

INSPECTION REPORT

WOODLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Birkenhead

LEA area: Wirral

Unique reference number: 104990

Headteacher: Ms Gill Hudson

Reporting inspector: Miss K Manning
20267

Dates of inspection: 17th – 20th June 2002

Inspection number: 195397

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Hollybank Road
Birkenhead
Merseyside

Postcode: CH41 2SY

Telephone number: 0151 647 8406

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Barbara Davies

Date of previous inspection: June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20267	K Manning	Registered inspector	English Art and design Design and technology Special educational needs	What the school should do to improve. How high standards are. How well pupils are taught. How well the school is led and managed.
19365	G Stockley	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well the school cares for its pupils. How well the school works in partnership with parents / carers.
25509	J Clarke	Team inspector	Foundation stage History Geography	
22881	G Halliday	Team inspector	Science Music Physical education	How good curricular and other opportunities are.
30935	K McArthur	Team inspector	English as an additional language	
31012	A Welch	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Religious education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Woodlands Primary School draws pupils from the local community. The school's intake has changed little since the previous inspection. The area continues to be one of high unemployment and social deprivation and more than half of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures and the proportion who do not speak English at home is higher than in most schools. The school also has a high proportion of pupils who join or leave the school part-way through their education. At present, there are 311 pupils in classes from reception to Year 6. The school also has a nursery and 25 children attend either mornings or afternoons. When they begin the nursery, children's attainments and experiences vary considerably but are generally well below what is typical of three-year-olds. Ninety-nine pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs because they have learning, physical or emotional difficulties. This proportion is higher than in most schools. Of these, 12 pupils have statements of special needs.

There have been some changes to the staffing of the school since the previous report. A new headteacher was appointed this term and there are two newly qualified teachers working in Year 1 and 2 classes. The school is a Beacon School and this has led to staff and pupils being involved in art and dance projects in the last year.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school. The leadership and management are good. Not all pupils achieve the standards expected nationally in English, mathematics and science but good teaching ensures that they achieve as well as they can. Although a significant number of pupils in Year 6 do not achieve the standards expected nationally in English, mathematics and science, they make good progress during their time in school. The school's strength lies in very good relationships between pupils, teachers and parents. The cost of achieving this is low and the school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Teachers do an excellent job of ensuring that all pupils benefit from what the school has to offer and that they have the same opportunities to make progress.
- Good teaching ensures that pupils achieve well.
- By the end of Year 6, standards are above what is expected nationally in design and technology, geography and history.
- The school is extremely successful in fulfilling its aims and they are evident in all of its work.
- The curriculum is rich and varied and provides abundant first-hand experiences for pupils.
- The school's very good provision for pupils' personal development ensures that they are highly motivated to learn and that most behave very well.

What could be improved

- Standards in music and writing are not high enough.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has successfully maintained the quality of education that it provided at the time of the previous inspection in 1997. There have also been some improvements. The curriculum is richer and offers more opportunities for pupils to learn from first-hand experiences. Teachers and governors monitor the quality of teaching and learning more rigorously and this ensures that the teaching continues to improve. A significant improvement is the way that teachers identify pupils who they believe to be gifted or talented in areas of the curriculum or in their personal skills. This is playing a big part in ensuring that pupils of all abilities get a good deal from the school.

STANDARDS

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

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

Children make good progress during their time in the foundation stage. However, the low level of attainment of most children when they start in the nursery means that, by the end of the reception year, few achieve the goals expected in reading, writing and mathematics. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world, personal development, creative and physical skills match those expected by the end of the reception class. In Years 1 and 2, pupils continue to make good progress and many achieve the standards of which they are capable. By the end of Year 2, most pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, reach the levels expected for their age in reading, writing and science. Standards in writing are prevented from being higher because pupils are not taught how to join their writing. In mathematics, standards are below what is expected nationally. This is because the high proportion of pupils who have special educational needs do not have the same amount of help for numeracy as they do for literacy.

By the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils who reach the level expected for their age in English, mathematics and science is lower than in most other schools. In English, many pupils do not write at length. In all three subjects, the results of National Curriculum tests reflect the fact that a significant number of pupils in Year 6 have special educational needs. These pupils make good progress from one year to the next and achieve as well as they can. A high number of pupils join the school after Year 3. Some are at an early stage of learning to speak English and others have had problems settling into other schools. They all do well in Woodlands Primary, but not all of them reach the levels expected for their age by the end of Year 6. Governors set realistic targets for raising standards in English and mathematics and last year the school exceeded these targets in both subjects. Standards are rising at a similar pace to the national trend and the school is rightly proud of how well pupils perform in comparison with similar schools. By the end of Year 6, standards are typical for pupils' age in art and design, physical education, information and communication technology and religious education. Standards in design and technology, geography and history are above what is expected for pupils' ages. In music, standards are below what is expected and pupils have only limited skills in performing and composing.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very positive attitudes and are highly motivated to learn. They are extremely enthusiastic about lessons and other activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Most pupils behave very well in lessons and when they are out of the classroom.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils show a tolerant, mature and growing understanding of other people and their views. They form very good relationships with

	other children and adults.
Attendance	Attendance is well below average.

Attendance figures are affected by higher than average amounts of illness and the increasing number of parents who take their children on holiday during term time.

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 teaching of English is generally good. Pupils who need it are given very good additional help in literacy. The only drawback is that teachers do not teach pupils in Years 1 and 2 to join their writing and they do not plan enough opportunities for pupils in Years 3 to 6 to write at length. Throughout the school, mathematics is taught well and teachers are good at teaching the basic skills of numeracy. Teaching is mostly good in all other subjects except music, where lack of resources and teachers' limited knowledge make the teaching unsatisfactory overall. A real strength of the teaching is that it meets the needs of all pupils, whatever their background or ability. This is the key reason why pupils make good progress from one year to the next and achieve well. Teaching is successful because the activities planned for pupils are interesting. Pupils respond by putting a lot of effort into their work and trying hard. Teachers are extremely good at managing pupils and do this in such a way that pupils want to do well and try their best, because they are keen to succeed rather than because they hope to gain rewards or merits. They make good use of classroom assistants to provide the help that is necessary to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress. Pupils who join the school part-way through their education are helped to settle in and learn at the same good rate as all other pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum meets statutory requirements for pupils in Years 1 to 6 and follows the recommended guidelines for children in the foundation stage. It is enriched by many first-hand experiences provided for pupils and by the school's close links with the community. All pupils have equal opportunities to learn and make progress.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The school ensures that all pupils with special educational needs get the help they need to achieve the best they can.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school does all it can for pupils who speak English as an additional language and they make good progress in all subjects.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development makes a very positive contribution to pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships. The ethos of the school is one in which pupils grow and flourish.
How well the school cares	Pupils are looked after very well. Staff keep a close eye on their academic progress and personal development. The school's procedures

for its pupils	for promoting good behaviour are very effective. Staff keep a close eye on attendance and encourage parents to bring their children to school regularly.
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The school has maintained the very good relationship it has with parents. They are encouraged to help their children at home and their involvement has a significant impact on the standards achieved by pupils.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership and management of the school are good. Co-ordinators generally do a good job and know what needs to be done to raise standards in their subjects. Staff work together well as a team and are committed to the continued success of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors do a good job on behalf of the school. They fulfil all of their statutory requirements and are extremely supportive of the new headteacher.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Staff and governors do a thorough job of evaluating what the school provides and how much it costs. They are well-aware of why the school struggles to match national expectations in tests.
The strategic use of resources	Good overall; the available funds are used appropriately and the principles of best value are applied well. Support staff play an important role in the life of the school and make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils also benefit from the time and talents of volunteer helpers.

The school has ample teachers and support staff to teach the number of pupils on roll. The accommodation is adequate and there are sufficient resources for all subjects except music.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • The teaching is good. • They feel comfortable about approaching teachers about their concerns. • They are glad that their children are expected to work hard and do their best. • They appreciate the way that teachers work closely with parents. • The school keeps them well-informed about how their children are getting on. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents would like a more interesting range of activities outside lessons. • Several parents feel that their children are not getting the right amount of homework.

The inspection team agrees with parents' very positive views of the school. The team considers the range of activities outside lessons to be satisfactory, especially as it is supplemented by residential visits for pupils in Year 6 and Saturday morning activities for pupils who attend Muslim school during the week. Teachers set regular homework for pupils and this has a good effect on their learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

By the end of the reception year

1. When children start in the nursery, their achievements vary widely but are mainly well below what is usually found for children of their age. A few know about books and numbers and have a wide experience outside of their own home and family. Most lack the confidence or vocabulary to speak to adults. Some speak English as an additional language and others have special educational needs. Consistently good teaching and a wide and rich curriculum ensure that, during their time in the foundation stage, children make good progress in all areas of learning. However, despite a growing confidence and widening vocabulary, few reach the standard expected in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave the reception classes. The rich and varied curriculum and the many opportunities that teachers provide for children to engage in creative and physical activities ensure that in these areas of learning, and in their knowledge and understanding of the world, their skills are typical for their age when they leave the reception classes. The help that they get from teachers and other staff ensures that children who speak English as an additional language do very well in this stage of their education.

By the end of Year 2

2. In Years 1 and 2 there is also a considerable amount of good teaching, which ensures that the pace of learning continues at the same rate. Many pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, achieve well and make considerable gains as a result of the frequent opportunities that teachers provide for them to take part in discussions and to write in literacy lessons and other subjects. In last year's National Curriculum tests in reading and writing, the proportion of pupils who reached the level expected for their age matched that of most other schools. Pupils did well in spelling and punctuation but standards are not higher because pupils are not taught to join their writing. In last year's national tests in mathematics, the proportion of pupils who reached the level expected for their age was lower than in most other schools. Inspection findings are that pupils achieve well but do not make the progress necessary to catch up from their low start. The main reason why standards are higher in reading and writing than they are in mathematics is because pupils who have special educational needs often make very good progress in *reading recovery* and *early literacy* lessons. In science, standards are a fair reflection of the results of teachers' assessments. These suggest that pupils achieve well and most reach the level expected for their age. The main reason for this is that one of the strengths of the teaching is the emphasis given to scientific investigation. Pupils enjoy this type of work tremendously and learn at a good rate.

By the end of Year 6

3. The results of last year's national tests show that standards in English and science were well below average. Standards in mathematics were average. Inspection findings are that standards are below average in all three subjects. Low standards in writing are the result of pupils not having enough opportunities to write at length. The results of national tests are not a fair reflection of how well pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieve in English, mathematics and science.

4. Pupils who have attended the school from Year 3 onwards achieve well in national tests in English and mathematics. Good teaching and extra support in *booster classes* helps those pupils in Year 6 who just need an extra push to reach the level expected for their age. By the time they are in Year 3, most of the pupils who speak English as an additional language speak fluently and do not need extra help. However, there is still a high number of pupils who join the school during these years and who are at the early stages of learning to speak English. These pupils do not generally reach the levels expected for their age in national tests.
5. Pupils who speak English as an additional language reflect a similar spread of ability to that seen across the school. By the time they are 11-years old, some more able pupils attain above average standards in mathematics, while others are below the level normally expected for their age. Pupils' knowledge and use of language improve steadily and progressively as they move through the school. Less able pupils may make fewer contributions during the oral sessions in lessons, owing to natural reticence rather than a lack of language knowledge. Most answer questions and contribute orally with confidence.
6. A high proportion of the pupils in Year 6 classes have special educational needs. Those who have learning difficulties achieve as well as they can in English, mathematics and science tests but do not always reach the level expected for their age. This brings the school's results in national tests down and is one of the reasons why comparisons with most other schools are unfavourable. Some pupils have special educational needs linked to behavioural difficulties and others have been diagnosed as having very short attention spans. They find national tests very difficult to complete and do not perform well in these situations.
7. The proportion of pupils who start the school part-way through their education is almost twice as high as the national average. This has a significant effect on the school's performance in national tests because a significant number of these pupils have been excluded from other schools and have dropped a long way behind with their learning. Teachers spend a lot of time on these pupils and often have to deal with their emotional and behavioural problems before they can start to make progress in any subject. The school's records show that this group of pupils make good progress from one year to the next. However, they do not always manage to catch up or attain the levels in English, mathematics and science that are expected for their age.
8. Pupils do as well as those in similar schools in English and mathematics and they perform really well in mathematics. Teachers and governors continue to set realistic targets for raising standards in English and mathematics and last year, they exceeded both targets.
9. The predominantly good teaching ensures that by the end of Year 6, standards in history, design and technology and geography are above what is expected nationally. Standards in information and communication technology match those expected nationally: they are not higher because pupils do not use computers often enough. In art and design and physical education, standards match those expected nationally. In religious education they match those prescribed by the locally Agreed Syllabus. In music, standards are below what is expected nationally. This is largely because there are insufficient resources and some teachers lack the skills and knowledge needed to teach the subject well enough.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. As noted at the previous inspection, pupils have very good attitudes to the school and this helps them to achieve well and to make good progress. They are highly motivated in their lessons, settle quickly to tasks and put a lot of effort into their work. Pupils are proud of their school and their own achievements because of the way that teachers encourage their talents and give them confidence in their abilities. They are eager to show their work to adults and are pleased to see it displayed attractively around the school.
11. Behaviour is very good. Pupils are aware of the expectations for high standards of behaviour, and most have the self-discipline to meet these. Children in the nursery know that they must share toys and equipment and generally do so without fuss. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are naturally ebullient, but learn to listen to adults without calling out and to take their turn in discussions. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 concentrate on their work and rarely need reminding to get on. A number of pupils have special educational needs that are linked to behavioural problems. They are often a handful in lessons but the very good relationships between staff and pupils ensure that they do not disrupt the learning of other pupils. It is a measure of the school's success that only one pupil was excluded in the last year. In the playground, pupils generally behave sensibly although there is some boisterous behaviour when they are *letting off steam*. There were no incidents of bullying or harassment during the inspection.
12. Pupils' personal development is very good and is a strength of the school. Many pupils have jobs to do around the school, such as answering the telephone at lunchtime or helping out in the dining hall. In this way they gain a sense of independence and responsibility as they get older. They carry out their duties sensibly and are proud to wear the badges that go with the responsibility. In lessons, pupils work co-operatively and are helpful to one another. In a very good lesson pupils worked in groups of six; each group retrieved hidden, numbered cards in order to form a sentence.
13. Last year, attendance was well below the national average. This is lower than it was at the time of the previous inspection and is the result of childhood illnesses and parents taking their children on holiday during term time. The school has the improvement of attendance as a current priority and there are signs that some progress is being made. Registers are marked promptly and accurately and lessons begin without delay.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

14. Most teaching is good and some is very good. The picture is similar to what it was at the time of the previous inspection. because of teachers' continuing commitment to maintaining and raising standards, and the attention they give to training. In each stage of their education, pupils are taught well. The teaching continues to be good in all subjects except music, where insufficient resources and teachers' lack of knowledge mean that it is unsatisfactory overall.
15. The main strength of the teaching is the way that teachers ensure that pupils of different abilities and backgrounds have equal access to the curriculum and equal opportunities to make progress.
16. Teachers ensure that pupils who have special educational needs get a good deal from the school. Their work is planned meticulously so that what they are doing matches the targets in their individual education plans. For example, pupils in Year 6 were given spelling homework that was specific to them. Programmes, such as those designed to promote early literacy skills for pupils in infant classes, are taught very well and ensure that pupils make good progress with reading and writing. Similarly, *booster* classes for

pupils in Year 6 help to increase the proportion of 11-year-olds who reach the level expected for their age in English and mathematics.

17. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are generally taught well. The school promotes an ethos in which all pupils get a fair chance and are involved in all learning activities. They are not withdrawn from lessons unless they are participating in *phonological awareness training* lessons. These intensive sessions last for just ten minutes each day and pupils benefit tremendously from this method of teaching. Although lesson plans should include specific activities for pupils who speak English as an additional language, this was seen in only one teacher's plans. Similarly, only a few questions were specifically directed to these pupils to involve them more fully, and help improve their speaking skills. Another effective method is the use of the *talking partners* programme, when pupils are carefully paired with one another so that they can hear good spoken language. Before a topic is introduced in class, pupils are taught new vocabulary to ensure they can participate fully. The good quality support provided by classroom assistants helps pupils to learn well. Classroom assistants are well deployed to work with specific groups. The bi-lingual support assistant works well with the younger pupils, and makes good use of dual-language teaching to help them use a wider vocabulary. When reading a story about jungle animals, pupils showed their quick grasp of new words and quickly named the elephant's trunk. Pupils' writing is celebrated on good displays around the school, and many notices are bi-lingual, giving value to different cultures.
18. Pupils who start the school part-way through their education are given the help they need to settle quickly and make good progress. Teachers assess their knowledge and skills informally and take pains to ensure that they join the group that best matches their ability for English and mathematics. Strategies, such as asking them to talk about the books they have read in their previous school, help teachers determine what they know and raise pupils' self-esteem. A number of the pupils who join the school have been excluded from other schools because of their poor behaviour. Staff manage these pupils very well and they often settle into the school and begin to succeed.
19. The school's strategy for teaching pupils in groups of similar ability works well. In Years 3 to 6, teachers ensure that pupils work in groups of similar ability for English and mathematics. In this way, the most able pupils are given more challenging work and the least able are set work that matches their ability. In other subjects, teachers are generally successful at ensuring that the work matches the different abilities of pupils within the class. They provide more challenging tasks for pupils identified as having talents and expect them to achieve well.
20. Throughout the school, pupils who need it are given extra help and support from students, classroom assistants and other adults, whenever possible. Teachers make good use of other adults in lessons and to accompany pupils on educational outings and visits. They make a significant contribution to the quality of teaching.
21. A common aspect of all good teaching is the skilled use that teachers make of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Effective use of both strategies enables teachers to provide work at the right level for pupils' current needs and to move those who are capable on to higher achievement. Teachers use the National Literacy Strategy to plan work in literacy but they do not plan sufficient additional opportunities for pupils in Years 3 to 6 to write at length; this is one of the reasons why standards could be higher in English.
22. Teachers make very good use of specialist teaching, resources, educational visits and residential experiences to broaden pupils' experiences. For example, an artist worked with pupils identified as being gifted or talented in this subject. Throughout the school,

activities are based on first-hand experiences. This ranges from a short walk to collect leaves to draw and paint to the extremely detailed work that pupils in Year 6 carried out in preparation for their residential visit to an adventure activity centre. They make satisfactory use of information and communication technology in most subjects and this is beginning to raise standards.

23. The work teachers provide for pupils to carry out at home has a good effect on pupils' interest and achievements in reading and is helping to raise standards in spelling.

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

24. The school provides a very rich, broad and balanced curriculum, which meets statutory requirements. This is an improvement since the previous inspection and is the result of the way that teachers plan many occasions when pupils learn from first-hand experiences. These vary from organised trips to museums and galleries to far more informal walks out to collect materials to draw in art lessons. The school uses a locally Agreed Syllabus to teach religious education.
25. The school makes excellent provision to ensure that all pupils have equality of access to what is offered. All curriculum guidance and policy documentation reflect and encompass the needs of all pupils. This includes pupils who speak English as an additional language, those who are gifted and talented, pupils who have special educational needs and those who start the school part-way through their education. The school runs a small number of after-school activities, which are open to girls and boys in Years 3 to 6.
26. The school continues to forge very good links with the community, which contribute well to pupils' learning. For instance, pupils visit a mosque and sing carols in a local church. There are many visitors to the school, who help to bring subjects to life for pupils. They include visitors who talk to pupils about ecological issues. The school's links with local schools have improved to a very good level since the school gained Beacon Status. It has helped to set up a number of initiatives with nearby schools, designed to raise attainment. For example, the *Beacon writing and arts projects*, were enjoyed by all pupils in the school.

Personal development

27. The school's programme for personal, social and health education is very good. It has helped ensure that pupils behave very well and that they have very positive attitudes to learning. Teachers plan many opportunities for pupils to discuss issues of life that are relevant to their age and maturity. For instance, pupils in Year 6 discussed personal problems and apologised to one another for instances of unsuitable behaviour. In lessons and in subjects, such as science, pupils are taught about sex education, the misuse of drugs and how to have a healthy lifestyle. The school's policy for promoting pupils' personal development has been very carefully thought out and is working well.
28. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development continues to be very good and remains a strength of the school. Central to the very good provision for spiritual development is the way that staff value the special contribution that each pupil makes to the school and use this to raise his or her self-esteem and self-knowledge. The school takes accounts of pupils from all sections of the community and stresses spiritual values such as of care, respect and achievement underpin the curriculum. Assemblies make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Teachers are sensitive to pupils' different religious traditions and although prayers are not always

said, time is taken for quiet thought and reflection. Religious education lessons provide pupils with an insight into the values and beliefs of their own and other cultures.

29. The school's strong moral code is promoted very effectively in all aspects of school life. The time that teachers take to encourage pupils to think about what is right and wrong, and to consider the impact of their actions on others, pays dividends in that pupils, on the whole, show a concern for the well-being of others. Regular opportunities to discuss moral issues occur during personal and social education lessons and during *circle times* when pupils come together to discuss sensitive matters that are important to them. Pupils in Years 5 and 6, for instance, discussed ways of dealing with bullies and the need to tell someone when this occurs.
30. The very caring relationships in the school contribute strongly to pupils' very good attitudes to social development and self-discipline. Teachers respect the culture and traditions of others and pass their positive attitudes on to pupils, this leads to very good racial harmony within the school. Good opportunities to work together in lessons help to develop pupils' social skills. Their understanding of good citizenship is developed well, for example, by fund-raising for a children's hospice, caring for the school's environment by regular litter campaigns and by being aware of global issues such as the need to recycle rubbish. Pupils are given the responsibility for managing many of the school's routine tasks such as manning the office and helping in the dining hall. Playground *buddies* take their responsibilities very seriously. After-school activities, school productions and residential visits help pupils to develop a sense of responsibility and to take initiatives.
31. In a community in which there are many different cultures, every effort is made to accommodate important festivals including Christmas, Divali, Eid-ul-Fitr and the Chinese New Year. Teachers provide opportunities in religious education for pupils to discuss the similarities and differences in the religions and cultures they study. Pupils are taught about other cultures in history and geography and their work in these areas is above expectations for their age. In art, pupils learn of famous artists from many parts of the world. However, opportunities to develop pupils' awareness of music from other cultures are missed - for example, when no music is played as they enter and leave assemblies. Visits to museums, places of worship and other places of culture, together with visits from theatre groups, artists and musicians are also planned into the curriculum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

32. The school is a warm and welcoming place where every child is valued, whatever talents or problems they bring. Pupils are looked after very well by caring and conscientious teachers and support staff, all pulling together to help each pupils to reach their full potential; in fact, exactly the situation described in the school's aims. There are very good procedures for promoting pupils' health and safety and these are rigorously carried out. The school gives a very high priority to child protection and procedures are very good, even to the extent of having a number of mid-day support staff trained in identifying signs of possible concern. Qualified support staff provide first aid, including one who is a trained nurse. Parents are kept fully informed about injuries to their children.
33. The school is working hard to promote full attendance by contacting parents when their children are absent without an explanation. Teachers work in close partnership with the school's educational welfare officer to keep a check on patterns of absence and encourage parents to get their children to school. Parents are left in no doubt that a

regular high level of attendance is important for their children, and teachers help pupils to catch up on work they have missed through illness or holidays.

34. Very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are based on positive action and are used consistently by all staff. They believe that this approach has had a very positive effect on behaviour and older pupils say that behaviour is now better than it was. There are also very good procedures for dealing with oppressive behaviour and as a result incidents of bullying or racism are rare.
35. Procedures for monitoring pupils' personal development are good, a mixture of formal and informal arrangements that work well because of the interest that staff take in their pupils' lives. The school supports pupils' personal development very well, using a range of methods that include providing first-hand learning experiences, group discussions, assembly themes and opportunities to take responsibility.
36. The school has good procedures for assessing pupils' learning. Teachers use the results of frequent tests to measure and track pupils' progress as they move through the school. Assessment is a natural part of teaching and learning in most lessons. By checking pupils' understanding through questioning, discussion and marking, teachers know when pupils are ready to move on to the next stage of learning. They use similar systems to determine what pupils who join the school part-way through their education know and to pitch work at the right level for their ability. Teachers keep very detailed records of how well pupils who have special educational needs progress towards the targets in their individual education plans and this ensures that the process of reviewing and then setting further targets works well. Teachers also keep a close check on the progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language. They use this to plan extra help where it is needed. At present there are no agreed procedures for monitoring the progress of pupils who are identified as gifted or talented. The school sees this as the next step in the process of providing for this group of pupils and the co-ordinator has begun to consider possible options.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

37. The school has successfully maintained its positive relationship with parents since the time of the last inspection. Parents have a good opinion of the school and those who attended the pre-inspection meeting had no concerns about any aspect of the school. The responses to the questionnaire were also mainly positive, with the amount of homework and the range of after school clubs being the only areas where a few parents felt unhappy. The inspection findings support parents' positive views of the school.
38. The school continues to give parents very good quality information to help them to know all about the school and how their children are getting on. The brochure contains a range of helpful information about the school and how the teaching is organised. Parents have two formal meetings with the teacher each year but teachers are always willing to talk to parents if they have concerns. The annual written reports are of very good quality, giving clear information about how pupils are getting on and what they need to do next. Teachers also show parents what they can do to help. There are regular newsletters from the school and from the Friends' Association and there is good notice of future events, which are well-attended by parents. Letters are translated for those parents whose first language is not English and this helps them to feel valued and involved.
39. Teachers work hard to strengthen the partnership between home and school because they believe that it has a good effect on pupils' learning. *Family learning* courses, run by teachers, have been well-attended by parents and are planned for the next year.

40. The school tries hard to involve parents in their children's learning. These efforts are beginning to pay off. A small number of parents help out in lessons and their contribution is both valued and useful. Parents of pupils who have special education needs, and those who speak English as an additional language, are kept up to date about their children's progress. Similarly, the parents of pupils who join the school part-way through their education are encouraged to talk to the class teacher in order to keep an informal check on how well their children are settling into school. A number of parents are involved in the Friends' Association, which raises funds for equipment and resources. Some run the *toast club* at break-time, which raises additional money for the school and at the same time provides extra nourishment to those pupils who are hungry. Many parents listen to their children reading at home and this helps them to make faster progress and to develop good reading habits and a love of books. They make sure that homework is done and generally make an effective contribution to their children's learning.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

41. The headteacher was appointed last term and has not been at the school long enough to have set her own style of leadership and management. The school's procedures and systems for management are effective enough to ensure that the school continues to run smoothly while the headteacher gets to know the children and evaluates the quality of teaching and learning. With this in mind, the headteacher has begun a programme of monitoring teachers, which has shown their strengths and provided ideas for changes in deployment in order to make best use of these skills.
42. The governors do a good job on behalf of the school. They fulfil all of their statutory requirements and are extremely supportive of the new headteacher. Several of them work or help in school and in this way they have a clear, first-hand view of its strengths and weaknesses. They are very much involved in setting and agreeing the school's priorities for improvement and in following this up with a clear system of professional development and training for staff. In the next term, governors will be setting targets for the work of the headteacher and for raising standards in English and mathematics in National Curriculum tests. Following the previous inspection governors were not required to draw up a plan of action because there were no key issues identified in the report. However, they were not content to sit back and relax, and have been involved in the school's Beacon projects and in its successful initiative aimed at identifying and celebrating those pupils who teachers believe have special talents.
43. Staff with leadership and managerial roles have a good understanding of their responsibilities and contribute to the effective management of the school. It is the school's policy to ensure that the curriculum remains broad and that the aims of the school are evident in all of its work. All co-ordinators monitor their subject areas closely and keep a check on teachers' planning and pupils' attainment in order to ensure that this happens. Subject co-ordinators analyse the results of National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science and are involved in consultations about setting targets and identifying gaps in teaching or learning. They do a thorough job and are well aware of why the school struggles to match national expectations in tests. Subject co-ordinators also provide informal advice for colleagues and more formal training in their subjects. As a result, there is a strong sense of shared purpose and teamwork in the school, which is evident in the support teachers give to one another and their willingness to work hard to continue to raise standards. The ethos of the school wholly reflects its declared aims and is one of the reasons why the school manages to succeed with pupils who have failed in other schools.

44. Financial planning and control continue to be good. The school receives several grants as a result of bids and because of initiatives linked to being a Beacon school. They are spent wisely and put to good use to raise standards and ensure that pupils of all abilities and backgrounds get a fair deal from the school. Governors and headteacher will work together to set and agree the budget. Throughout the year, governors make regular checks on spending. At the same time, the school administrative staff exercise good control of day-to-day spending within the limits agreed by governors. Through the conscientious work of the school's secretary, financial administration is efficient and unobtrusive. Action has been taken on all points raised for improvement at the last audit.
45. Governors and the headteacher understand the principles of best value and are well aware of the need to make the best use of finances. They use information from National Curriculum tests to compare the school's results with other schools, both locally and nationally. Spending is targeted on where it will have the best impact on standards, such as buying new computers in order to raise standards in information and communication technology. Parents are consulted on matters such as homework and the school has a good idea of its strengths and weaknesses.
46. There are ample teachers and support staff to teach all subjects of the curriculum. They are suitably qualified and continue to improve their knowledge and keep abreast of developments in primary education through regular training. Newly appointed staff are given plenty of support and this has helped two recently qualified teachers to do well in their first year of teaching. Teachers are prepared to take on the extra work involved with the initial training of teachers. As a result, the school has a good influence on the performance of students and they are helped to make a significant contribution to the quality of teaching and the life of the school. In turn, students feel that the experience is worthwhile and enjoyable.
47. Teachers make best possible use of the adequate accommodation and resources. The grounds are not spacious and classrooms are small. Teachers make particularly good use of classroom assistants and other adults who work with small groups of pupils in shared areas. This works well and relieves congestion in classrooms when pupils are working on activities such as art and crafts. In classes and corridors, lively and interesting displays make the school an attractive place for pupils to learn. Teachers also make very good use of visits to places of educational interest to increase pupils' understanding of subjects such as geography and history. There are too few musical instruments of good quality and this has an effect on pupils' ability to perform and compose music. Similarly, a shortage of computers is limiting pupils' achievements in information and communication technology.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

48. Governors, the headteacher and staff should

(1) Raise standards in writing by

- a. teaching a cursive style of writing to pupils in Years 1 and 2
- b. providing more opportunities for pupils in Years 3 to 6 to write at length.

(paragraphs 2, 3, 21, 73, 79 of the commentary)

(2) Raise standards in music by

- a. improving teachers' knowledge and expertise through training
- b. planning more opportunities for pupils to perform and listen to music in assemblies
- c. increasing the school's resources
- d. making greater use of computers to help pupils listen to and compose music.

(paragraphs 9, 14, 129 - 134 of the commentary)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	71
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	42

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	11	38	22	0	0	0
Percentage	0	15	54	31	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 more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	25	311
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	169

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	12
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	99

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	29

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	45
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	28

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.2
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	21	24

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	18	19
	Girls	22	24	20
	Total	39	42	39
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	87 (80)	93 (80)	87 (82)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	18	18	20
	Girls	22	22	24
	Total	40	40	44
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (84)	89 (80)	98 (95)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	27	23

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	21	24
	Girls	14	12	17
	Total	29	33	41
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	58 (59)	66 (73)	82 (71)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	22	21	22
	Girls	13	16	19
	Total	35	37	41
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	70 (82)	74 (78)	82 (88)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	23
Chinese	6
White	240
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23
Average class size	28.3

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	11.7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	345

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.7
Total number of education support staff	1.2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	45.5
Number of pupils per FTE adult	9.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
	£
Total income	673,963
Total expenditure	654,320
Expenditure per pupil	1,833
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	19643

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	336
Number of questionnaires returned	54 (16%)

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	30	2	4	0
My child is making good progress in school.	56	41	2	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	50	2	2	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	44	19	4	4
The teaching is good.	69	30	0	2	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	59	37	2	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	83	15	0	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	28	0	2	0
The school works closely with parents.	52	43	2	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	48	50	0	2	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	44	0	4	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	39	26	4	9

Four parents made additional comments

There were no significant issues arising from these comments.

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

49. The school admits children to the nursery after their third birthday. They go on to join one of the reception classes in the September after their fourth birthday. Many children start the nursery with skills that are well below what is typical for their age. A number speak English as an additional language and others have special educational needs. Consistently good teaching ensures that all children make rapid progress during their time in the foundation stage. However, their low starting point prevents them from reaching the goals expected in reading, writing and mathematics. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development and their personal and social skills match those expected by the end of the reception year.
50. Children who speak English as an additional language make particularly good progress during their first years in school. This is due to the help they get from teachers and multi-lingual support staff. Children who have special educational needs benefit from having these needs identified at the earliest stage and from the subsequent help and support that they get from staff.

Personal, social and emotional development

51. This area of learning is promoted well by staff and as a result, most children are on track to achieve the early goals and skills by the end of the reception year.
52. In the nursery, children are encouraged to do things for themselves and be independent. Consequently, most share equipment and to take turns. They get aprons when working with paint or water and know that they must wash their hands after going to the toilet. Teachers encourage children to be friendly to one another and say *please* and *thank you* when fruit is handed around at snack time. Right from this early age, children are expected to carry out simple duties, such as passing out the fruit or drinks. Teachers in the reception classes give children more responsibilities for putting things away, carrying out jobs such as taking the register back to the office or just finding their own reading bags from the box.
53. A good feature of the teaching is that teachers know each child well and are able to respond to their needs. For example, they know which children find it hard to join in with class activities and ensure that they have their say in discussions and get a turn at popular activities, such as working on computers.
54. Throughout the school, staff are very good at promoting children's social and moral development. It begins in the nursery, when children are given opportunities to think and talk about what is right and wrong and to work co-operatively with other children.

Communication, language and literacy

55. Children make good progress in this area of learning as a result of good and often very good teaching. They learn at a fast pace and achieve well during their time in the foundation stage. Despite this, by the end of the reception year, few reach the goals expected for their age.
56. A strength of the teaching in the foundation stage is the way that staff constantly talk with children. Every activity involves asking questions and emphasising words and

names. For example, children in the nursery talk about what Stripy the mouse has done when staying in their homes. In reception classes, children were encouraged to act out the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears using dolls and toys. They particularly enjoyed repeating the well-known words of the three bears. This type of activity ensures that children enjoy learning at the same time as it develops and extends their vocabulary.

57. Another good feature of the teaching is that teachers tell and read stories to children every day. Consequently, children learn to enjoy books and to handle them with care. Children in nursery learn to turn the pages by the corner, and to understand that the words tell the story. They look at the pictures very closely and smile and join in with the parts they know. By the time they are in reception classes, the brightest children read simple stories and talk about their favourite characters. Most children behave as readers, pointing to the words and telling the story, though a number are still at the stage where they remember the words rather than read them. Children who speak English as an additional language benefit from having a range of bilingual books to look at and enjoy, though these are just as often chosen by other pupils. Children are encouraged to take books home to share with parents and staff are working hard to increase the number of *story sacks* available to parents because they are so popular.
58. Teachers ensure that children in the foundation stage have daily opportunities to write. Writing is displayed prominently in the nursery and reception classes and this is effective in encouraging children to write. Children make books and cards. In the nursery, children particularly enjoy writing on a large whiteboard. Writing skills are taught carefully and systematically, with the most able children in the reception classes able to write simple sentences unaided. The teachers and classroom assistants focus very clearly on small groups of children, giving them very individual help. This good organisational strategy has a beneficial effect upon the way the children learn.

Mathematical development

59. This area of learning is also taught well, though few children reach the goals expected for their age by the time they leave reception class.
60. Teachers place strong emphasis on practical activities to help children understand the relationships between numbers. This prepares them well for future work in mathematics and supports their good progress. In the nursery, activities such as threading beads, playing with shapes in the sand tray and working with numbered boats all help children to develop their mathematical language and number recognition. Teachers make good use of computers and information and communication technology to promote children's mathematical development. Children enjoy counting and identifying numbers using familiar programs and this helps them make good progress in recognising number.
61. One of the strengths of teaching is that mathematics is part of everyday life in the foundation stage. This means that children practise their counting, adding and taking away many times each day. For example, in the reception classes, children keep a close eye on the puppet Peter the Pelican because he constantly gets his numbers wrong and they take great delight in correcting him. Throughout the foundation stage, children learn quickly to add and take away as they sing songs and rhymes.
62. Teachers provide many opportunities for children to practise their skills and consolidate their mathematical understanding. Children learn about subtraction by practical activities such as taking toy bears or frogs away from the main group then carefully counting how many are left. Teachers plan their lessons well so that children's learning is built securely lesson by lesson.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

63. Good teaching, typified by high expectations and well-planned and interesting activities, ensures that children have a sound knowledge of a range of topics by the end of their time in the reception year. Teachers provide a wealth of exciting activities to widen children's understanding of the world around them and extend their knowledge, starting with points from their own home and families.
64. In the nursery, teachers plan a varied programme of activities around the theme of farm animals. Children hatched chickens' eggs and visit a farm. This means that when they sort a group of toy animals into those that have fur and those that have feathers they have a good point of reference. In this way, teachers develop children's understanding of the natural world by using good observation skills. Children talked happily about the chickens, saying they had *gone back to the farm because they had got too big*.
65. A strength of the teaching is the way that teachers plan the curriculum so that children's learning is carefully structured. It effectively brings together learning in geography, history, information and communication technology and science. In the reception classes, teachers draw upon a very successful farm visit to enable children to explore whether animals have two legs or four. Children sort the animals and put them in the correct sets. The wide range of books, posters, puzzles, farm sets and the vets' role in helping to care for sick animals, helps them to understand and learn more about animals.

Physical development

66. In physical development most children attain the standards expected by the end of the reception year. Good teaching in this area enables the children to make good progress.
67. Regular opportunities to use the hall for dancing, games and gymnastics help children make steady progress in the development of physical skills. By the end of the reception year they achieve many of the early learning goals and move with confidence and control.
68. Staff ensure that children have plenty of opportunities to engage in physical activities, both indoors and when playing outside. As a result, children are robust and lively and are keen to have a good run around at playtimes. In the reception classes, teachers show children how to throw and catch balls and challenge them to use skills, such as dribbling a ball, that they find difficult. Children enjoy physical exercise tremendously and put a lot of effort into climbing, running and playing with wheeled toys. Although they can rely on support staff to help them if things go wrong, children in the reception classes are fairly good at dealing with zips, buttons and shoes when dressing themselves.
69. Teachers also provide daily opportunities for children to practise their skills at using small tools such as pencils, paintbrushes and scissors. They gain dexterity and control by moulding and shaping play-dough and in one activity children in the nursery were asked to think about the strokes they made with their brush as they painted farm animals. As a result, the paintings they achieved were of a particularly high standard.

Creative development

70. Good teaching in this area of learning ensures that by the time children leave the reception classes they achieve many of the goals expected for their age.

71. Teachers have a good understanding of how to teach the basic skills of painting and drawing. They describe the techniques and the effects caused by a range of materials and painting styles. In the nursery, children were enthralled as they watched the wax on a picture resist the ink being placed upon it and one child believed it to be *magic*. In the reception classes, children are expected to take time at their paintings and they work diligently and produce detailed pictures and paintings.
72. In the nursery and reception classes, teachers provide many opportunities for children to experiment with and to create music. Children sing, play musical instruments and move to music in many activities. Children particularly enjoyed their *body gym* work as they moved in time to rock music. Teachers ensure that there are times when children make their own music and listen to that of famous composers. In one lesson, children in a reception class were asked to consider what the music made them think about. The children were confident in expressing their own feelings and thoughts. They thought the music was slow and sad and made them think of butterflies.

ENGLISH

73. Throughout the school, standards in speaking and listening match those expected nationally. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress in their early years at school and by the end of Year 2 they achieve as well as most other pupils. In reading, standards are average by the end of Year 2 but below average by the end of Year 6. While this appears to be a drop in standards since the previous inspection it is a result of the increasing numbers of pupils who have special educational needs and the high proportion of pupils who start school part-way through their education. Pupils do not achieve as well as they could in writing and standards are below what is expected nationally by the end of Years 2 and 6.
74. One of the strengths of teaching is that the methods used to promote language and extend pupils' vocabulary work well. Teachers have high expectations that pupils will understand and use technical vocabulary in all subjects. In literacy lessons, pupils in Years 1 and 2 use terms such as *author* and *blurb* and are keen to *recommend* books that they have enjoyed reading. Older pupils identify nouns and prepositions in sentences and are fairly confident when it comes to joining in discussions and giving their opinions about the books they have read. In a Year 5 and 6 class, pupils understood that the *emotive language* used by an author would be unsuitable when writing an unbiased report of the events in the story. Throughout the school, teachers question pupils who speak English as an additional language in order to ensure that they understand what is being said. This helps them learn to speak English at a good rate. Another method that is working well, though it is limited in its use throughout the school, is drama lessons and the after-school drama club. Through acting, pupils learn to speak to a wider audience and gain self-esteem and confidence.
75. Teachers put a lot of effort into ensuring that pupils learn to listen carefully. In Years 1 and 2, pupils are encouraged to listen to what teachers and other pupils have to say without interrupting. Teachers ensure that the small number of pupils who have special educational needs linked to difficulties with paying attention are given all the help they need to play a full part in lessons. Very often, classroom assistants sit close by these pupils and remind them gently about not calling out and help them answer when it is their turn. In this way all pupils get an equal chance to have their say in class discussions. By the time they are in Years 5 and 6, pupils listen attentively and show that they have grasped the main points of discussions by their thoughtful answers. For example, when answering questions about a story, average attaining pupils in Year 6 made reference to the text and referred to comments that had been made by the teacher when giving their opinions of the characters.

76. The school's results in national tests in reading are not a true reflection of pupils' achievement. Teachers keep a close eye on pupils' attainment and progress and their detailed records and assessments show that most pupils make good progress from one year to the next.
77. One of the main reasons why most of the pupils in Year 2 reach the level expected for their age is that initiatives such as the *reading recovery programme* and *early literacy support* are very successful. The teaching in these lessons is generally very good and, as a result, pupils enjoy reading and writing and they make good progress with both. Teachers use the National Literacy Strategy effectively to ensure that pupils in Years 1 and 2 have a range of strategies that help them read unfamiliar words. For example, lower attaining pupils in a Year 2 lesson used their knowledge of the sounds of letters to read difficult words such as *disappear* correctly.
78. The methods used to teach reading in Years 3 to 6 are equally successful and, over time, pupils achieve well. From Year 3 onwards, teachers plan many opportunities for pupils to read books from a variety of genres and in this way pupils begin to respond to fiction and form their own preferences. Pupils in Year 6 are keen to talk about favourite authors and books and speak of their fondness for poetry and their expectations that reading Shakespeare will be difficult but is something that they look forward to doing. Throughout the school, the work teachers provide for pupils to carry out at home has a good effect on pupils' interest and achievements in reading.
79. There are some gaps to the teaching of writing that prevent pupils from achieving as well as they could. In Years 1 and 2, pupils are not taught to join their writing and in Years 3 to 6, pupils do not have enough opportunities to write at length. Through monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, the co-ordinators have identified these as areas for work in the next year.
80. There are also some good features in the teaching of writing. In Years 1 and 2 pupils are given many opportunities to write, in English and other subjects. They learn to draft their work and to write using word-processing programs on computers. As a result, by the end of Year 2 most pupils write accounts and stories that are interesting and are punctuated with full stops and capital letters. In Years 3 to 6, teachers ensure that pupils experiment with different styles of writing and use imaginative language in their work. For example, in a very good lesson, lower attaining pupils in Year 4 were able to compose short poems of their own after listening to examples read by their teacher and talking about the meaning of the words used by the poets.
81. In the past year, teachers have introduced several strategies aimed at improving pupils' spelling skills and these are paying dividends. By the end of Year 2, most pupils spell simple words correctly or have a good go at spelling them the way they sound. In Years 5 and 6, the very specific spelling homework given to lower attaining pupils has helped them make more than a year's worth of progress since September. Pupils who have special educational needs linked to writing are proud when they spell words, such as *young* and *yours*. The most able pupils spell many complex and difficult words accurately.
82. Throughout the school, pupils who have special educational needs are often given support from classroom assistants and the work that they are given is generally pitched at an easier level so that they do not become overwhelmed by the amounts of writing expected of the most able pupils and those who are identified as talented authors and writers. Teachers assess what pupils who start the school part-way though their education can do and they are placed quickly into the groups that best matches their ability. In this way they do not lose any ground by changing schools.

83. The leadership and management of the subject are good. In the time since the previous inspection, the co-ordinators have provided useful training for their colleagues and this has been instrumental in helping them use the National Literacy Strategy effectively. They have analysed the results of national tests and ensured that staff and governors are aware of gaps in teaching and learning. They are rightly concerned to ensure that pupils continue to achieve well and recognise the difficulties that the school faces in matching national standards.

MATHEMATICS

84. Standards have fallen since the previous inspection and are below expectations by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. The main reason for this is the high proportion of pupils in Years 2 and 6 who have special educational needs and do not reach the expected level for their age. Although attainment is below national expectations, most pupils do as well as they can and make good progress over time. This is because teaching is good overall. Comparisons with prior attainment are not always reliable because over a third of the pupils in both the current and the previous Year 6 classes joined the school part-way through their education.
85. Checks on the quality of teaching and learning by the senior management team have ensured that the school is consistent in its approach to teaching mathematics. Teachers apply the methods and the more structured curriculum of the National Numeracy Strategy with confidence. A good feature of all teaching is the way teachers use their knowledge of the subject to encourage pupils to think for themselves and discover patterns and relationships in number. They choose their resources carefully to illustrate their teaching. In a very good lesson on equivalent fractions in the lower-ability Year 4 class, the teacher, as she cut a large cake into halves, quarters and eighths, posed questions that made pupils think and led them on to explain their answers. Using these explanations as teaching points, she enabled pupils to see the relationship between the fractions. This helped lower-attaining pupils to understand, for instance, that two quarters has the same value as a half, while higher-attaining pupils went on to understand that six eighths has the same value as three quarters. Pupils in Year 2 began to see the relationship between multiplication and division as they made arrays of factors of numbers such as 12 and 20.
86. Teachers are also good at ensuring that pupils have a range of strategies to use in their calculations. Pupils in a lower-ability Years 5 and 6 class, for example, used three different ways to subtract 70 from 230. These involved counting back in tens or subtracting 30 then 40 or taking 70 from 200 and adding back 30. The very good relationships between all staff and pupils ensure that pupils are willing to explain their strategies to their teacher and classmates. As pupils describe how they work out answers, teachers help them to develop their understanding, and emphasise the fact that mathematical problems can be solved in different ways and that no one way is the correct way to work out an answer. Teachers also use these occasions well to ensure that pupils use the correct mathematical vocabulary in their explanations.
87. Strong teaching and supportive guidance from classroom assistants ensure that pupils who have special educational needs make the same good progress as other pupils in the school, albeit from a different starting point. Pupils appreciate the guidance they receive during group activities that helps them to keep up with the pace of the work. Pupils in Years 1 and 2, who do not make as good progress in mathematics as in other subjects, benefit from the effective teaching of a *mathematics intervention* teacher employed by the local education authority. This means that pupils in Year 2 who are close to reaching the expected level in national tests are given additional impetus to

achieve this target. Teachers also give good support to pupils who speak English as a second language. They speak clearly, repeat instructions and check that pupils have understood what they have to do. Teachers make sure that both groups are included in all aspects of the work. The school has begun to identify pupils who are gifted and talented in mathematics. There are plans afoot to provide them with opportunities to work with more able pupils drawn from other local primary schools. Gifted and talented pupils in Year 4 use their talents to run a mathematics *buddy* club for pupils in Year 2. Every class has a number of pupils who have special educational needs linked to behavioural problems. Teachers follow the school's arrangements for promoting high standards of behaviour and are quick to nip in the bud any misbehaviour. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils creates a climate of mutual respect and a willingness that helps pupils to do their best.

88. Pupils develop their mathematical skills when working in other subjects, particularly design and technology and geography. Pupils in Year 2 use their information and communication technology skills to present, on a pictogram, data gathered about how they travel to school. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 use bar and pie charts to present information about the fibre, fat and protein content of cereals. However, there are few examples of the use of computers to assist pupils' learning in mathematics in Years 5 and 6. They do not have opportunities, for example, to use spreadsheet models to investigate relationships such as those between expenditure and income in a simple accounting system.
89. Management of the subject is good. Since last year, the co-ordinators have made a thorough analysis of test results and identified gaps in pupils' learning. This highlighted a particular weakness in pupils' problem-solving activities and their knowledge of multiplication tables. The school has worked hard to strengthen these areas and has been successful on both counts. Assessment procedures have improved since the last inspection and are used to predict the levels pupils will attain by the time they leave the school and to determine individual targets for them to achieve. The school has a comprehensive plan of action to keep the subject moving ahead which, together with the shared commitment of all staff to raising standards, places the school in a good position to improve.

SCIENCE

90. Standards match those expected nationally by the end of Year 2 but are below what is expected by the end of Year 6. The main reason for this apparent fall in standards since the previous inspection is that a high number of pupils who join the school in Years 3 to 6 have special educational needs and find it difficult to achieve the levels expected for their age. However, good teaching ensures that pupils achieve the levels of which they are capable by the end of Year 6.
91. A strength of the teaching, throughout the school, is the emphasis given to investigative and experimental science in lessons. In Years 1 and 2, pupils are given many opportunities to observe plants growing and to find out about the properties of materials by using all their senses. They explore electricity using bulbs and batteries and, by the end of Year 2, most pupils know how to create a circuit and how to stop and start the flow of power. Higher attaining pupils understand that two bulbs will glow more dimly than one because they are sharing the same amount of power. In Years 3 to 6, teachers continue to provide many opportunities for pupils to learn by experimenting and finding out for themselves. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 thoroughly enjoyed handling large models of human teeth as they explored canine, incisor and molar teeth and by the end of the lesson pupils of all abilities could explain the different functions of each type of tooth.

92. A good feature of the teaching is the way that teachers guide pupils through the processes of setting up an experiment and predicting what will happen. This begins in Year 1 and 2 classes when pupils test the conditions needed for plants to grow healthily. By the time they are in Year 6, pupils understand how to set up a fair test and control the outcome by varying one or more conditions.
93. Teachers also ensure that pupils know how to record their results in a scientific way. Pupils in Year 1 are expected to draw simple pictures of their observations and by the end of Year 2 they make fairly detailed diagrams that are labelled clearly. Pupils of all abilities write accounts of their findings and those who have special educational needs related to reading and writing difficulties are often helped to complete a simplified sheet by classroom assistants and other adults. In Years 3 to 6, pupils are taught how to present observations and measurements clearly, using tables and bar charts. A good feature of the teaching of older pupils is the way that teachers encourage pupils to repeat their observations and measurements in order to test their accuracy. The most able pupils and those identified as talented in science are expected to work at a higher level and produce their findings as detailed graphs and to use computers to help them communicate their findings.
94. Throughout the school, teachers have high expectations that pupils will use difficult and complex scientific language. Consequently, pupils in Years 1 and 2 use the words *thorax* and *abdomen* in their descriptions of mini-beasts. Older pupils use terms such as *evaporation* and *molecules* in their written work.
95. An excellent feature of the school's provision for science is the way it encompasses the needs of all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and those who are gifted. As a result, pupils have the chance to achieve well and they do. Teachers ensure pupils with special educational needs get all the help they need. Extra lessons for pupils in Year 6, which were originally intended to boost the standards of lower attaining pupils, are now also arranged for other pupils. This contributes to the progress of a significant number of pupils towards higher levels.
96. The co-ordinator provides effective leadership and promotes the steady development of the subject. The priority that teachers give to implementing new guidelines for teaching science lays a solid basis for high quality planning of what pupils learn. As a result, pupils receive lots of interesting experiences and respond with very good attitudes to what teachers offer them. The school's improved procedures for assessing what pupils learn and can do lead to a close match of work to pupils' needs.

97. The school's priorities for the development of the subject for the next academic year are aimed suitably at raising standards. For instance, the co-ordinator has identified a weakness in the use of information and communication technology in lessons and plans for its systematic use. Few examples of the use of computers in science lessons were seen in pupils' work. Similarly, the present tenuous links with other subjects are to be extended and planned into lessons. The school recognises the vital role of the experimental and investigative aspects of science and for pupils to learn through first-hand experiences whenever possible. There are plans in hand to develop these further.

ART AND DESIGN

98. Standards are above average by the end of Year 2 and match those expected nationally by the end of Year 6. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 to 4 and satisfactorily in Years 5 and 6. The change in the rate of learning is because of the greater emphasis given to design and technology in Years 5 and 6. Younger pupils who speak English as an additional language do well in art and design because of its practical nature.
99. Good teaching in Years 1 and 2 has helped to raise standards. There are some good features in teaching in Years 3 to 6, though it is mostly satisfactory. A key feature of the good teaching is that teachers plan activities that are interesting to pupils and stimulate their imagination. For example, pupils in a class in Years 1 and 2 painted, drew and made collage pictures of the pattern and texture of bark and leaves that they had collected on a walk. Their interest was evident in the way they settled quickly and put a lot of effort into their tasks. Consequently, by the end of the lesson, pupils of all abilities had created work of a high quality.
100. Teachers also make good use of the skills of local artists. For example, as part of the school's Beacon art project all of the pupils who are identified as being talented worked with a local artist. The rest of the pupils worked on the same project but with their teachers. The end result was work of a high quality, which is part of the school's attractive and vibrant displays.
101. Throughout the school, teachers ensure that pupils learn about and explore a range of techniques and skills. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are taught how to draw in the style of traditional Japanese artists. The work that they produced in the same style is of a very high quality and is displayed imaginatively by teachers so that it forms a talking point for pupils of all ages. In Years 3 and 4, teachers show pupils how to mould plasticene and papier mâché and use tools, such as knives and sticks, to give texture to their sculptures. Pupils in these classes could hardly wait to show off the expressive and lively model heads that they made. Teachers provide frequent opportunities for pupils to use computers in their work. As a result, pupils in Years 1 and 2 produced lively pictures of water lilies on a pond, in the style of the painter Monet.
102. Teachers generally have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and give them a great deal of self-belief. Pupils who lose heart with their efforts are gently encouraged to have another go and a number of pupils are proud to have been identified as *artists* because of their special talents. In lessons, the most able pupils are often given more challenging tasks while those who have special educational needs are given extra help from teachers and other adults.

103. Good leadership and management have ensured that, since the previous inspection, standards have improved by the end of Year 2 and been maintained by the end of Year 6. The co-ordinator has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning and has rightly identified the need to revise the school's procedures for assessing and recording what pupils know and can do as areas for development in the coming year. This puts the school in a good position to be able to continue to improve the quality of teaching and raise standards.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

104. Pupils achieve well and standards are above what is expected nationally by the end of Years 2 and 6. Most of the teaching is good and ensures that pupils of all abilities and backgrounds have equal access to the curriculum and the same chance to make progress.
105. A real strength of the teaching is the way that teachers build on the skills that pupils have already learned. For example, in Years 1 and 2 pupils are taught to draw wheeled objects, such as a shopping trolley, from different views. By the time they are in Year 6, pupils draw far more complicated and accurate drawings of their models and often show and label several elevations in their designs.
106. A further strength of the teaching is the way that tasks match the different abilities of pupils. For example, the least able pupils in a Year 5 and 6 class made paper bridges by following a simple diagram. In the same lesson, average attaining pupils made bridges with moving parts using construction kits and the most able pupils, including those identified as having talents in the subject, made wooden bridges that involved measuring, cutting and joining materials accurately. Pupils who have special educational needs are often given help from a classroom assistant or other adults and in this way they make the same good progress as others in the class.
107. The work that teachers expect pupils to do is challenging and stimulating. They use technical language such as *fixed axle* and expect all pupils to do the same. In this way, all pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, extend their vocabulary and by the end of Year 6 they talk knowledgeably about the components and mechanisms that they use in their models.
108. Teachers are good at incorporating knowledge and skills from other subjects into pupils' work in design and technology. They provide many opportunities for pupils to use their literacy skills. In Years 1 and 2 pupils label their designs of calendars and give simple instructions about how models should be made. By the time they are in Year 6, pupils write explanations of how technology, such as pneumatics *work by transferring movement from one place to another place*. Teachers also ensure that pupils use their mathematical and information and communication technology skills in their work. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 used computers to create designs for cereal packets and those in Years 5 and 6 had to measure accurately when designing and making moving fairground models.
109. Good leadership and management have ensured that standards have been maintained since the previous inspection and that teachers continue to challenge and stimulate pupils. The school's procedures for assessing and recording pupils' progress are generally effective although the co-ordinator has identified the need to make greater use of technology, such as digital cameras, to provide evidence of pupils' attainment.

GEOGRAPHY

110. The last time the school was inspected standards in geography were at the levels expected. Since then the school has made good improvements and now standards are above those expected by the end of Years 2 and 6. Standards have risen because of the clear improvement in teaching and because of a highly relevant and interesting geography curriculum.
111. The curriculum is clearly rooted in environmental issues. These issues engage pupils and cause them to look at their own environment and consider how it could be improved. This clear emphasis on taking responsibility for their own locality helps pupils to be effective citizens. Teachers facilitate this aspect of the curriculum well with many visits to relevant places. Some pupils have visited a nearby landfill and reclamation site. Visitors to the school, for example a member of the waste management staff, encourage pupils to think about environmental issues.
112. Teachers are effective in using educational visits to help the pupils to become aware of their immediate locality. For example, pupils in Year 2 travelled by train to nearby woods where they observed the main physical features of the area. Back in the classroom, they used a map of the area to look at the layout of the woods and considered the reasons for picnic benches being located close to the car park. Clear explanations and help from teachers ensured that pupils knew how to read simple keys and plans. Consequently, pupils in Year 2 tracked their journey around the woods on a map and gave considered reasons for the map symbols and their meanings. The pupils generated their own symbols and keys for their group maps with good levels of collaboration and co-operation within the group. Achievement in this lesson was good because the pupils understood the importance of making country parks accessible to people without spoiling their natural beauty. Similarly, pupils in Years 3 and 4 visited Bidston Moss in order to study the impact that humans have had on this area over the past 200 years. That these visits bring the subject to life for pupils is evident in the enthusiasm with which they talk about what they have seen and in the detailed accounts that they write about the areas studied.
113. Throughout the school, teachers ensure that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum and that work meets the needs of pupils of different ability. Pupils who have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are often given extra help with reading and writing from classroom assistants and in this way they succeed at their own level, while engaging in similar topics and activities as the rest of the class. The most able pupils are generally given more challenging work and are expected to write in greater detail.
114. Teachers ensure that older pupils have opportunities to study other countries in depth. As a result of much research and discussion, pupils in Year 6 talked knowledgeably about the different climate and lifestyle of people living in the Caribbean island of St Lucia. They have a good understanding of the destruction of the rain forest on the island and know that the forest in the mountains was saved because of the difficulty of cutting down and transporting logs. Careful questioning and prompting by teachers leads pupils to a better understanding of the limited resources available to people in relatively small areas and the pressures on the land areas to sustain the people who live there. In Years 3 to 6, teachers have begun to make more use of information and communication technology to teach geography. Pupils research information from CD ROMs and the Internet and this has made a good contribution to their learning.
115. The subject is led and managed well. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic about the further development of geography throughout the school and is clear about the need to maintain standards. The school has sound procedures for assessing what pupils can

do but these are to be evaluated at the end of the year to determine their effectiveness. The co-ordinator feels that the use of information and communication technology is an area that needs to be strengthened in the subject.

HISTORY

116. Standards in history at the end of Years 2 and 6 are above the levels expected of pupils of their age. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when standards were at the levels expected. These improvements are the result of a high level of expertise and a clear determination to raise standards.
117. Teachers are effective in using first-hand experiences to stimulate pupils' interests. The many educational visits, visitors to the school, examination of artefacts and documentation from the periods being studied have a huge impact on the way that pupils learn about history. As a result, pupils achieve well and make good gains in understanding of how people in the past lived and what was important to them. In this way they develop an understanding of how people have changed.
118. Another good feature of the teaching is that pupils are shown how decisions made in the past have an effect on how they live today. The high standards of historical displays in the school demonstrate the prominence the subject has in the curriculum and the value teachers place upon pupils' work. History makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development as they reflect on how ancient civilisations impact upon our lives today.
119. When teachers plan their work they make effective use of cross-curricular links; these reinforce pupils' learning and help them make connections between art, history and geography. For example, pupils in Year 2 visited Birkenhead and looked at how the town has changed over time. They studied the history of the town and wrote detailed accounts of what they had seen and found out. Through these close observations of the locality, pupils gain a good sense of time. In Year 2, pupils have an opportunity to study the patterns and designs that William Morris used for his wallpaper. They then created their own patterns for wallpaper in their art lessons and on the computers as part of their information and communication technology lessons.
120. Teachers provide well for the pupils identified by the school as gifted and talented in writing and art. They use history as a good vehicle for extending and developing their skills even further. For example, in Years 3 and 4 teachers make effective use of the Roman topic to give purpose to pupils' writing. Perceptive writing about Roman soldiers and Chester gives pupils a flavour of life in ancient Britain. The quality of all the pupils' written work is good and shows their interest in the subject.
121. Many different kinds of evidence are used by teachers to interest and intrigue pupils. In Years 5 and 6, pupils looked at a range of source materials to find out about Henry VIII. They studied portraits, documents and contemporary reports about him and tried to deduce, from this evidence, what sort of man he was. They recognised his desperation for a son and heir and the effect his divorce from the Queen had upon the lives of the people around him. They made observations about his character from looking at his portraits. They thought he looked a powerful man but also a man who was rich, lazy and selfish. They put forward views about the scant regard he had for his wife because he was holding his son's hands and not his wife's. At the same time they recognised that the portraits may not have been an accurate reflection of him because the artist drew from his own particular point of view.
122. The subject is led and managed well. The co-ordinator has monitored pupils' work and has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning. This has

helped to set informed priorities for development in the next year and puts the school in a good position to be able to maintain high standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

123. The school has maintained standards in information and communication technology since the last inspection. These are typical of those achieved by most pupils at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and some is good. Pupils learn at a steady rate. However, standards could be higher if pupils had more opportunities to work with computers. Although the school has increased its resources since the previous inspection to include a small suite of computers, there are only enough to teach half a class at a time. This means that pupils are limited to using a computer only once every two weeks and this slows their rate of progress. At present the suite is timetabled for only one session a week and computers are often standing idle for much of the remaining time. This is an inefficient use of resources.
124. Teachers' planning benefits from the adoption of a comprehensive scheme of work based on national guidelines and this ensures that pupils are learning skills in a logical order. Teachers in Years 1 and 2 ensure that pupils are taught the skills they need for word processing and understand the functions of the keys and the mouse. They know how to use menus and tool bars when creating pictures with paint programs and how to programme a robot to move in a sequence. In a good lesson in Year 2, the teacher's accurate instructions enabled pupils to find information about natural wonders of the world, such as the *Sahara Desert* and the *Grand Canyon*, with few problems.
125. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are becoming adept at making their own *powerpoint* presentations, adding pictures, sounds and text to the sequence. In a good lesson, the teacher's clear expectations of what pupils should achieve and her confidence in using information and communication technology ensured that pupils were successful in adding animation and sound to their presentations. Older pupils, however, have a limited understanding of control technology. They do not use temperature sensors linked to a computer, for example, when carrying out scientific investigations or know how to make models move using control technology. They do know how to access the Internet and to send e-mails.
126. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are beginning to use their information and communication technology skills in other subjects. In art, pupils in Year 2 created a symmetrical pattern in the style of William Morris while in mathematics they used a bar chart to show the number and kind of their pets. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 use their skills well across the curriculum, ranging from finding information about mosques on the Internet in religious education to designing a poster advertisement for their cereal in design and technology. Pupils in Years 5 and 6, however, have limited opportunities to use their information and communication technology skills in other subjects.
127. Pupils have very good attitudes to the subject. Their enjoyment of using computers is obvious and they are proud of their work, particularly when combining different forms of information or using art programs. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils' and teachers very high expectations of behaviour, ensure that pupils in each class who are not working on computers work hard to complete their tasks under the supervision of a classroom assistant.
128. The subject leader has used his expertise well to give practical advice to colleagues but has not yet been allocated time to observe the quality of teaching. He has made good use of specific grants available to improve resources and has raised a substantial amount of money to buy new resources including a computer for each classroom and

five more for the computer suite. His action plan has correctly targeted the development of information and communication technology skills across the curriculum and the provision of after-school facilities for the pupils. As staff confidence is set to increase through further training and new resources are imminent, the school is in a good position to improve standards further.

MUSIC

129. Standards have fallen since the previous inspection and are now below those expected for pupils by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This is because the quality of teaching in the subject is unsatisfactory and there are too few resources. Some teachers do not have enough expertise in music to promote satisfactory standards of performance in singing and playing instruments. As a result, by the end of Year 2 pupils do not sing well enough or play tuned and untuned percussion expressively. Most do not make satisfactory progress as they get older. By the end of Year 6 they do not perform confidently or accurately when they play and sing.
130. Teachers are aware that teaching of singing is not strong enough to ensure that pupils reach the levels expected for their age. Teachers continue to provide opportunities for pupils who wish to take part in extra-curricular choral singing at special times of the year, for instance, at Christmas. However, they miss opportunities to raise the standards of singing for most pupils. Singing does not play a significant role in assemblies. Teachers do not promote tonal quality when pupils sing. Consequently, the standard of singing is not good enough.
131. Teachers are more confident when teaching pupils how to compose music and this area of the subject is taught satisfactorily. The co-ordinator ensures that all staff have been trained to use the school's new guidelines for teaching music. As a result, teachers use them to provide pupils with many interesting experiences. This enables pupils to compose simple pieces and listen to a range of music with attention to detail. For instance, pupils in Year 2 composed music for tuned and untuned percussion based on a walk around a local wood. Teachers in Years 3 and 4 taught pupils about the composer Saint Saens and compared their music with his. Pupils were fascinated by Saint Saens' adaptation of Offenbach's *Can-Can* for his composition *The Tortoise in The Carnival of the Animals*. Some pupils used specialist vocabulary correctly, such as *tempo* and *dynamics* in their appraisal of the music.
132. Teachers are less successful in teaching pupils how to perform music. This was seen in one lesson, when pupils were asked to create sounds to represent animals. Pupils spent very little time playing and almost all their time watching and listening to each other in turn. As a result, they made little progress in performing.
133. The co-ordinator has identified the need to increase the school's resources and make greater use of computers in the teaching of music. Little evidence of this was seen during the inspection. The school takes advantage of specialist peripatetic instrumental teaching for a small number of pupils who learn to play violin, flute, clarinet and brass.
134. The co-ordinator for the subject has already identified several areas of weakness in the school's provision for music. Standards are unlikely to rise until the school takes action already planned by the co-ordinator. In most lessons seen, aspects of teachers' knowledge and understanding of how to teach music were lacking and this affected how well pupils learned. For instance, in a lesson in Years 5 and 6, the teacher did not have enough musical ability to enable pupils to learn how to sing and play the melody on tuned percussion. The teacher explained to pupils well enough how to perform a two-part round, but could not lead or conduct them through it. As a result, pupils' performance became muddled and faded away. In order to remedy this the school

intends to increase teachers' musical knowledge and is considering the possibility of beginning some specialist music teaching.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

135. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection and are typical of those achieved by many pupils by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Most of the teaching in physical education is satisfactory and sometimes better. However, an excellent feature of teaching is the way that teachers encompass the needs of all pupils, including those who are particularly talented and those with special educational needs. They ensure that all pupils are included in physical education and have equal access to after-school sports and residential visits.
136. Teachers are keen to improve their skills in physical education and make good use of opportunities for additional training. One consequence of this is an improvement to pupils' achievements in dance, which were weak at the time of the previous inspection. Also, teachers established satisfactory levels of attainment in swimming by rectifying a decline in standards that occurred after the previous inspection. They did this by providing pupils with tuition in smaller groups and by placing as much emphasis on skills as on stamina.
137. By the end of Year 2, pupils take part in games, gymnastics and dance. The programme widens as pupils get older to include athletics, swimming and outdoor adventurous activities. A residential visit to an outdoor pursuits centre provides good opportunities for pupils in Year 6 to engage in a wider variety of activities. As a result, pupils take part in a wide range of interesting experiences and respond with very good attitudes to what teachers offer in lessons.
138. A good feature of teaching is teachers' approach to health and safety. This was demonstrated well in a lesson in Years 3 and 4 when the teacher asked pupils to check their reactions to energetic activity. They were clearly used to the procedure and showed a high degree of awareness of their own bodies. Most teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to learn from demonstrations of good practice and by evaluating one another's performances. Pupils improve their own performances by watching and listening carefully.
139. Teaching is very good in lessons where teachers have a firm grasp of the subject and high expectations of pupils' achievements. For instance, when the teacher expected pupils to *improve all the time* in a lesson that highlighted throwing and catching, they responded by concentrating hard on the task. Once satisfied with their performances, pupils set themselves new targets and continued to improve. Teaching is satisfactory in most lessons in the infants. However, in one lesson, pupils' learning slowed because the teacher was not firm enough with a small group of pupils whose restlessness caused difficulties at critical points of the lessons.
140. Teachers provide pupils with satisfactory opportunities to benefit from physical activities outside lessons. Pupils also benefit from the helpful advice about good practice given by visiting coaches. They are not providing pupils with the chance to take part in competitive activities with pupils from other schools. The school has not yet incorporated the use of information and communication technology into its programme for physical education.
141. The co-ordinator provides effective leadership that promotes the steady development of the subject. Sound leadership helps teachers to identify and deal with areas in need of improvement and gives them the capacity to raise standards. For instance, the priority

the co-ordinator gave to putting new guidelines for physical education into place gives teachers a firm foundation for high quality planning.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

142. Standards in religious education have been maintained since the last inspection and meet those prescribed by the locally Agreed Syllabus for pupils at the end of Years 2 and 6. Pupils study six religious traditions but particularly Christianity, Islam and Hinduism, which reflect the traditions of the locality. Teachers respect the culture and traditions of others and pass this positive attitude on to pupils. This approach makes a valuable contribution to the racial harmony that exists in the school. By celebrating most of the major festivals of world faiths such as Christmas, Eid-ul-Fitr and Diwali, pupils learn to respect and celebrate each other's different beliefs and customs and this enables them in turn to reflect upon their own beliefs.
143. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2. Teachers make good use of stories that focus on values, relationships or religious teachings so that pupils can consider the relevance of these to their own lives. Pupils know that storytelling was the way that Jesus taught about God. Pupils in Year 2 showed good understanding of right and wrong when looking for meaning in the parable of *The Sower*. One pupil wrote *the plants are like people that grow to love God* while another wrote *the seeds that don't grow are like people who don't listen*. Pupils learn about important human values, such as friendship and helping one another, when sharing examples of occasions when they have been helped. As they study Hinduism, they learn of the importance of the *Ramayana* to Hindus and that *Diwali* is a time to start afresh.
144. The quality of teaching is good in Years 3 to 6. A particular strength of the teaching is the way teachers use first-hand experience to help pupils understand the reality and importance of religion to people. Visits to an Anglican church and a mosque, by pupils in Years 3 and 4, developed their awareness that places of worship, special books and rituals of prayer are shared by more than one religion. This has prepared them well for their forthcoming visit to a Methodist church. In a good lesson, pupils drew on the knowledge gained from their previous visits to places of worship and devised questions to ask the Methodist minister, for example, the importance of the church to the local community.
145. Religious education makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers develop pupils' spiritual life by talking about special events and places in their lives. Pupils are encouraged to make the link between moral teaching in any religion and their own actions. In a good lesson in Years 5 and 6, the teacher encouraged contributions from Muslim pupils, which helped other pupils to understand the importance of the Qur'an as a guide to the way Muslims lead their lives. Throughout the school, teachers ensure that pupils from all backgrounds are included in lessons and have equal opportunities to make progress.
146. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to develop their writing in religious education. Pupils take an obvious pride in their work, which is neatly presented and illustrated by careful drawings. Little use is made of information and communication technology as yet, mainly because of the school's limited facilities. However, pupils in Years 3 and 4 use the Internet to search for information about mosques. Teachers use their good knowledge of the subject to make lessons interesting and enjoyable and because of this, pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive. This is evident in their readiness to answer questions and join in discussions.

147. The subject is led and managed satisfactorily. Although teachers' planning is monitored regularly, the co-ordinator does not have opportunities to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching in the classroom. Good procedures are in place to check pupils' progress. Resources have improved because the school makes good use of the nearby multicultural centre to supplement its own artefacts and materials relating to world faiths.