 with below average attainment in most subjects including English, mathematics and science.

### *Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 2*

The trends in the table above show that:

- standards in reading improved from well below average in 2000 to very high (in the top 5 per cent of similar schools) in 2001, reflecting the extra work the school put in that year on reading
- standards in writing fell back in 2001 from average to well below average, but were still average compared to similar schools
- standards in mathematics remained well below average from 2000 to 2001

The provisional results of the 2002 tests are:

- Reading: below the national average (D) but above similar schools (B)
- Writing: above the national average (C) and well above similar schools (A)
- Mathematics: well below the national average (E) but in line with similar schools (C)

These results reflect the school's emphasis on writing this year, and continue the trend of lower results in mathematics. The inspection found that standards in writing are above average at the end of Year 2 this year. Standards in reading and mathematics are below average.

Boys do less well than girls in the national tests, mainly because there are more boys than girls with special educational needs in most year groups. Pupils of both genders achieve equally well relative to their previous attainment.

### *Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 4*

Standards are below average in English and mathematics at the end of Year 4. This does not reflect the current work of the school, as some of these pupils joined the school between Year 2 and Year 4.

### *Standards in science and particular strengths and weaknesses in other subjects.*

The results of the school based assessments in science at the end of Year 2 were below average in 2001. The inspection found that standards in science are average overall at the end of Year 2 and Year 4, but above average in experimental skills. Standards are average in ICT throughout the school and pupils are beginning to use their skills well in other subjects. Standards in physical education are above average at the end of Year 4 and the quality of singing is above average throughout the school. In design and technology, pupils have good designing skills, but use too narrow a range of tools and material in Year 3 and Year 4. In all



other areas of the National Curriculum and in religious education standards are average at the end of Year 2 and Year 4.

Progress is good in lessons throughout the school and most pupils achieve well, compared to their previous attainment, in most subjects. Achievement is satisfactory in mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in completing the tasks they are set because of the good support they receive. However, the highest attaining pupils do not always achieve as well as they might because the tasks they are given are not matched closely enough to their needs.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy school, work hard and take part with enthusiasm in the wide range of opportunities on offer
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The vast majority of pupils are very well behaved. A small number of pupils with challenging behaviour are managed very well. One pupil was excluded for a fixed period during the past year.
Personal development and relationships	Very good overall. The majority of pupils enjoy excellent relationships with each other and with adults and are mature and responsible
Attendance	Slightly below average despite school's best efforts. Most absences are for minor ailments.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is consistently good throughout the school. It is particularly good in the Nursery and reception, where excellent teamwork is rooted in very good knowledge and understanding of the children's needs.

English and mathematics are taught well throughout the school via the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Lessons are well planned and well organised. The basic skills of literacy are taught well overall. Writing is currently taught particularly well in Year 2. Teaching is good overall in mathematics lessons, but teachers do not challenge higher attaining pupils sufficiently to explain their thinking and apply their skills to more difficult problems.

Very good management of pupils with challenging behaviour ensures minimal disruption to the learning of others, especially in Years 3 and 4, where the problem is most acute.

Teachers' lesson plans are good in all subjects. They often provide well organised, interesting and exciting activities that make it fun to learn. They give clear instructions and explanations, helping pupils to understand exactly what is expected of them. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported, although tasks are not always sufficiently well matched to individual pupils' existing knowledge.

The quality of learning is good throughout the school. Children in the Nursery and reception show high levels of interest, concentration and independence because of the very good range of stimulating activities provided. In Years 1 to 4, pupils concentrate well and put in good levels of effort, especially in physical education.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school provides a good curriculum, enriched by a good range of visits and input from the community. The range of extra curricular activities, including sport and music, is excellent
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils receive good support in lessons, but the tasks they are given are sometimes too difficult
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Very good provision for pupils' personal, spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils are encouraged to value themselves and each other, develop good relationships and accept responsibility. Provision for cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Excellent child protection and welfare procedures. Very good care and guidance. Satisfactory tracking of educational achievement.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents	Good. The school provides very good information for parents and does its best to involve them in the life of the school. Parents have very positive views of school and make a satisfactory contribution to their children's learning.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very clear leadership and has a very effective partnership with the assistant headteacher. The inexperienced subject co-ordinators fulfil their responsibilities well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities well and have a productive working relationship with the head and the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This aspect of management is in the early stages of development. The need to settle in new members of staff and consolidate a team spirit has justly taken precedence over detailed development planning.
The strategic use of resources	Good financial planning and control ensures that all funds received are spent appropriately. Governors seek the best value in all purchases. There is a very good match of teachers and teaching assistants to the needs of the pupils. The accommodation and resources available to support learning are good.

## 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>Parents are very pleased with almost all aspects of the school's work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The amount of homework given</li> </ul>

The team supports the parents' extremely positive views of the school.

No individual parents made comments about homework, so it was unclear whether the feeling was that the quantity was too much or too little. The team judged the amount of homework given to be satisfactory.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Children enter the nursery with well below average attainment overall, especially in language and communication skills. Progress is good overall in the nursery and reception classes and the children achieve well. By the time they leave the reception class, their attainment is at the level expected in personal and social, creative and physical development, but is still below expectations in communication, language and literacy, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world. This means that pupils in Year 1 start from a below average base in English, mathematics and science. Children with special educational needs are identified and supported appropriately. They are fully included in all class and group activities and make good progress relative to their previous attainment.

#### ***Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 2 – including the results of national tests.***

2. There was a downward trend in the school's results in the national tests at the end of Year 2 in reading until 2001. The results improved dramatically in 2001 because of concerted efforts by the school. They slipped back slightly in 2002 (when the support was diverted to writing), but remained above average compared to similar schools. The trend in the results in writing was upwards until 2001, when standards slipped. The school concentrated on raising writing standards during 2001 – 2002. As a consequence, the results improved to above average compared to all schools and well above similar schools. The inspection confirms the improving trend in English. Inspectors found that pupils are making good progress in lessons. They achieve well and reaching average standards overall and above average standards compared to similar schools. Standards are above average in writing and average in listening, but are still below average in speaking and reading at this stage.

3. Despite improving from 1998 to 2000, the results in the mathematics tests remained well below the national average overall from 1997 to 2001. 2002 saw an improvement. Although the results were still below the national average, they were average compared to similar schools, suggesting an upward trend. The inspection evidence confirms that standards are beginning to improve. Pupils are now making good progress in lessons, and their achievement overall is satisfactory compared to their previous attainment.

#### ***Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 4***

4. Standards are below average in English at the end of Year 4. Pupils have satisfactory listening skills, but their speaking, reading and writing skills are below average for their age. Pupils do not speak or write at sufficient length. Spelling and handwriting are also weak at this stage and pupils do not read aloud fluently enough or with sufficient expression. Current standards do not reflect the school's input, however, because this class contains pupils who have joined the school during Year 3 and Year 4. Progress is good in lessons, and pupils achieve well compared to their previous attainment.

5. Standards in mathematics are below average at the end of Year 4. Pupils' knowledge of number facts is insecure and they are not very confident in using their skills to solve practical problems. Pupils are now making good progress in lessons, however, following recent staff changes, and their achievement is satisfactory compared to their previous attainment.

### **Standards in other subjects**

6. Standards in science, as measured by teachers, were below average at the end of Year 2 compared to the national picture in 2001. However, the school has worked hard to remedy the situation since then. Inspectors found standards for the current Year 2 to be broadly average, with above average experimental skills. Standards are also average at the end of Year 4.

7. Standards in ICT are average at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. Pupils make good progress in lessons, with examples of very good learning, because of the systematic way in which the subject is organised and taught. Standards in art and design, design and technology, geography, history, music and religious education are average at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. Standards in physical education are average at the end of Year 2 but above average by the end of Year 4. This good achievement in physical education reflects the good start pupils get off to in the Nursery and reception, the constantly good quality of specialist teaching throughout Years 1 to 4 and the excellent gymnastics and games clubs provided after school.

8. In relation to their abilities, pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they are supported well in most lessons. Support includes extra help from the teacher or learning support assistants within the class, and additional support from the special needs teacher in smaller groups. This good provision helps them to complete the set tasks and achieve well in relation to their earlier attainment. However, planning for these pupils, for example in mathematics and science, does not always pay sufficient regard to their particular needs. As a consequence, although they usually complete the work, their understanding is sometimes insecure.

9. Boys' results are lower than girls' results in the national tests at the end of Year 2. This is mainly due to there being more boys than girls with special educational needs in most year groups. The school recognises this problem and has taken some steps to address it. For example, books of interest to boys have been provided to encourage them to read more. The inspection found that boys and girls have equal opportunities to make good progress in all subjects and achieve equally well relative to their prior attainment.

10. Overall, pupils achieve well in relation to their previous attainment. However, inspectors found that on occasions, higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they could, especially in mathematics and science because they are not sufficiently challenged by the tasks they are given.

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

11. The pupils' attitudes, relationships and personal development are very good and have improved since the last inspection. Their behaviour is good overall. Parents are pleased with how the school helps their children to behave well and to become mature and responsible. Inspectors found that the pupils' maturity helped them to get the most out of the range of learning opportunities provided by the school.

12. First among the school's aims is to "raise the children's self-esteem through an atmosphere and learning environment where children are happy and self-confident." This aim is fulfilled very well indeed. The pupils enjoy lessons as the teachers often make learning fun, for example through number games in the nursery or the quality of musical sounds in the reception class. The pupils are eager to learn, and have the confidence to ask questions. They work hard and are keen to improve, for example in challenging lessons in physical education throughout the school, where the lively teaching is infectious.

13. The pupils take part with enthusiasm in the wide range of opportunities offered by the school. Large numbers come to the breakfast club every day. The lunchtime and after school activities are well supported. The pupils' active participation in gymnastics and games clubs helps to raise standards in physical education to above average. Their enjoyment of singing in the choir is reflected in good performances in assemblies and school productions. The residential visit is enjoyed by all Year 3 and Year 4 pupils and improves their personal and social development.

14. Most pupils are very well behaved in lessons. They listen attentively and obey instructions quickly and quietly, helping them to make good progress. They are polite to one another and respectful to visitors. Furniture and equipment is treated with care. Behaviour around the school is good, contributing to the calm and orderly environment that encourages learning. Most individuals work and play happily in the positive and mutually supportive atmosphere. Most pupils see playtimes as an opportunity to let off steam after concentrating hard throughout lessons, so behaviour is lively and robust at times. A small minority of pupils, mainly boys, have difficulty in complying with the school's expectations as far as their behaviour is concerned. These pupils usually respond well to the school's disciplinary strategies and very little teaching time is lost.

15. Older pupils become reliable, responsible members of the school society. They are quite independent and undertake research well. As they get older they perform a wide range of important tasks conscientiously and well. These include distributing fruit to each classroom, putting away toys at the end of breakfast club and working as play-leaders.

16. Pupils establish very good relationships with other pupils and with adults. They work together well, caring for each other and celebrating one another's successes. The pupils cooperate well, as seen in the choir and the football club, or when small groups spontaneously get together to make sculptures at playtime. They show respect for the feelings of others; there is no evidence of racism or sexism in the school.

17. The level of attendance is just below the national average and has fallen since the last inspection, despite the school's best efforts. It is diligent at recording the reasons given by parents for the pupils' absences and has a low level of unauthorised absences. Most absences are due to minor ailments, reflecting the health problems associated with the relatively low socio-economic conditions of the area. The habitual absence and/or lateness of some pupils slows their progress, but the school does all it can to help them to catch up.

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

18. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, when it was good or better in just over half of the lessons seen, with some unsatisfactory lessons. In this inspection, teaching was at least satisfactory in all of the 29 lessons seen, good or better in 24 of the lessons and very good in six lessons.

19. Teaching has improved throughout the school. In the nursery and reception, it is now at least good in all lessons and was very good in half of the lessons seen. This represents very good provision for children in this age group. In Years 3 and 4, big improvements have been made to achieve consistently good teaching. It was in these classes that the quality of teaching was weakest at the time of the previous inspection, with unsatisfactory teaching in some lessons.

20. The consistently good teaching in the nursery and reception classes is rooted in the teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of children's needs. This is coupled with a strong team spirit, in which teachers and teaching assistants work very closely together in

planning, organising and supervising a very good range of stimulating activities. The staff make very good use of available space. For example, on occasions, they open the whole area up so that all the children have access to all the activities. This helps to meet the needs of children in the reception class who still need some nursery level activities and for children in the nursery who are ready to try out more demanding reception activities. Very good records are kept of individual children's progress so that daily activities can be matched to their emerging needs. All the adults show great sensitivity and skill in the way they judge when it is best to talk with the children and when to let them play independently. This helps the children to achieve very well in their personal and social development and to become very independent in their choice of activities and in their learning.

21. All teachers in Years 1 to 4 are fully conversant with the requirements the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, and use these well to teach the basic skills in English and mathematics. English and mathematics lessons are well planned and well organised, with a good mix of whole class teaching and individual and small group work. When the school focuses on a particular aspect of these subjects, teaching becomes even more effective. For example, in Year 2, very good teaching of writing in Year 2 helped to raise standards in the national tests in 2002. In the previous year, when the emphasis had been on reading, similar improvements were achieved. In areas that receive less emphasis, teaching is not quite so effective. For example, too few planned opportunities are given to pupils to speak and write at length in Year 3 and Year 4 to improve the fluency of their reading. In mathematics, all the appropriate ground is covered in each year group and basic mental number skills are taught well. However, much of the pupils' work is untidily presented, with few explanations of how problems have been solved or of the results of investigations. The fact that most of their work is recorded on plain paper has a bearing on this. For example, pupils in Year 4 found it difficult to write large numbers correctly without the guidance that squared paper offers for placing numbers in the correct place-value columns.

22. In all subjects, teachers plan lessons well and ensure that a good supply of suitable resources is available. They generally manage the lessons time well, although on occasions spend a little too much time talking to the whole class. The activities they provide are often interesting and exciting, making it fun for the pupils to learn. Teachers give clear instructions and explanations that help the pupils to understand exactly what is expected of them, showing good knowledge of the National Curriculum. In design and technology, however, there is a need for teachers to update their knowledge about the range of materials and tools that pupils should be learning to use in Years 3 and 4.

23. As a result of the consistently good teaching throughout the school, pupils acquire knowledge, skills and understanding at a good rate and put in good levels of effort. Their work-rate is especially high in physical education because of lively demanding teaching. This contributes strongly to their good progress and the achievement of above average standards. In most lessons, the vast majority of pupils work hard and sustain concentration. The pupils show good levels of independence in their use of reference books and computers, including the Internet, reflecting the improvements that have been made since the last inspection to library and computer provision, and the higher expectations teachers have for them to learn for themselves. On occasions, expectations could be even higher for the more able pupils. For example, in some lessons, individual pupils raise questions that suggest interesting and rewarding lines of enquiry, which are not followed up because teachers plan to cover the same ground with all the pupils. Marking is used well to ensure that all pupils complete the work that is set, but is not often used to encourage higher attaining pupils to tackle more demanding work, especially in mathematics and science.

24. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall and supports their learning well. The last inspection report found that these pupils were not always

sufficiently challenged by the tasks set for them. This is no longer the case. In fact, on occasions, the tasks given to some pupils with special educational needs are too demanding. Teachers ensure that individual pupils have adequate support to complete the work, but they do not always fully understand it. The teaching assistants assigned to individual pupils do a very good job in maintaining their self-esteem through praising them and encouraging them to do their best. Teachers reinforce this well through fully including these pupils in rewards for effort and achievement.

25. In most classes in Years 1 to 4, there are a number of pupils, mostly boys, who exhibit very challenging behaviour. Teachers manage these pupils extremely well, ensuring minimal disruption to learning of others. However, some disruption is inevitable to their own learning, especially when they have to spend time outside the classroom.

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

26. The quality and range of opportunities for learning provided by the school are very good for children in the nursery and reception, and good for pupils in Years 1 to 4. All statutory requirements are met.

27. The curriculum for the nursery and reception children is very good. Detailed long-term plans successfully incorporate all the areas of learning that should be taught to children before they enter Year 1. Lesson planning is comprehensive and children have access to a very wide range of interesting activities and learning experiences. A rich and varied curriculum is the result. Teachers and teaching assistants have a very secure knowledge of the children in their care, and the curriculum is effectively tailored to meet their needs.

28. The curriculum in Years 1 to 4 is appropriately broad and balanced, with suitable provision made for the majority of subjects. In design and technology, however, the range of materials and tools used by Year 3 and Year 4 pupils in their work is too narrow. The provision for physical education goes beyond what is expected; this is contributing to the higher standards being achieved in the subject. ICT is used successfully to enhance learning in a number of subjects, such as mathematics, geography and history. The length of the school day is adequate and the time allocations for individual subjects are sound.

29. Appropriate and relevant schemes of work are now in place for all subjects. This provision addresses a key issue from the last inspection. The schemes ensure full coverage and progressive development of each subject through the school. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are securely in place. The Numeracy Strategy has been generally well implemented, with an appropriate use of mental activities in lessons and a ready use of mathematics in other subjects of the curriculum, such as science and geography. In literacy, opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their reading and writing skills within English lessons. Some opportunities are provided in other subjects, such as history and geography, especially in Years 1 and 2, contributing to improving standards in writing at this stage. This is not such a strong feature of provision in Year 3 and Year 4.

30. Teachers produce an extensive range of good quality curriculum planning that helps to ensure the steady development of pupils' knowledge and skills as they move through the school. The planning makes some allowance for the various needs of pupils, especially the lower attainers, in English, mathematics and science. However, less allowance is generally made for higher attaining pupils, particularly in mathematics and science. The school makes good overall provision for equality of access to the whole curriculum, with the staff making sure that as many pupils as possible are involved in a full range of activities. Good provision is made for pupils' personal, social and health education, with aspects of drugs education



being suitably covered when appropriate. The importance of healthy eating is also regularly emphasised to pupils. The school's policy, approved by the governors, is not to teach sex education to pupils of this age.

31. Pupils with special educational needs are identified at an early stage and clear, practical targets are set to support them in their learning. These individual education plans are reviewed termly and new targets set where appropriate. A weakness is that pupils are not sufficiently involved in the setting of these targets, and although parents are invited to reviews of pupils' progress, they are not always fully involved in the process. At the present time, the special needs co-ordinator, after consultation with the class teacher, writes the individual education plans, with the result that teachers are not always mindful of their content when planning lessons. The school enlists the support of a range of outside agencies and provides specialist resources to aid pupils' learning where appropriate. The nature of the support it offers meets the new legal requirements that have been recently introduced.

32. The school provides an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, including football, gymnastics, art and design, choir, bingo, recorders, computers and the very popular breakfast club. Many of these activities are available to pupils from reception to Year 4. They are very well supported, both by teachers and pupils, and, in some cases, by parents also. The school welcomes many visitors, including the police, members of the medical profession, local clergy, artists and poets and the local Mayor and Town Crier, as well as drama and music groups. A wide range of educational visits is arranged including an annual residential visit for pupils in Year 3. These activities make a significant contribution to pupils' personal and social development, as well as to their learning in various subjects.

33. The school has very good links with the local community, of which it is very much a part. It has close ties with local businesses and supermarkets, and neighbouring sports clubs. Local residents are regularly invited to events in the school. Good sporting and musical links have been established with other local primary schools, and aspects of the curriculum are also regularly discussed jointly by staff representatives from the different schools. Ties with the neighbouring middle and high schools are also well developed, with, for instance, visits being made by pupils from the high school. Appropriate arrangements are made for pupils to visit the middle school, to help them when they move from the one school to the other. Good use is made of the area around the school to enrich the pupils' learning in subjects such as science, history and geography.

34. The school makes very good overall provision for pupils' personal development. Provision is very good for their spiritual, moral and social development and good for their cultural development. Very significant improvements have been made in the provision for spiritual development, since the time of the previous inspection. Assemblies are well planned and thoughtfully delivered, with pupils often making a considerable contribution themselves. Moments of quietness are provided for pupils to reflect on what they have heard, and to consider how they should respond themselves. Pupils are helped to gain knowledge and insight into their own, and other people's values and beliefs through religious education lessons. Many opportunities are also planned for pupils' spiritual development in the subjects of the National Curriculum, such as when they are provided with thought provoking experiences in science.

35. Provision for moral development is very good. The headteacher and staff provide good role models for the pupils. They help the pupils to develop a clear understanding of right and wrong by regularly reminding them what is the best way to behave and why. Discussions on these issues often take place in lessons, with rules of conduct being emphasised when necessary. Teachers set high expectations for pupils and regularly praise and reward them for maintaining good standards of behaviour and conduct.

36. Very good relationships between pupils and adults are at the heart of the school's very good provision for the pupils' social development. Teachers build successfully on this to promote good social relationships between pupils. As they progress through the school, pupils are encouraged to work collaboratively, to take turns and to share resources. This helps learning, for example on computers and in experimental work in science. Older pupils are expected to take care of younger ones, for example, by hearing them read and helping them during lunchtimes and break times, or whenever a need should arise. This fosters good relationships, and helps the younger children to learn. The social development of pupils is further enhanced by their involvement in fund-raising, the quality of the school's community links and the excellent extra-curricular activities.

37. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. They are taught about aspects of British culture in subjects such as English, art and design and history. An appropriate emphasis is placed on their knowledge and understanding of other cultures during assemblies and during lessons in subjects such as geography and religious education. The school also makes suitable provision for making pupils aware of the multicultural society in which they live. They consider different forms of worship, art and design, music, ritual and life-style, celebrate important festivals such as Diwali and Chinese New Year, and undertake visits to places of worship, for example a local Sikh Temple and Synagogue.

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

38. This school takes exceptionally good care of its pupils. It has maintained the excellent standard found at the previous inspection in this respect. Parents responding to the questionnaire almost all stated that their children were happy at school.

39. The school seeks to get to know the children and their families from their first contact, when they apply for a place in the nursery. Very good relationships are established and the staff respond very well to the children's needs. Building the children's confidence and self-esteem is given a high priority in the school's aims. This contributes to the children's good rate of learning and parents are very pleased with the way in which their children blossom during their time in the nursery.

40. All pupils are fully included in all activities, regardless of gender, ability or background. This is reflected in the large numbers of boys and girls from reception to Year 4 that take part in after-school activities. The school is particularly successful obtaining funds from various agencies to promote the welfare of the pupils and their families. They use this money to provide facilities such as a popular breakfast club and fruit at break-time, which contribute to the pupils' learning as well as health by helping them sustain concentration. The outdoor play equipment that has been provided aids the pupils' physical development and social skills. Very good links with other agencies support the school's excellent procedures for child protection and for monitoring the health and safety of the pupils. Security and supervision are given an appropriately high priority. A whole-school policy, understood by all the staff, ensures that pupils are protected from undesirable materials via the Internet and e-mails.

41. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good. Praise and rewards are well used to encourage pupils to attend school and be punctual. Any unexplained absence is followed up swiftly. Close links with the education welfare service are effective in supporting those families who have difficulties in sending their children to school regularly.

42. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very effective. The school's strategy for behaviour management is known to all members of the school community and is consistently implemented. Praise and rewards are used very effectively to raise the pupils' self-esteem, giving them more confidence to tackle new challenges. Weekly celebration assemblies, during which rewards are presented in the presence of parents, inspire the pupils to positive attitudes and greater efforts. The recording of incidents of poor behaviour is thorough and appropriate sanctions are fairly administered. These are usually effective, but a small number of pupils have such profound behavioural difficulties that they repeatedly step out of line. Teachers manage these pupils very well and the teaching assistants attached to them are skilled at intervening to minimise disruption

43. The school takes a strong line on bullying and most pupils respond well. Class discussion and assemblies are well used to remind pupils of the feelings of others. When bullying is detected, the incident is usually resolved sensitively within the school and the bullying behaviour is not repeated. However, one or two pupils find it difficult to stop hurting other pupils. Referral to the behaviour support service, and ultimately exclusion are appropriately used in these circumstances.

44. The school tracks and supports the pupils' personal development very well. Useful data is also gathered to show how well they are doing in English and mathematics. However, this information is not used as effectively as it could be to identify the educational needs of individual pupils.

45. Procedures for measuring pupils' achievements are satisfactory, which is an improvement since the time of the previous inspection. The use made of the information gained from these procedures is satisfactory, overall. In English, mathematics and science, suitable tests are carried out at the end of topics, and teachers keep records of pupils' results. This information is generally used effectively to ensure that lessons build on what has been learned previously. However, the data is not used as effectively as it could be to track the progress of individual pupils to ensure that pupils of all abilities are provided with suitably challenging targets.

46. In other subjects of the curriculum, satisfactory procedures are included in teachers' planning to test pupils' present knowledge and understanding. Records are kept to judge pupils' present attainment and to illustrate their progress. As in English, mathematics and science, however, the information gained is not always used well enough to provide work that is particularly suited to individual pupils. The headteacher is fully aware of the remaining weaknesses in current practice, which was part of a key issue at the last inspection, and plans are in hand for these issues to be addressed.

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

47. Parents hold the school in high esteem, as shown by their responses to the inspection questionnaire and parents' meeting. These were more strongly positive than the last time the school was inspected. Parents value the school's contribution to their children's happiness and progress, and the way it helps them to become well behaved and responsible. They state that the school is well led and managed, the teaching is good, characterised by high expectations, and there is an interesting range of activities outside lessons. The school

promotes a good partnership with parents and keeps them well informed about their children's progress. The inspection team agreed with all these positive comments.

48. The only area where there were significant reservations was the amount of homework given. It is difficult to judge whether the parents concerned felt there was too much or too little homework, as the team received no other comments on the subject. In the team's judgement, the amount of homework is appropriate and it makes a sound contribution to the pupils' learning. Discussion with Year 4 pupils showed that they felt that they received the right amount homework and it was often made fun to do.

49. The school fulfils its aims of fostering a partnership with parents, and sharing and celebrating the pupils' achievements very well. It provides information of very good quality in the pupils' reports, giving insight into their progress, personal development and indicating the next steps in their learning. It has recently started setting targets for improvement in English and mathematics, attitudes and behaviour. These are shared with parents at the termly consultation evenings, or sent to those 30 per cent of parents who do not attend. Some parents respond very positively and encourage their children to improve. Many do not play an active role in helping their children with their schoolwork, however.

50. The school tries to help parents to develop positive attitudes to education. Parents have recently been invited to spend the start of the day in the nursery and reception classes with their children. Several of them have taken up this opportunity and are learning to help their children. The school has also arranged a series of family workshops, which parents attend with their children. These include sessions on numeracy as well as creative activities such as kite making. Parents are also given the opportunity to learn about computers and first aid through sessions in the school organised by the local college of further education. These measures are improving the education of the children in the families concerned, but only a relatively small number of parents are involved.

51. The school provides parents with very clear information about its aims, expectations and philosophy in its prospectus and leaflets. These contain useful detail on the subjects to be covered each half-term, so that parents can support their children's learning. Only a small proportion of parents regularly share books with their children or hear them read. They do, however, support their children's efforts in other ways, such as by attending productions or celebration assemblies. A small nucleus of very committed parents play a much more active part in school life, organising fund-raising events, running the football club, acting as escorts on trips and even stepping in to run the breakfast club for 6 weeks during the absence of the 2 leaders through sickness. The Parents, Teachers and Friends Association raises substantial sums for enriching the curriculum, for example by providing additional resources such as a digital camera, which is used well to extend the pupils ICT skills.

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

52. The headteacher has provided very good leadership since taking up her appointment shortly after the previous inspection. She has managed to maintain the school's many strengths during a period of exceptional staff changes. Among the school's attributes that she has continued to foster and develop are the excellent standards of care for pupils, very good provision for their personal development and very strong partnership with parents. She has also established high expectations for the standards of education provided. The excellent improvement in the pupils' performance in reading in the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2001 and in writing in 2002 reflect the headteacher's firm lead in selecting priorities and achieving results. The assistant headteacher was only appointed at the beginning of the spring term of this academic year. Since then, a very effective leadership team has been consolidated. The headteacher and assistant headteacher complement each other very well

and share a common vision of how the school should move forward. They communicate this very clearly to the staff, governors and parents, all of whom are fully behind them. A visitor to the school could be forgiven for assuming that this was a long-established, experienced staff. A sense of belonging to a caring educational community and determination to raise standards pervades all aspects of the school's work, and gives it a very good capacity to continue improving.

53. Most of the teachers are very new to the management aspect of their jobs. The headteacher has established a realistic but challenging programme to develop their management skills so that they can make a fuller contribution to raising standards in the subjects they take responsibility for. Already, they are keeping abreast of standards in their subjects through sampling pupils' work in each class and checking teacher's planning, offering each other support and advice. For example, the very good input of ideas and guidance provided by the new co-ordinator for ICT has greatly increased the confidence of both teachers and pupils in the use of computers across the curriculum. This is a good improvement since the last inspection. Teachers are fully involved in discussions about the school's priorities for development, and share in setting the agenda. For example, training in lesson observations is being planned, in response to their requests, to improve their ability to judge how effective teaching and learning is in different subjects.

54. A main aim of the school is to raise pupils' self esteem and to be fully inclusive. The headteacher plays a major role in ensuring that this is achieved. She knows the pupils and their families intimately and arranges a wide range of support, particularly for those pupils with poor attendance records and with challenging behaviour. All members of staff play a full part in ensuring that all pupils have equal opportunities to take advantage of all that the school has on offer. The success with which the school manages pupils with very challenging behaviour, some of whom have been excluded from other schools, strongly reflects the school's determination to cater fully for all its pupils.

55. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties well. For example, it ensures that regular health and safety checks are made and provides parents with all the information they require about the school's work. The chair of governors works very closely with the headteacher, and has been instrumental in obtaining the services of governors who wish to be actively involved with the school. She is aware that the governors do not yet gather enough first-hand information to help them judge how effective the school is and to help them fulfil their role in shaping the direction of the school and holding it to account for the standards achieved.

56. The school continues to manage its funds efficiently. It obtains extra income from a range of sources and uses the funds well to support the pupils' progress. Examples of improvements bought about by such initiatives include: the successful breakfast club, funded by a special budget; daily supplies of fruit provided through the National School Fruit Scheme Pilot Scheme and the support for pupils with reading difficulties through membership of the Dyslexia Friendly Schools group. Outdoor play equipment has also been improved with money from the 'Seed Challenge Fund'. The headteacher and governors ensure that as much of the budget as possible is spent during each financial year for the benefit of the pupils. For example, an anticipated surplus in 2002 has been used to extend the hours worked by teaching assistants, as this was judged to make teaching and learning more effective. Governors ensure that competitive tenders are invited wherever possible. Spending is closely linked to the school improvement plan so it contributes to raising standards, and the school achieves good value for money. However, the current improvement plan covers only one year. A rolling programme has not been fully established to sustain longer-term improvements over a broad range of the school's work.

57. The school secretary is very efficient and effective in keeping the administration of the school running smoothly. This is accomplished with a cheerful willingness that sets a very positive tone for any visitors to the school. She regularly updates her skills and makes optimum uses of new technology to continue improving efficiency. For example, all financial transactions are now computerised, and plans are in hand to computerise attendance records and streamline transfer procedures for pupils. The headteacher and governors have ready access to any information they need on the finances and administration of the school and are therefore free to concentrate their energies on educational and welfare matters.

58. Arrangements for professional development are sound. The performance targets that are set for individuals are relevant to their own professional development needs and to the school's priorities. Procedures for settling in new staff, including newly qualified teachers, are very good. New teachers quickly feel part of the team. They express their appreciation of the support and guidance they have received. There is a good match between the number of teachers and their qualifications and experience to the needs of the curriculum, and a generous allocation of teaching assistants. Good training and support is provided to ensure that teaching assistants are fully effective. They work hard and make a very valuable contribution to the standard of education provided.

59. The school site is spacious and attractive. The headteacher has put a lot of thought and effort into improving the appearance of the site and the facilities offered. For example, the grounds now provide a variety of interesting areas in which the pupils can play or sit and be quiet. The classrooms and other teaching areas are of adequate size, and the school makes good use of all the available space. The hall is used for dining and assemblies, for example, as well as for physical education and the library is housed in the entrance hall. The caretaker and cleaners ensure that the building is kept in very good order and the lunchtime staff make a valuable contribution to the community spirit of the school. Adequate resources are available to support learning in all subjects except that in design and technology, the range of materials and tools available for pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 is too narrow. The school realises this and plans to address the issue in the near future.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

60. In order to continue raising standards and ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they should in all subjects, the headteacher and governors should:

- (1) Raise standards in mathematics by:
  - providing more training and support for teachers in planning challenging activities for pupils of all abilities, including the most able
  - giving more support for pupils in the organisation and presentation of their work, for example by providing squared paper on which to record number operations
  - raising expectations for pupils, especially the more able, to explain and record their mathematical thinking
  - offering more challenge and support for pupils to apply their mathematics to solving practical problems and undertaking investigations(Paragraphs: 3, 5, 21, 45, 84, 86, 87, 88)
  
- (2) Further improve the use of test results and other assessment information to set challenging targets for pupils of all abilities, including gifted and talented pupils and pupils with special educational needs.  
(Paragraphs: 8, 10, 23, 31, 45, 46, 83, 87, 95, 99, 107, 111, 115, 117)

In addition to these key issues, the governors should consider including the following objectives in their Action Plan:

- Providing more opportunities for pupils to speak at length and to read aloud in a variety of settings.  
(Paragraphs: 21, 29, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 107, 110, 124)
- Extending the scope and time-scale of the School Improvement Plan  
(Paragraph: 56)
- Ensuring that pupils use an adequate range of tools and materials in design and technology in Year 3 and Year 4.  
(Paragraphs: 22, 101, 103)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	29
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	32

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	6	18	5	0	0	0
Percentage	0	21	62	17	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR– Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	26	120
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	45

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR– Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	35

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	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.3

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2



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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	6	16

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	17	16	14
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	77 (89)	73 (94)	64 (89)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	18	18	18
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	82 (78)	82 (89)	82 (72)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Where the number of boys or girls are ten or fewer the individual results are not reported.

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	90
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

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

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

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Year 4**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20
Average class size	24

#### **Education support staff: YR– Year 4**

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	138

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	25
Number of pupils per FTE adult	13

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	351 890
Total expenditure	372 440
Expenditure per pupil	2 550
Balance brought forward from previous year	32 399
Balance carried forward to next year	11 849

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3
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
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	146
Number of questionnaires returned	66

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	24	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	77	18	5	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	61	38	2	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	38	11	3	15
The teaching is good.	77	20	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	67	27	6	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	77	18	0	5	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	83	14	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	68	24	6	2	0
The school is well led and managed.	71	26	2	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	71	21	5	2	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	70	23	5	0	3

## **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**

61. Children enter the nursery during the year in which they are four, and they move into the reception class at the start of the year in which they are five. Very few of these children have experienced play-group or other pre-school nursery education. Children's attainment on entry to the nursery class is well below that expected for children of that age overall. They have particularly poor language and communications skills, but their physical development is nearer to the expected level. During their time in nursery and reception, children make very good gains in their creative and personal, social and emotional development, and good gains in all other areas. Most children are on course to achieved expected standards in personal, social, emotional, creative and physical development by the time they leave reception. Their attainment in communication, language and literacy, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world remains below expectations, however.

62. The quality of teaching is good overall and often very good in both the nursery and reception classes. This leads to good learning and good levels of achievement by the children. The teachers have a secure understanding of the social, emotional and educational needs of the children and they plan a very appropriate range of activities for them. Instructions are clear, help is always on hand and teachers manage the children very well. Teachers have a pleasant, helpful and encouraging manner with the children, and they continually praise them for their work. A very good range of strategies is used in teaching the children in both classes. The classrooms are small, but the teachers make very effective use of the available space and enliven the environment with imaginative, colourful displays of the children's work. Teachers provide the children with a wide range of experiences and opportunities. Good planning ensures that activities cover all the areas of learning for children of this age very thoroughly. The teachers and teaching assistants work well together as a team in ensuring much personal attention for the children. The quality of the teaching enables all the children, including those with special educational needs, to make good progress overall.

63. The children's attitudes and behaviour are always very good, contributing to rapid learning and good levels of achievement. They listen carefully and intently to their teachers, and other adults in the classroom, and they are very keen to be involved in all activities. They set about their tasks with enthusiasm, and they all persevere until they are complete. They work well on their own, showing considerable independence in finding resources and carrying out activities. They also work well in groups, where they readily help each other if a need arises. The children are well motivated and keen to please, and they try to produce their best work. They are happy and confident in seeking advice from adults, should difficulties arise.

64. Children's abilities are carefully assessed on entry into the school, and extensive records are kept of their progress. For example, teachers and teaching assistants keep detailed notes of the children's work on a day to day basis. This information is then used to help plan suitable future work. A strong feature of the very good provision is the way that both classes work together, sharing the available space for the benefit of the children. Resources are plentiful and of good quality. Storage space is limited, but staff work wonders in keeping resources readily available, whilst at the same time keeping the teaching areas neat and tidy!

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

65. Children make very good progress in the nursery and reception classes, in their personal, social and emotional development. By the time they leave reception, all the children

achieve the expected standards in this area. In the nursery, they learn to eat their snack and drink their milk in a civilised manner. They pass things to each other and never fail to be polite in their response. Most children change independently for physical education, even managing, in many cases, to put on shoes and socks. They have learnt how to behave in school and to be part of a social group. When serving and buying items in the cafe, for instance, they readily share and take turns. Children in the reception class happily assist their teachers in giving out materials and equipment, and in collecting finished work. They readily take turns at riding their tricycles in the outdoor area. They move confidently around the classroom and the wider school and ask for assistance when required.

66. The quality of teaching for this area of learning is very good in both classes. The teachers know the children well and respond very appropriately to their individual needs. The children are continually encouraged to be involved in a range of activities, and, where necessary, they are reminded about such things as sharing and politeness. Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together to establish high standards of behaviour and social skills.

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

67. Children enter the school with poor communication, language and literacy skills. They make good progress, but only a few of them are on course to reach expected standards before they leave reception. In the nursery, pupils develop satisfactory listening skills. They listen with interest and concentration to stories, poems and instructions. Speaking skills are less well developed, however, and whilst a small number of children speak clearly and with confidence, many are less keen to speak. They provide one-word answers, and they do not possess the vocabulary to make longer contributions. The children are interested in books. They know which is the front of the book and they know that the print conveys the story. Children are beginning to recognise their names. For example, they select their name-card at the start of the day. They are starting to 'write' in their own way, for example by 'taking orders' and 'writing menus' in the Lighthouse Cafe. In reception, the children develop a good range of skills that will help them to make good progress in reading and writing later on. They are learning to recognise letters, for example, and in a significant number of cases, they can relate the letter to the appropriate sound. They handle books with interest, and happily share them with adults and with each other. Many children can write their own names, although the quality of writing is below average for their age. A small number of higher attaining children write their letters accurately, and attempt to join words into sentences, such as when they write about their friends or their holidays.

68. The quality of teaching is good in both classes. In the nursery, the children are provided with many activities that help them to develop early literacy skills. A strong feature is the range of opportunities provided for the children to talk with adults in small groups. Adults are skilled at involving all children and praising them for what they say, however little it may be. In both nursery and reception, imaginative areas are created, such as the café and barbecue corner that encourage the children to speak and interact with each other through role play, further developing their social as well as language and communication skills. Whole class sessions are used well to develop an enjoyment of books, with adults using high quality reading skills to capture the children's interest. In reception, there are many opportunities for the children to continue improving their speaking and listening skills, and to write words and short sentences when they are ready to do so.

## **Mathematical development**

69. Children enter the nursery with well below the expected levels of mathematical understanding. They make good progress, but most do not achieve the expected standards in this area before the end of reception. In the nursery, the children are beginning to develop an appropriate vocabulary. For example, many understand the terms 'empty and 'full' when serving drinks during snack time. They count to five with confidence and are beginning to understand the concept of 'more' and 'less', when counting. They also count beyond five, but most do not reliably relate these numbers to the correct number of objects. In Reception, the children develop some understanding of volume, through structured water play, and they are beginning to understand the concepts of 'heavier' and 'lighter', for example through weighing vegetables. Many children name flat shapes correctly, for example when cutting out. Higher attaining children write out numbers, and although some numbers are not well formed, there are clear signs of improvement in the children's work.

70. The quality of teaching is good in both classes. In the nursery, many opportunities are provided for the children to count and to develop their understanding of the value of numbers. Counting rhymes are frequently used. Counting is particularly well emphasised during registration, when numbers of children are counted, as well as those having dinners and sandwiches. In reception, good use is made of number lines, blocks and counters to help the children count accurately. The children are also provided with many opportunities to measure, to weigh and to handle different shapes. They are encouraged to estimate in order to strengthen their awareness of the value of numbers in the real world.

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

71. The children make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world throughout the nursery and reception, but most do not achieve the expected standards by the time they leave reception. In the nursery, the children are beginning to understand past and present events in the context of family life, and some can successfully talk about past events, for example in relation to holidays they have had. The children have studied the local area, and produced pictures of their houses, and most can identify different parts of the body. A significant number of children, however, have difficulties finding the correct words for things, illustrating how their poor language development affects their understanding in other areas of the curriculum. In reception, the children have planted a variety of seeds, and they try hard to explain the importance of water and light in allowing plants to grow properly. They are also beginning to appreciate the importance of the senses, particularly in relation food. All children in the nursery and reception are given opportunities to use a computer, and many can use the mouse successfully to produce pictures on the screen. Most children also handle construction apparatus with confidence to build a variety of models.

72. The quality of teaching is good in both classes. Teachers plan a wide range of experiences to broaden the children's understanding of the world they live in. For example: flowers are used to develop children's awareness of the life processes of plants; snack time to increase their knowledge of different kinds of fruit, and also to develop their awareness of the senses of smell and taste; tricycles in the outdoor area to improve their sense of direction. Appropriate opportunities are provided for children to broaden their cultural horizons, such as when they are provided with a variety of different foods, such as curry and pizzas.



## **Physical development**

73. Children make good progress in physical development and most of them achieve expected standards in this area of learning before they leave reception. In the nursery, the children develop their fine motor skills through activities such as cutting, sticking and threading wool through holes in a card. The children generally hold pencils and crayons correctly, although many children have difficulty in controlling them when colouring in pictures. Manipulation and control are improved through using play-dough and clay. The children develop good physical skills through the use of large play equipment in the outdoor area in the hall. Their dance movements are also in line with expectations, for example then they imitated fish and an octopus during a lesson in the hall. In reception, children develop sound finer skills, for example by cutting out shapes such as rectangles and triangles, with many children succeeding in cutting along the lines accurately. They confidently make models out of play-dough and show increasing control using pencils and crayons. The skills that prepare them for playing games are also soundly developed. For example, they successfully kick a ball across the yard.

74. The quality of teaching is good in both the nursery and reception classes. The children are provided with many opportunities to develop their fine motor skills. Pencils, crayons, scissors, play-dough and construction toys are readily available, and the children are encouraged to use them. In the formal sessions of physical education, the children are provided with an appropriate range of apparatus, which they are encouraged to make full use of. The children who find the activities difficult receive sympathetic support. All staff change into appropriate clothing to take part in these lessons, and join in many of the activities with the children. Teachers emphasise safety procedures and supervise the children closely throughout, whether they are using potentially dangerous tools such as scissors or engaging in activities involving risk, such as climbing on apparatus.

## **Creative development**

75. The children make very good progress in their creative development and most children are on course to achieve expected standards by the time they leave reception. In both the nursery and reception classes, the children sing songs with enthusiasm, and perform actions for a variety of simple songs and rhymes. Although some children find it difficult, most are able to clap a steady beat to accompany their songs. They use percussion instruments, such as tambourines, drums and shakers, with confidence and the expected level of skill. Children choose from a range of paints, crayons and pencils. The pictures on display of themselves, flowers and butterflies are of an expected standard. Some reception children find drawing difficult, lacking the control to draw accurate lines and stay within the lines when colouring. Others, however, produce work that is accurately drawn and carefully coloured. Children use their imagination well, when undertaking role play, for example, in the cafe and the barbecue site.

76. The quality of teaching is very good in both the nursery and reception classes. A wide range of opportunities is provided for the children to sing and play instruments, and to use a variety of media including paint, crayons and clay. Children's imaginations are further stimulated through the provision of role play opportunities in both classrooms. Children are also encouraged in their creative efforts by the stimulating displays of their work, which greatly enhance the learning environment.

## ENGLISH

77. Standards at the end of Year 2 are broadly average, and pupils achieve well compared to their prior attainment. Standards at the end of Year 4 are below average overall, compared with average at the last inspection. They are broadly average in listening, but below average in speaking, reading and writing. This group contains a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, however. In the light of this, the results they achieve represent good achievement. The quality of pupils' work has shown good improvement over the year.

78. At the end of Year 2, pupils' listening skills are broadly average, whilst their speaking skills are below average. Pupils usually listen attentively to their teachers, and most show an understanding of what they have heard. A minority of pupils are able to speak clearly and confidently, and a small number feel able to provide extended answers and comments. The majority of pupils, however, speak either in single words or in short phrases, often lacking the confidence to express themselves at length in lessons. At the end of Year 4, pupils' listening skills are also average, whilst their speaking skills are below the standard expected. A minority produce good answers and observations confidently and concisely. The majority of pupils, however, are not keen to speak at any length in front of their classmates, and when asked to do so they find difficulty expressing themselves clearly.

79. At the end of Year 2, pupils' standards in reading are below average. A significant minority of pupils read their texts accurately, introducing some expression into their reading, and confidently explaining what they have read. The majority of pupils read their books accurately, but with little expression or fluency. Most have appropriate knowledge of letter sounds, enabling them to attempt to read words that they do not know. Some pupils, however, are unable to explain clearly the meaning of texts that they have read correctly. At the end of Year 4, pupils' reading skills, overall, are below those expected. Whilst some pupils read fluently and accurately, with a number producing good expression into their work, the majority lack fluency and put little intonation into their voices. In talking about what they have read, most pupils make appropriate reference to characters and events in the story. A number of pupils, however, cannot explain clearly what they have read. Higher attaining pupils are confident in finding information using reference books. Some have successfully mastered the useful skills of 'skimming' texts to get the overall meaning and 'scanning' texts for key words. Other pupils find these tasks difficult.

80. At the end of Year 2, pupils' standards in writing are above average. Pupils successfully write portions of text, including stories, news and poems. A significant number of pupils use capital letters and full stops consistently, correctly and independently, to add structure to their writing. The writing is often thoughtful, with some interesting and imaginative vocabulary introduced. Many pupils spell all their words correctly, whilst other pupils successfully produce plausible alternative spellings based on letter sounds. Pupils' handwriting skills are appropriately developed, with higher attaining pupils joining their letters successfully. Most other pupils produce letters that are well formed, and of a consistent size. At the end of Year 4, the quality of pupils' writing is below average. Most pupils successfully write factual information, but they are less confident in producing imaginative writing, in the form of stories and poems. These pupils have difficulties producing extended pieces of writing, often lacking the knowledge of punctuation or of adventurous vocabulary to produce interest and depth in their work. Higher attainers join their letters in a clear and neat handwriting style, although a significant number of pupils do not maintain this quality of handwriting when writing in other subjects. Pupils' spelling is generally satisfactory, and those who find it difficult use dictionaries to help them improve their work.

81. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The teaching of writing in Year 2 is very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. Lessons are well planned from the National Literacy Strategy. Teachers also provide time for pupils to undertake extra work in writing, which the school has identified as an area of weakness. They provide many opportunities for pupils to listen to stories and various forms of instruction, and they make good use of intonation in their voices when reading, as well as humour, to help maintain pupils' interest. In the most effective lessons, teachers use well directed questions to ensure that all pupils contribute answers and ideas. In some lessons, however, teachers do not provide pupils with enough chances to speak, leading to insufficient progress in this area. Teachers successfully encourage a love of reading by providing pupils with a choice of books suitable to their needs. As a result, pupils are generally keen to read.

82. Teachers provide an appropriate range of writing activities and opportunities for their pupils, during English lessons. Opportunities are missed in many classes, however, to encourage pupils to develop their writing skills in other subjects of the curriculum, such as history, science and religious education. Pupils respond appropriately to the opportunities provided, in all aspects of the subject, and all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good gains in their knowledge and skills. Where teaching is very good, with high expectations and very clear explanations of how the pupils can improve their writing, progress is very good. Teachers provide appropriate support during lessons, enabling all pupils to make good progress. Written comments on pupils' work helps them to correct mistakes and improve the content and presentation of their writing. As a result, pupils' attitudes to English are consistently good, which is an improvement since the previous inspection.

83. The co-ordinator is hard working and well informed. She has identified weaknesses in pupils' achievements through analysing their answers to questions in the national tests. The strategies that have been implemented as a result of this exercise have helped to raise standards, especially at the end of Year 2. The co-ordinator has opportunities to observe lessons to see for herself the standards being achieved. She is fully aware that boys often do not perform as well as girls, and the school is attempting to address this issue, for example by providing more books and writing topics that are likely to appeal to boys. Procedures for measuring pupils' attainment are satisfactory, but limited use is made of this information, at present, to track the progress that pupils are making, and to help provide targets for further improvement. Resources are good. The library provision has improved significantly since the time of the previous inspection, leading to better independent learning by the pupils. Suitable use is made of ICT to encourage writing. For example, pupils in Year 3 confidently type out poems they have written. Overall, however, insufficient use is made of other subjects to help develop pupils' literacy skills.

## **MATHEMATICS**

84. Standards in mathematics are below average at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. Inspectors found that pupils are now making good progress in lessons. Their levels of achievement are satisfactory overall, but the highest and lowest attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they might because tasks are not sufficiently matched to their current knowledge and understanding.

85. The pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 reflects the 2002 test results, which were below the national average, but in line with similar schools. The pupils' books show that most of them are working towards average targets for this age group. For example, they solve problems involving simple addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, measure length in centimetres, tell the time using quarter to and quarter past the hour and know the names of

common flat and solid shapes. There are indications, however, that work is being set to move the pupils towards more above average targets. For example, some higher attaining pupils weigh in grams, read volume scales to the nearest 100ml and represent more than one unit for each square on a block graph.

86. Standards at the end of Year 4 are below average. This reflects the variety of backgrounds that the pupils have had. They are now making good progress in lessons, but still have a lot of ground to make up. Most pupils know some of their times-tables and other number facts and use these to solve problems. However, many of them are not as confident as they should be in this aspect of their work. They enjoy trying to solve problems mentally, but have many gaps in their knowledge and tend to make guesses at answers to problems rather than working them out. The work in their books shows that they have been challenged to tackle problems in their own ways. However, not much of this work is presented clearly enough to show what the problem was and how it was solved. This greatly limits the usefulness of the books as a record of the pupils' progress and as a starting point for discussions on what the next step should be. The fact that most of the number work is done on plain paper contributes to an untidy appearance as most pupils do not keep columns and rows of figures sufficiently in line. This difficulty was evident in discussion with pupils about large numbers and decimal places. Their understanding of the decimal system was clearly inhibited by the lack of a clear grid on which to place digits.

87. The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons that were observed was good overall. This is an improvement since the previous inspection, especially in Years 3 and 4, where teaching was judged to be satisfactory. Achievement, however, is satisfactory rather than good. There are two main reasons for this:

- pupils are not making as rapid progress as they should in their understanding of the decimal number system. This is partly due to the use of plain rather than squared paper as described above
- activities are not sufficiently matched to the pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and skills. This limits the progress made by higher attaining pupils and sometimes leads to insufficient consolidation of understanding for lower-attaining pupils.

88. Teachers provide good, stimulating mental mathematics sessions at the beginning of lessons, and ensure that all the pupils are actively involved. The lessons themselves build well on what has gone before for the class as a whole, with different activities for different ability groups. However, the activities are often too similar in level, with not enough challenge for the more able pupils to tackle more difficult problems or open-ended investigations. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well, and make good progress overall. Here, too, however, the activities are sometimes not quite matched to the pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and skills. As a consequence, although sufficient headway is made with the tasks, the pupils' understanding is not always as secure as it should be. This was an area for improvement in the previous inspection. The teachers have to cope with a very wide range of ability in many classes, as well as some very challenging behaviour. They manage the behaviour problems very well indeed, through consistent expectations for abiding by class rules and positive praise and encouragement.

89. The school has used the National Numeracy Strategy well to ensure that most pupils make sound progress in the basic skills of mathematics. Teachers use a variety of commercial materials and books to provide interesting lessons. However, they do not make enough use of these resources to provide opportunities for pupils to explore mathematics patterns and ideas. Teachers take opportunities to enable pupils to apply their skills in other subjects, for example by drawing time lines in history and making graphs of results of science experiments. In design and technology, opportunities for pupils to measure accurately are missed. The co-ordinator is new to the management of the subject, but has

already begun to build up a picture of how mathematics is taught across the school. She is aware that standards in mathematics are not as high as they should be and is prepared to seek new advice from outside on the best way to proceed, especially as this has been a feature of the school's performance over a number of years.

## **SCIENCE**

90. At the time of the previous inspection, the attainment of pupils at the end of Year 2 was in line with expectations and pupils in Years 3 and 4 made good progress. Evidence from this inspection indicates similar standards. A particular strength at the present time is in the development of pupils' experimenting and investigating skills. Pupils are encouraged to find things out for themselves. This approach is very successful in extending their knowledge and understanding.

91. Pupils in Year 2 achieve well in each area of the subject. Their knowledge of animal and plant life is good. For example, they understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and carry out investigations to discover the needs of plants for survival. They know that different animals are adapted to different habitats and they accurately describe the life cycle of a frog and a butterfly. Their understanding of forces is also as expected. They know that light comes from a variety of different sources and that electricity is widely used to make things work. Their diagrams show a good understanding of electrical circuits. All the pupils know that pushes and pulls are examples of force. Higher attaining pupils understand that the speed or direction of a moving object can be changed because of pushes and pulls. They also understand the need to keep all but one variable the same in order to carry out a fair test. This level of knowledge and understanding reflects a sound level of achievement for this ability group. Average and lower attaining pupils also achieve satisfactorily. They develop a good understanding of forces but are uncertain about the notion of fair testing.

92. By the end of Year 4, pupils have a clear understanding of magnetism and electricity gained through first-hand investigations and experiments. Higher attaining pupils have above average experimental skills. For example, they confidently set up their own investigations, identifying the variables that they will keep the same in order to make the test fair. In an investigation to find out if people with the biggest feet can jump furthest, for instance, they created the right conditions for a fair test and recorded their measurements with care. Lower attaining pupils carry out the same activities and produce a good volume of work. Their work is well presented and shows an interest in the subject, but they are sometimes uncertain about the underlying principles. For example, they find it difficult to explain the idea of a fair test. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by skilled learning support assistants and this helps the majority to make good progress. The pupils' use of accurate vocabulary reflects good, well informed teaching. For example, pupils in Year 3 used precise vocabulary to describe objects that are opaque or translucent and showed by their drawings that they understand how shadows are formed in relation to the source of light.

93. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with little difference across the year groups. This is an improvement on the previous inspection. Although the current staff comprises younger, more inexperienced teachers, they are open to new ideas and keen to share experiences and develop their own knowledge and expertise. All teachers plan and manage their lessons well. Activities are well organised and prepared with appropriate resources to help the pupils with their work. In the best lessons, pupils are encouraged to make scientific discoveries for themselves. Teachers provide interesting and exciting activities that make it fun to learn. For example, pupils in Year 1 investigated a wide range of everyday objects to determine whether they needed a push or a pull to make them move. These pupils were interested to discover that a door could be moved by either a push or a pull, whilst computer keys required only a push. One pupil realised that she could both push

and pull a wobbly tooth! In this very good lesson, good monitoring and support of the groups ensured that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, were very clear in their understanding. In some lessons, however, teachers over-direct the pupils, missing opportunities for active and independent learning.

94. Teachers provide clear instructions and explanations, helping pupils to understand exactly what is expected of them. They are careful to develop the pupils' scientific vocabulary, thus extending their understanding and contributing to the development of their literacy skills. Skilful questioning is used very well to probe and enhance pupils' understanding, and teachers ensure that all pupils understand what is being taught. In the Year 1 lesson that was observed, for example, pupils were required to label objects according to agreed criteria and, as a result, any misconceptions were quickly spotted and rectified. In this lesson pupils showed curiosity and an enthusiasm for science and wanted to learn. However, there are some pupils, particularly in Year 4, who do not have these positive attitudes, and their disruptive behaviour impedes their learning. These pupils are managed with patience and sensitivity..

95. The checking of pupils' understanding of earlier work is good. In Year 3, for example, pupils are encouraged to complete a *'concept map'*, which shows how much they already know before embarking on a new project. However, similar work is usually planned for all pupils in the class, with little allowance made for their varying abilities. There are therefore limited opportunities for the highest attaining pupils to extend their learning further. Also, lower attaining pupils sometimes fail to complete the work because it is too challenging. A whole school system of assessment to show clearly how pupils' skills can be developed has not yet been put into practice. This lack of tracking results in teachers being unable to predict forthcoming standards or to judge if individual pupils are achieving as well as they should. Marking of pupils' work is positive and encouraging but the use of helpful comments on how the work could be improved is not consistent.

96. The newly appointed co-ordinator is enthusiastic and has the skills to manage the subject effectively. She has used her allocated time well to carry out reviews of pupils' work, visit classes informally and talk to colleagues about their needs. Consequently she has a clear and accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in her subject and has drawn up an action plan to guide developments. ICT is used appropriately to support pupils' learning, for example through the use of CD-ROM for research. The subject supports mathematics well, for example through measurement and the use of graphs to present information. Resources are adequate and enhanced by an attractive and stimulating outdoor learning environment, which includes a pond.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

97. No lessons were observed during the inspection and it is therefore not possible to make a judgement about the quality of teaching and learning. The sound standards reported at the time of the last inspection have been maintained and all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. Sketchbooks show that pupils' drawing and design skills are in line with expectations by the end of Years 2 and 4. Work on display shows that pupils throughout the school use a good range of materials, including papier-mâché for simple sculpture. Pupils achieve well in the range of techniques that they use, including interpreting and imitating the work of famous artists. For example, pupils in Year 4 have studied closely the work of Paul Klee, reproducing some of the motifs in his *'With The Eagle'* painting. They talk with pride about how they have developed this idea for themselves, producing similar works with titles such as *'With the sharks'* and *'With the Romans'*. They describe the 'wet into wet' technique used by Klee for the background to his painting and their interpretations show a good understanding of how to achieve this effect.

These pupils are developing a good understanding of colour mixing to achieve a desired effect. In Year 2, pupils have produced very effective paintings, extending tiny viewfinder images to make a full landscape picture, such as a poppy field with distant hills. This work shows good observation skills, which develop well as the pupils move through the school. Three-dimensional work is evident in sculptures in Year 3 and pupils describe earlier work with clay.

98. Ample opportunities are offered for pupils to observe texture, line, shape and colour very closely. For example, pupils in Year 4 talk about how they make their drawings appear three-dimensional through the use of tone and shading. This and their work on perspective indicates good teaching of basic skills. Lesson planning is detailed but does not show a whole school approach to how pupils' skills and understanding will progress over time and assessment is not yet used as a tool for moving pupils forward. Good use is made of natural resources, including the outdoor environment to develop pupils' observational skills. For example, pupils in Year 3 have looked closely at leaves before printing and stencilling leaves and creating patterns in the style of William Morris. Good use is made of ICT, for example when pupils in Year 1 used a paint package to produce firework pictures linked to their science topic and abstract pictures in the style of Mondrian. Pupils in Year 4 have carried out independent research on famous artists, reflecting improvements in this aspect of their learning since the last inspection.

99. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The newly appointed co-ordinator is enthusiastic and knowledgeable about art and design, with a particular interest in developing pupils' observational drawing. She has already begun an audit to assess current strengths and areas for development and has collected evidence of progress in drawing throughout the school. The action plan reflects current priorities in the subject and identifies which areas will be monitored throughout the year. The co-ordinator understands the need for the scheme of work to be made detailed enough to support non-specialists in preparing lessons that build on existing skills. Resources are adequate and include a satisfactory range of prints and examples of other artists' work. There is a flourishing and established craft club, which attracts pupils of a broad range of attainment, and makes a good contribution both to their confidence and to the development of their skills and understanding.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

100. No lessons were observed during the inspection but evidence from displays of pupils' work, photographs, teachers' planning and discussions with pupils and teachers indicates that standards are broadly average by the end of Year 2 and Year 4. At the time of the previous inspection, pupils worked well in groups, sharing ideas, offering solutions to problems and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of each other's designs. Inspection evidence indicates that these strengths in standards have been maintained.

101. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have sound basic planning, designing and making skills. They draw and plan their ideas appropriately before making their products. For example, pupils in Year 1 have planned a fruit salad, paying particular attention to presentation, whilst those in Year 2 have designed and made a glove puppet, following their plans carefully. In Years 1 and 2, pupils use simple tools such as hole-punches and scissors, and materials such as card, paper and fabric to design vehicles and glove puppets. However, in Year 4, pupils use similar materials and techniques to make picture frames and books with moving features. They have limited experience of working with rigid materials and their understanding of strengthening and joining techniques and the safe use of more tools is limited. Although opportunities are offered for pupils to investigate different design ideas for products such as pencil cases, they do not always progress to the making stage. Most find the making aspect quite difficult

because they have not developed all of the necessary techniques, such as accuracy in measurement. The quality of the few finished products seen reflects these weaknesses.

102. There is insufficient evidence for a secure judgement to be made on the quality of teaching and learning. However, evidence from pupils' work indicates that many opportunities are offered for designing and making and for pupils to evaluate their designs and finished products. For example, pupils in Year 3 designed and made sandwiches before making thoughtful evaluations. Pupils remark that learning is fun and that teachers provide interesting and exciting projects that give them the opportunity to plan and work together. Skills such as sewing are taught satisfactorily and appropriate regard is given to health and safety, such as attention to hygiene in food technology. However, the range of pupils' work suggests that there are weaknesses in teachers' knowledge and confidence in some areas of the curriculum for design and technology. There has been a significant change of staff since the last inspection and none of the present staff have received training in the use of resources.

103. Assessment is at an early stage of development and not yet used sufficiently to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning. The school recognises the need to revise medium term plans in order to meet the needs of each year group more fully. Resources are adequate, apart from tools and materials for Year 3 and Year 4 pupils to develop more advanced making skills. The headteacher recognises that, with significant changes in staffing, there is a need for more in-service training to bring teachers up-to-date with current requirements in the subject.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

104. Standards at the end of Year 2 and 4 are average, as they were at the time of the previous inspection and pupils continue to make good progress.

105. By the end of Year 2, pupils show an average level of understanding of geographical features in their locality, such as houses, roads and shops. Pupils in Year 1, for example, recognise different kinds of houses, such as bungalows and flats. Mapping skills are in line with expectations. Year 1 pupils have drawn simple maps of the local area based on first-hand observations made during 'fieldwork'. Pupils in Year 2 draw appropriate maps of real and imaginary places and locate features on them. Pupils relate lessons to their own lives. For example, they discuss the problems caused by traffic. By the end of Year 4, standards are also average. For example, pupils in Year 3 name the countries of the United Kingdom and locate Biddulph accurately enough on a map of England. They also compare the local weather with the climate in other parts of the world. Year 4 Pupils compare and contrast features in their own country and locality with those of different locations. For example, they accurately locate Chembakolli, a village in India, on a map of the world and compare features such as houses, climate and schools there with their own experiences and knowledge of these aspects of life in England.

106. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, with some good features. Teachers have sound subject knowledge. They introduce a good range of maps and emphasise correct geographical terminology so that the pupils' learning is secure. The learning opportunities that are provided are varied and interesting, including outdoor fieldwork. In the good lessons, the teachers provide particularly clear and helpful instructions gaining the pupils' interest and enthusiasm and enabling them to make good progress. Overall, pupils are generally well behaved, concentrate well on their tasks, enabling them make satisfactory gains in their knowledge and skills. Just occasionally, the teacher's instructions are not fully clear. This slows down learning a little because extra advice needs to be provided before the pupils settle to their work. Most pupils take considerable care with their work, for example drawing maps and plans neatly so that they become a valuable source of reference later.



They also work well in groups, for example when discussing various questions they have been asked, which helps them to consolidate what they have learned. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, and they often include helpful written comments to add to the verbal advice they provide.

107. The co-ordinator is fully aware of the work that is being covered throughout the school and she supports her colleagues well when necessary. Information is available to judge pupils' current attainment, but is not always used effectively enough to provide appropriate future work for pupils of all abilities. The written work in geography is making some contribution towards the development of pupils' literacy skills, but this is not a strong feature of planning. The various measuring and counting activities, such as the use of co-ordinates in Year 3, offer opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills outside mathematics lessons. The school is using ICT to support the work in the subject. For example, pupils in Year 4 use computers to find information about India. The study of a range of contrasting areas successfully helps to develop the pupils' understanding of different cultures.

## **HISTORY**

108. Standards at the end of Year 2 and 4 are average, as they were at the time of the previous inspection and pupils continue to make satisfactory progress. During the inspection only one lesson was observed. Overall judgements are based, therefore, on discussions with pupils, and a study of their previous work.

109. By the end of Year 2, pupils know suitable details about the past. They are beginning to gain a sound understanding of how things change over time by sequencing objects and events. Most pupils are also confident in using appropriate historical terminology, such as 'old', 'new' and 'long ago'. They have a sound knowledge of a number of historical figures, such as Florence Nightingale and Samuel Pepys, and they know interesting facts about important past events, such as the Great Fire of London. By the end of Year 4, pupils know relevant information about a suitable range of historical periods. They have a clear understanding of the Tudor and Victorian periods of British history, for example, as well as aspects of the history of Biddulph. Many pupils in Years 3 and 4 are confident in placing the periods they study on a time-line. Pupils confidently explain some important events that have taken place, such as the Spanish Armada, and they can recall the lives of famous people such as Prince Albert.

110. Too few lessons were seen to judge the quality of teaching, but the pupils' work reflects some good features of provision. For example, teachers provide a good variety of photographs, artefacts and visits to foster the pupils' interest and make their learning more active and provide appropriate historical information. The work samples show that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory gains in their historical knowledge and understanding. In the lessons seen, expectations were high and a particularly good range of resources and information were provided, enabling pupils to make good progress. Overall, teachers' subject knowledge is sound and they make appropriate use of events and artefacts to develop pupils' understanding of the past. However, they do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to write at length to extend their understanding of the subject and improve their literacy skills. Most pupils present their work well, taking considerable care over presentation of both their writing and drawing. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, and useful comments of advice and encouragement are also added. Colourful displays of their work further encourage pupils to greater efforts.

111. The planning of the curriculum covers all areas of the subject, which is an improvement since the last inspection. The co-ordinator keeps well informed about standards throughout the school through sampling of pupils' work. Suitable details about pupils' work is

recorded, though this information is not always well used to plan different activities for pupils of different levels of attainment. Pupils successfully use ICT to increase their historical knowledge, such as searching CD-ROMs and the Internet for historical facts. The work undertaken in history also contributes to pupils' cultural development through the studying of aspects of British culture.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

112. Standards are average at the end of Year 2 and Year 4 as they were at the time of the last inspection. However, pupils are now using computers more effectively to support learning in other subjects.

113. By the end of Year 2, pupils achieve well and use computers confidently in a range of situations, reflecting good achievement. For example, they use the mouse and keyboard to type text, select icons and make pictures on screen. They know how to give directions to make an off-screen robot move in a pre-determined way, using a sequence of commands. They apply their skills effectively in subjects such as mathematics and science, for example, by making a decision tree to show which sweets each person in a group would choose. By the end of Year 4, the pupils have a wide range of skills, and a good understanding of how computers can help them in their studies. They type and edit texts, import pictures into documents and produce complex designs by giving repeat commands to an on-screen robot. Pupils in Year 3 have been introduced to the use of emails, and can send and receive messages, which is a good level of achievement for their age. During the inspection, they were observed composing replies to messages they had received from pupils in another school in the locality. Year 4 pupils use the computer well as a source of information, using the Internet and CD-ROM with at least the expected levels of skills and confidence. Documentary evidence shows that the pupils have also made good use of a digital camera, for example to select shots of the local environment for inclusion in a geography topic. The school has done well to maintain standards in the subject to this level in the face of rapidly expanding use of computers.

114. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with very good direct teaching of skills by the co-ordinator. All the teachers have enough subject knowledge and confidence to teach the required skills to their own classes and to plan for the use of computers in different subjects. Lessons are very well-organised to build on the pupils' existing skills in a systematic way. The pupils' respond very positively, showing a high degree of confidence and independence in their use of computers, and sharing their skills willingly with one-another. They concentrate very well on the set tasks, and sustain a good rate of learning throughout lessons. Some opportunities are still missed to use computers however on an individual basis – for example for higher attaining pupils to undertake extended research and investigations. Pupils are managed very well in lessons, and the best use made of available lesson time and resources. Teaching assistants make a very good contribution in supporting pupils with special educational needs, especially those with behavioural difficulties, to concentrate on the set tasks and improve their skills.

115. The specialist teaching has paid dividends in setting a good pace for the teaching and learning of skills in a systematic way. However, there is currently no tracking of individual pupils' skills to aid planning for different levels of prior attainment within each class. The computer suit is used well, and in most lessons, adequate use is made of computers in the classroom, though this could be extended. The co-ordinator leads and manages the subject well. She has checked teachers' planning and standards across the school and established priorities for development. For example, the school is now focusing on the use of computers to help pupils handle and interpret data, which has been identified as an area of weakness.

## **MUSIC**

116. Standards are average at the end of Year 2 and Year 4 in listening, composing and performing music and are above expectations in singing. This is an improvement since the past inspection. Few class lessons were seen, but pupils were heard singing in assemblies and in the choir and observed at work in small groups under the guidance of teachers and teaching assistants. By the end of Year 2, pupils sing well in tune and with a good feeling for a song. They keep a rhythm well while singing or playing percussion instruments. In composition lessons, pupils listen attentively to the sounds instruments make before selecting instruments for a particular purpose. They experiment with different ways of producing sounds and combine a series of sounds to make a desired effect. For example, two Year 2 pupils shook and swirled an African 'rain drum' to create the effect of a storm. By the end of Year 4, pupils sing a range of songs accurately and with good expression. They keep to their own part well when singing simple two-part rounds. They learn new songs quickly and compose their own lyrics to fit existing tunes.

117. Too few lessons were seen to make an overall judgement in the quality of teaching. The pupils' enjoyment of music and good singing skills demonstrated in assemblies suggest that this aspect of the subject is taught well. The recorded evidence of compositions shows that appropriate skills are taught in each year group and that the pupils make at least sound progress. The co-ordinator ensures a high profile for the subject through teaching all the pupils in Year 3 and Year 4, playing the piano for assemblies and running a school choir. This level of direct contact with the pupils also gives her a good insight into standards throughout the school. Currently, however, the assessment of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills is left to individual teachers to carry out on an informal basis. This means that although lessons build systematically on skills, they do not cater fully for pupils of all abilities in each class.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

118. Standards have improved significantly since the time of the school's previous inspection and pupils achieve well. At the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment is broadly average but above average in gymnastics. By the end of Year 4 standards overall are above average.

119. By the end of Year 2, pupils successfully control their dance movements, showing appropriate changes in speed, direction and level. They confidently introduce gesture and stillness into their movements, especially when responding imaginatively to music. Pupils in Year 1 move confidently around the hall, showing clear awareness of space and other pupils. They use both floor and apparatus to climb, jump and roll, and they introduce a varied range of shapes into their movements. They show good levels of control and co-ordination in their work, especially when producing a sequence of movements. Pupils understand the need to warm up for, and recover from, exercise. By the end of Year 4, pupils have good ball control and throwing, catching and shooting skills and recognise some of the effects that exercise has on their bodies. Pupils further develop their skills and awareness of tactics when taking part in small-sided team games, such as basketball. Year 3 pupils were observed successfully performing a range of good quality gymnastic movements, introducing quality and fluency into the routines that they develop. Pupils attend swimming lessons during the year, and all successfully develop their confidence in the water. By the time they complete these sessions in Year 4 at least 80 percent of the pupils swim 25 metres unaided. This puts the pupils well on course to achieve the minimum expected standards in swimming and water safety before the end of Year 6. Pupils in Year 3 develop their outdoor skills during a visit to the Staffordshire Centre.

120. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. The teacher provides good planning, clear instructions and enthusiasm, together with a good and varied range of resources, allowing all pupils to make good gains in their physical skills. The teacher changes appropriately for lessons, and she joins in and demonstrates for pupils, which helps them identify areas where they might improve themselves. She has good subject knowledge, and has high expectations of the pupils' performance. In all lessons, pupils join in appropriately, enjoying themselves, making a good physical and creative effort and taking pleasure in the quality of their performance. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, with very good control and management of the pupils. The teacher provides good opportunities for pupils to observe and discuss each other's work to identify the good features and suggest improvements. The teacher provides help and support to pupils in all aspects of their work, and in particular she emphasises the need for safety. In turn, pupils show good, and sometimes very good, attitudes. They behave well, work well alone and with a partner or group and carry equipment carefully and safely.

121. Lessons cover all aspects of the subject. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and knowledgeable, and through taking all the lessons herself she can ensure that pupils make good progress. Satisfactory procedures are in place to measure and record individual pupils' achievements. Activities involving counting and measuring, in various aspects of physical education, give appropriate support to the pupils' numeracy skills. The advice provided to pupils about the importance of honesty and fair-play in their sporting activities, successfully supports their moral development. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular sporting and gymnastic activities. This contributes greatly to the pupils' good standards of achievement and personal development.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

122. Standards are average throughout the school as they were at the time of the last inspection. Pupils achieve the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. They have a sound knowledge of some of the world's main religions and of how religion is important in many people's lives.

123. Achievement is sound at the end of Year 2. Pupils have a good understanding of what a celebration is, and why people have them. They relate celebrations in their own lives, such as birthday parties, to celebrations in different religions. For example, one pupil explained that Christians celebrate the birthday of Jesus at Christmas. They understand that there are features that are common to most celebrations, such as 'getting together', and eating special foods. They also have an understanding of how special buildings are important to religions, with an emphasis on Christian churches. Achievement is also sound at the end of Year 4. Pupils understand some important similarities between religions. For example, when studying journeys, one pupil explained that many Muslims make one special journey in their lives to Mecca because this is their most holy place. This knowledge was then related to some of the important journeys that key figures in the Christian and Jewish traditions made, such as Moses leading his people out of Egypt.

124. The quality of teaching and learning is sound. Teachers plan lessons well, with suitable resources to interest the pupils, such as birthday party ingredients. Discussion is encouraged, but pupils' ideas are not always made the best use of for further discussion and investigation. Teachers have suitably high expectations for behaviour and effort, and try to involve all pupils fully in the lessons. The work recorded in the pupils' books, though limited in quantity, shows that all the required elements of the agreed syllabus are covered in each year-group. However, the subject is not used as effectively as it could be to develop the pupils' literacy skills, for example, writing at length and in different styles.

125. The co-ordinator is inexperienced in the management of the subject, but is keen to take it forward. In particular, she ensures that religious education lessons are used effectively to generate positive attitudes towards different religions. For example, in Year 3, pupils appreciated how the Hindu Guru Numak tried to overcome inequalities. In this respect the subject makes a good contribution to preparing the pupils for life in a multicultural society in which many faiths are represented.