

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ABBEY PARK FIRST AND NURSERY SCHOOL**

Pershore

LEA area: Worcestershire

Unique reference number: 116716

Headteacher: Mrs S. Mason

Reporting inspector: Mr C. D. Taylor  
23004

Dates of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> June 2001

Inspection number: 195570

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Abbey Road Persnore Worcestershire
Postcode:	WR10 1DF
Telephone number:	01386 552722
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms S. Gilbert
Date of previous inspection:	3 <sup>rd</sup> March 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
23004	C. D. Taylor	Registered inspector	Science Geography History Music Areas of learning for children in the foundation stage Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Information about the school The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9039	B. Eyre	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22949	I. Addis	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education Religious education Equality of opportunity	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
19709	J. Fisher	Team inspector	English Art and design Design and technology Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Abbey Park First and Nursery School caters for boys and girls aged three to nine years. It is similar in size to most Junior and Infant schools with 197 full-time pupils and a further 25 children who attend part-time in the nursery. Numbers have increased since 1997. The school serves a mixed area of private and local authority housing in Pershore, and pupils also travel from a number of surrounding villages. Most pupils join the nursery class with levels of attainment broadly typical for their age. Fifteen per cent of pupils - broadly in line with the national average - are known to be eligible for free school meals. Ninety four pupils - well above the national average - are on the special educational needs register. Four of these pupils have statements of special educational needs. Most pupils with special needs have moderate learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are no pupils from ethnic minorities and no pupils speak English as an additional language.

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

Abbey Park First and Nursery School is a good school with appropriate aims and values and a caring environment. Standards have improved considerably in the last year and are at least in line with national expectations in all subjects. Teaching is good at the foundation stage and at both key stages. As a result, pupils make good progress during their time at the school. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive and their behaviour, personal development and relationships are particularly good. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The school benefits from good leadership and management. Although expenditure per pupil is well above the national average, the school provides sound value for money.

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

- Pupils in the nursery and reception classes make good progress because of good teaching.
- Teaching is good at both key stages and pupils make good progress as a result.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Pupils' very good attitudes, behaviour and relationships help them to learn effectively.
- There is good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare are good and the school has very effective links with parents.
- Good leadership ensures that the aims and values of the school are clearly reflected in its work.

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

- Assessment of pupils' standards and the level of pupils' work is not accurate enough in writing and in science. Pupils are not being given sufficient credit for work of a high standard.
- The criteria for placing pupils at Stage 1 on the special educational needs register are not rigorous enough, and there are far too many pupils on the register as a result. Administrative procedures for checking the progress of pupils with special needs are too time-consuming.
- Resources for information and communication technology (ICT) are unsatisfactory, and there is insufficient use of ICT to assist teaching and learning across the curriculum.

*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 made good progress in addressing the key issues in the previous inspection report in March 1997. It has made good progress in raising standards in geography, history and religious education, and has ensured that learning activities in all subjects challenge pupils of all abilities. It has made good progress in improving teachers' planning to ensure that all National Curriculum programmes of study are covered in sufficient depth, and has developed pupils' awareness of their own and other cultures. Good progress has been made in assessing the progress of pupils in Year 4 and in checking the progress of pupils in the foundation subjects. The school has introduced closer monitoring of teaching and has increased the governors' contribution to strategic planning. In addition to these key issues, the school has raised standards, especially in writing. It has improved the quality of teaching and learning and has made the curriculum more balanced. It has maintained its high standard of leadership and management and its good provision for pupils with special educational needs. Links with parents were good and have become very good. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships were generally good at the previous inspection, and are now very good. The school has identified appropriate areas for development and has a very good commitment and capacity to make further improvements.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				<b>Key</b>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
reading	D	D	C	C	well above average    A above average        B average                 C below average         D well below average    E
writing	D	E	E	E*	
mathematics	D	D	D	E	

In reading, the school's results in 2000 were in line with the national average for all schools in the country, and close to the average for schools with a similar proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. Over the past four years, standards have improved. Inspection findings indicate that standards of attainment in reading in the current Year 2 are above the national average. In writing, the results of the tests in 2000 were judged to be well below the national average for all schools and were in the bottom five per cent of schools in the country with pupils from similar backgrounds. Standards have improved considerably during the past year. Inspection findings indicate that standards of writing are in line with the national average in the current Year 2. This is partly due to good teaching, but is also because inaccurate assessment of the level of pupils' work by the school

resulted in scores that were too low for the standard of work produced in the national tests in 1999 and 2000. In mathematics, standards in the tests in 2000 were below the national average and well below the average for similar schools. Inspection findings indicate that attainment is now broadly in line with the national average at the end of Key Stage 1. Results have improved in the last year because of good teaching. Teachers' assessments of pupils' standards in science in 2000 indicated that the percentage of pupils achieving the nationally expected standard was well below the national average and close to the average achieved higher levels. Overall, standards were below those in similar schools. Inspection findings indicate that standards in the current Year 2 are in line with the national average. Pupils are making good progress because of good teaching, and standards are being assessed more accurately than last year. Standards are in line with those expected nationally in all other subjects at Key Stage 1 except in art and design and in music where standards are above those expected. Standards in Years 3 and 4 are in line with the national average in English, mathematics and science. They are similar to standards expected nationally in all other subjects except in art and design, music and history where they are above national expectations. Children make good progress in the nursery and reception classes. Standards are in line with those expected nationally by the end of the reception year. Realistic targets have been set to improve standards in English and mathematics in the National Curriculum tests for seven-year-olds in 2001.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are very keen to learn and are well motivated. They are interested and involved in all school activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils nearly always behave well in class and around school. They are polite and helpful. There have been no exclusions.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships among pupils and with staff are very good. Pupils willingly take initiative and carry out responsibilities.
Attendance	Well above the national average. Authorised absence is below average. There is very little unauthorised absence. Punctuality is good.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-9 years
Lessons seen overall	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.*

Teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons. It was good in 56 per cent of lessons and very good in 27 per cent. Overall, teaching is good in the nursery and

reception classes and is good at both key stages. The teaching of English and mathematics, including the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, is good throughout the school. Strengths of teaching include very high expectations, effective planning of lessons, very good class management and effective use of homework to consolidate and extend pupils' learning. The school meets the needs of higher and lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, well. As a result, pupils generally work at a brisk pace and make good progress in acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding. In ICT, there are too few computers, printers and Internet connections, and as a result, there is insufficient use of ICT to aid teaching and learning in other subjects of the curriculum.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Planning for lessons in the nursery and reception classes is good. The curriculum is broad and balanced at both key stages. All statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are met. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities to widen pupils' interests.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils receive helpful assistance and make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. The criteria for placing pupils on Stage 1 of the special educational needs register are not rigorous enough, and there are too many pupils on the register as a result. The lack of centralised records means that checking the progress of pupils with special needs is not efficient enough.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for pupils' personal development is good. Provision for pupils' moral development is good, with clear teaching of right and wrong. Provision for pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development is good, including effective teaching on their own and other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare are good. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are effective. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good, and assessments are used effectively to raise standards by setting targets for pupils to achieve.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Very good. The school's links with parents are very good. Parents express very strong support for the school.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides good leadership of the school and is supported effectively by senior staff. They ensure that the school is moving forward with a clear sense of educational direction. Subject co-ordinators play an important role in monitoring and promoting high standards of teaching and learning. There is a good match of teachers and support staff to the needs of the curriculum.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors carry out their statutory duties well. They play an effective role in helping to shape the direction of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The headteacher, key staff and governors monitor and evaluate the school's performance well. They have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Educational priorities are supported well through the school's financial planning. All major decisions take into account the principles of best value to ensure that spending is effective. Overall, the accommodation is good, but there are insufficient areas for group teaching and inadequate storage. Learning resources are generally good, but there are insufficient resources to support the teaching and learning of ICT.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children enjoy school.</li> <li>• The school enables children to make good progress in their work.</li> <li>• There are high standards of good behaviour.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• Most parents are comfortable about approaching the school with a problem.</li> <li>• The school expects children to work hard and to achieve their best.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• Most parents feel the school helps their children become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few parents feel that their children do not get the right amount of work to do at home.</li> <li>• A few feel they are not kept well informed about their children's progress and the school does not work closely with them.</li> <li>• A sixth of the parents who responded feel the school does not provide an interesting range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

The inspection findings support the parents' very positive views. The school sets an appropriate amount of homework, especially in literacy and numeracy. The school has very good links with parents and the quality of information provided for parents is high. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities to broaden pupils' interests.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Children under the age of five join the nursery class on a part-time basis before attending full-time or part-time in the reception class. When they enter the nursery class, the full range of ability is represented, while most have levels of attainment broadly in line with those expected for children of their age. As a result of good teaching in the nursery and reception classes, they make good progress towards the early learning goals. By the end of the reception year, the attainment of most pupils is close to what is expected nationally in personal and social development, in communication and early reading and writing skills, in mathematical, physical and creative development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. Children with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans.

2. By the end of Key Stage 1, the overall attainment of pupils is in line with national expectations in English, mathematics and science. It is similar to that expected nationally in all other subjects except in art and design and in music where standards are above national expectations. Most pupils make good progress during Key Stage 1.

3. In English, inspection findings indicate that standards in Year 2 are broadly in line with the national average. In reading, attainment is above the national average. In writing, standards are similar to what is expected nationally. Both reading and writing have improved since the last inspection. Standards in reading were close to the national average in the National Curriculum tests for seven-year-olds in 2000, but were well below average in writing. In reading, they were close to the average in similar schools, but in writing they were very low compared with the average in similar schools. Standards, especially in writing, are much higher in the current Year 2 as standards have improved markedly in the last year. This is due partly to good teaching and the adoption of an effective writing strategy, but is also due to inaccurate assessment of the level of pupils' work by the school in the national tests in 1999 and 2000.

4. In mathematics, inspection findings indicate that attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is close to the national average. Standards in mathematics were below the national average in the tests in 2000, and well below the standard in similar schools. Results have improved in the last year because of good teaching. In science, inspection findings indicate that attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is in line with national expectations. This is better than teachers' assessments in 2000 when standards were below the levels expected nationally. Pupils are making good progress because of good teaching, and standards are being assessed more accurately than last year.

5. In English at Key Stage 1, the majority of pupils make good progress in their speaking and listening skills. As a result, pupils grow in confidence and are able to express themselves clearly. In reading, all pupils make good progress in their reading skills. They read simple texts accurately, confidently and with some expression. The school has worked successfully to address the lower achievement of boys in reading. In writing, the majority of pupils make good progress, and both handwriting and spelling have improved since the last inspection. The presentation of work is satisfactory.



6. In mathematics at Key Stage 1, most pupils make good progress. There is a good focus on developing basic numeracy skills, and mental mathematics skills have improved since the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy. In science, pupils make good progress. They develop their scientific enquiry skills by observing the location of light and dark areas around the school, and carry out simple experiments to investigate different materials.

7. Pupils' attainment in ICT is in line with the standard expected nationally at Key

Stage 1 and pupils make satisfactory progress. There is insufficient use of ICT in other subjects of the curriculum, however, due to a lack of sufficient computers, printers and Internet connections. Pupils' attainment in religious education is in line with the standards expected in the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils' attainment is similar to national expectations in all other subjects at Key Stage 1, except in art and design and in music where the standard of pupils' work is higher than is typical for their age.

8. Inspection findings indicate that the attainment of pupils in the current Year 4 is in line with the standards expected for their age nationally in English, mathematics and science. The overall attainment of pupils is similar to national expectations in all other subjects except in art and design, in music and in history where standards are above those expected nationally.

9. In English, inspection findings indicate that standards in the current Year 4 are in line with those expected nationally. Pupils make good progress in listening and speaking. They discuss their work sensibly using a wide vocabulary and speak clearly and confidently. The good use of questioning makes pupils think carefully about their answers and extends their vocabulary. Pupils make good progress in reading. The majority read with expression, tackle unfamiliar words well and understand what they are reading. Pupils know how the library is organised and use their skills to find books quickly. Progress in writing is also good. The oldest pupils' writing is carefully planned, with an interesting use of vocabulary and punctuation to enliven the text. Spelling and punctuation are usually accurate and handwriting is joined-up, clear and fluent.

10. In mathematics, inspection findings indicate that attainment in the current Year 4 is similar to that expected nationally. Pupils are making good progress and have benefited from the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy. Pupils are becoming more confident with written methods of calculation, and there has been a good effort to develop and use mental methods of calculation. In science, attainment is in line with the national average in Year 4. Pupils are making good progress. They investigate the plants and mini-beasts found in the school environmental area and ponds, and carry out experiments to determine the best insulator to stop ice cubes from melting. They understand the principles of fair testing and record and explain their results clearly.

11. Pupils' attainment in ICT is similar to the standard expected nationally by the end of Year 4, but there is not enough use of ICT to assist learning in other subjects. Attainment in religious education is in line with the standards expected in the locally

agreed syllabus. Pupils achieve standards close to national expectations in all other subjects except in art and design, music and history, where standards are higher than those usually found at this age.

12. There are no significant variations in attainment by gender as the school has worked hard to remedy underachievement by boys, for example in reading and writing, at both key stages.

13. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. Their needs are identified at an early age, and this contributes to the good progress they make. Pupils receive good support from their class teachers and from classroom assistants, and work is provided at the right level. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties make good progress in learning to control their behaviour.

14. Pupils' literacy skills are in line with those expected nationally at both key stages, and pupils make good progress. A daily literacy lesson has been introduced effectively in all classes, and standards of writing have improved during the last year. The new knowledge and skills gained in the literacy lessons are used effectively in other subjects of the curriculum to improve pupils' writing, for example, in science and in geography and history.

15. Standards in numeracy are similar to those expected nationally at both key stages. The National Numeracy Strategy has been introduced effectively in all classes and pupils are making good progress. They are carrying out mental calculations with increasing agility and showing confidence in manipulating numbers and using multiplication tables. There is appropriate use of numeracy skills in other subjects such as design and technology, and in science.

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

16. Throughout the school pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They show a high level of enthusiasm and enjoy coming to school. Pupils are well motivated and respond positively to the praise and encouragement offered by staff. They are interested in their work, share resources and co-operate well with one another. Most pupils show very good levels of concentration in lessons. They listen to instructions and explanations carefully and contribute well to discussions. They are keen to join in the good range of extra-curricular activities the school offers to pupils. The lunchtime writing club is particularly well supported, demonstrating that pupils want improve their work. Pupils are keen to develop independent study skills. Those in the older classes approach their work with maturity and work for long periods with sustained interest. Pupils with special educational needs have very positive attitudes to the school and are well integrated within the school community.

17. Standards of behaviour are very good. Pupils settle quickly to their tasks and behave in a responsible and helpful manner. Pupils are courteous, trustworthy and respectful of others. The vast majority of pupils are fully conversant with the school's code of conduct and know exactly what is and what is not acceptable. A very small number of pupils display challenging behaviour on rare occasions. These pupils are well supported by the school. There were no incidents of aggressive behaviour inside the classrooms or outside in the school grounds during the inspection. Parents are satisfied that pupils are well behaved at school and that the school deals with any minor incidents speedily and effectively. There have been no exclusions in the last school year.

18. Pupils' personal development is very good throughout the school. Younger pupils are responsible for the tidiness of designated areas of the classroom and

take the register to the school office. Older pupils are keen to take on responsibility. They act as librarians, monitor corridors and help younger pupils at break times. They are not afraid to use their own initiative, particularly when it involves helping the teacher or supporting others. Pupils take pride in their achievements and are able to evaluate their own and other pupils' performances constructively and sensibly. As they get older they take increasing responsibility for studying independently, including homework. The school is very tidy and free from litter and graffiti. This is due largely to pupils' respect for the buildings and the attractive school grounds. Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities and visits. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good throughout the school, as are relationships between pupils themselves. A high level of respect is shown to teachers, support staff and lunchtime supervisors which indicates a mature and considerate approach.

19. Attendance is well above the national average and there is little unauthorised absence. Almost all pupils arrive punctually in the mornings. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Lessons commence punctually and pupils settle quickly and quietly to their tasks.

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

20. The standard of teaching is good. As a result, pupils develop new skills quickly and learn effectively. Teaching was satisfactory or better in all the lessons. In 56 per cent of lessons the teaching was good and in 27 per cent it was very good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching.

21. Teaching is good at the foundation stage. The teachers and nursery nurses have a good understanding of how young children learn, and succeed in making learning fun. Children learn about different fruits, for example, by tasting pieces of banana and pineapple, and by visiting the local supermarket. Teachers place great emphasis on developing children's social skills, and encourage them to make choices and to take decisions. Planning is very good and includes a wide range of interesting and appropriate activities for children at different stages of learning. This reflects the teachers' very high expectations of all children. Children are very well managed and activities change frequently so that they do not have time to get bored. This helps to maintain very good levels of concentration. Staff pay careful attention to developing children's language, reading and writing skills, and to introducing children to numbers in a wide range of everyday situations, including visits to the local shops.

22. Teaching is good at Key Stages 1 and 2. It is good in English, mathematics and science and in all other subjects except music, where it is very good. Teaching that is good or better (83 per cent of lessons) is a major factor in ensuring that pupils make good progress.

23. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and this ensures that pupils acquire sound techniques and accurate information. The teaching of basic literacy and numeracy skills is good at both key stages. Teachers follow the structure of the

National Literacy Strategy confidently, and stress the development of pupils' language and vocabulary. Opportunities for developing and consolidating writing skills are followed up in subjects such as science, geography and history. The teaching of numeracy includes a wide variety of activities for pupils to practice and consolidate their learning, and this helps to retain pupils' interest. Teachers use mental mathematics sessions well to develop pupils' analytical thinking and mathematical vocabulary. Numeracy skills are re-inforced appropriately in other subjects, for example, in science, where pupils in Year 4 measure and compare the length of boys' and girls' arms, and in history, where pupils in Year 1 draw a bar chart showing favourite toys from the past.

24. Teachers' planning is particularly good at both key stages. In English and mathematics, teachers prepare lessons thoroughly and benefit from following the guidelines in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. In other subjects, planning usually follows national guidelines and shows a clear progression of skills and knowledge. This helps pupils to acquire skills in a logical order. A science lesson on habitats in Years 3 and 4, for example, was particularly well planned to ensure that pupils gained from recording and explaining their first-hand investigations at a number of different sites around the school. Teachers' expectations of pupils' work are very high, and this ensures good productivity and a brisk pace of work.

25. A wide variety of teaching methods is used effectively at both key stages. Teachers often start their lessons by referring back to the previous lesson in order to reinforce pupils' learning. This was done effectively, for example, in a Year 4 history lesson before pupils visited Pershore Abbey. Most teachers make the learning objectives clear at the start of lessons and review what pupils have learned at the end. This helps pupils to consolidate their learning. Teachers use questioning skills effectively, and constantly encourage pupils to improve their speaking skills by using correct vocabulary and technical terms when expanding on their answers. This was seen in a 'brainstorming' session in a Year 3 and 4 English lesson, when pupils suggested using phrases such as 'sending shivers up your spine' and 'getting goose bumps'. In science and mathematics, there is a good emphasis on developing investigative skills, while in other subjects, good use is made of visiting speakers and of visits in the local area.

26. Very good relationships between teachers and pupils produce a pleasant, hard-working and creative atmosphere. Very good class management is reflected in pupils' very good behaviour and positive attitudes to work. As a result, pupils are eager to learn and their intellectual and creative effort is very strong.

27. Teachers use time and resources well. In literacy and numeracy lessons, for instance, teachers time the different activities well and lessons move at a brisk pace. As a result, pupils work productively and maintain a busy pace of learning. The use of classroom assistants is effective, and teachers and support staff work closely together. Teachers make good use of a wide variety of teaching resources and this helps to stimulate pupils' interest and curiosity. There are many interesting displays in classrooms and around the school to stimulate pupils' thinking. Pupils' work is attractively displayed, and this reflects the appreciation that teachers show for pupils' efforts.

28. Teachers make regular assessments of pupils' attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science, and make good use of the results to guide their planning and teaching. In other subjects, informal assessments are used to check pupils' learning and to plan for subsequent lessons. The day-to-day use of homework to reinforce and extend learning is particularly good, especially in literacy and numeracy. Pupils take reading books home regularly and are set an appropriate amount of work to do at home. The marking of pupils' work is carried out regularly by teachers and praise is often used to encourage pupils. Most marking includes

helpful written comments on how pupils can improve their work, but, occasionally, marking does not indicate how the work could be better.

29. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good throughout the school. The special educational needs co-ordinator liaises closely with all staff. With her support, teachers write individual education plans that give a clear indication of what pupils need to learn and do. Targets are detailed, specific and achievable in the short term. The plans are reviewed and modified regularly and teachers match pupils' work with the targets indicated. Pupils receive good support from teachers and support staff both in the classroom and when taught in small groups or as individuals. Their work is carefully structured and based on an accurate assessment of their needs. They receive sensible guidance on behaviour where necessary. Very good relationships with teachers and assistants help pupils to feel confident and to make good progress.

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

30. There is a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, which meets the statutory requirements for all subjects of the National Curriculum and for religious education. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, have equal access to all areas of the curriculum.

31. At the time of the last inspection, the school allocated insufficient time to cover programmes of study in geography at Key Stage 1 and in history at Key Stage 2. There was inadequate provision for competitive games in physical education lessons, and medium term planning did not ensure that all programmes of study were covered in depth and that activities were linked to the learning objectives. All aspects of planning are now good. Coverage of the curriculum is at least adequate in all subjects and physical education lessons provide elements of friendly competition between pupils.

32. The National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Strategy have both been adopted effectively by the school. Their implementation has had a positive effect on planning and has contributed to improved standards in English and mathematics.

33. Planning for different groups of pupils is generally good. More able pupils have been identified in all classes, and in most lessons teachers plan effectively to provide suitably challenging work for high attainers. This is an improvement on the previous inspection when high-attaining pupils were not always stretched sufficiently. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Work is nearly always at an appropriate level as teachers plan carefully to match pupils' work with the targets indicated their individual education plans.

34. The school makes good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education, with a comprehensive programme of study to promote pupils' learning in this area. The positive aims and values of the school promote and support pupils'

personal development. Discussion times are organised during which pupils can talk about their feelings, and class activities and school visits contribute well to their social development.

35. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities to extend pupils' interests. Seasonal sports, including football and skittleball, are offered and visiting coaches provide instruction in rugby, tennis and netball. Pupils enjoy lunch time and after-school sessions in such diverse activities as drama, skipping, engineering, yoga and writing, and receive tuition in the guitar and French.

36. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is good. The school seeks to widen pupils' understanding of their environment and the world around them in a variety of ways. A wide range of visitors, including the *What a Waste* theatre group, Viking warriors and *Annie the Victorian housemaid* stimulate interest across the curriculum. Links with Pershore Abbey are particularly strong. School assemblies are held regularly in the abbey and very good use is made of the building and its staff to encourage pupils' spiritual awareness and historical understanding. Pupils participate in the town's carnival and there are educational visits for all year groups. Pupils visit local shops to encourage practical use of mathematics, travel to the Chedworth Roman villa and Cirencester museum and, in Years 3 and 4, participate in a residential weekend at the Malvern Outdoor Centre.

37. The school has constructive links with other schools. The relationship with the adjacent middle school is very positive and ensures that transfer arrangements are effective in providing good continuity for individual pupils.

38. The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As at the time of the previous inspection, this is a strength of the school. Spiritual awareness is developed through a wide range of experiences, and particularly during school assemblies. These occasions are well organised and highly effective in creating an appropriate atmosphere for pupils to share moments of reflection or listen attentively to music or stories. Good use is made of opportunities across the curriculum to extend pupils' spiritual development. During a visit to the abbey for a historical enactment, for example, pupils responded appropriately to the reverential atmosphere, were spell-bound by the symbolic lighting of candles and were transfixed by the re-telling of the story of Abbot Holbriht, represented in the abbey's stained-glass windows.

39. The school promotes a strong moral code and provides pupils with a clear sense of right and wrong. Teachers act as good role models and pupils respond well to the high expectations for good behaviour, which are consistently employed throughout the school. Pupils display a good awareness of the need to comply with class and school rules, and weekly achievement assemblies, when pupils are rewarded for their positive behaviour, contribute to the school's caring ethos. Elements of the personal and social education programme and religious education lessons are also effective in addressing moral and ethical issues. Pupils studying the parable of the good Samaritan and the story of Abraham and Isaac, for example, are encouraged to relate issues to their own experiences through discussion or written work.



40. Provision for pupils' social development is good. Opportunities are often provided during lessons for co-operative and collaborative work, for instance when investigating Venn diagrams in mathematics, organising games in small teams in physical education or working in groups to formulate questions during role-play activities in religious education. Teachers often enable higher-attaining pupils to provide support for their peers in activities such as ICT, when good use is made of shared expertise while using laptop computers. The school has introduced a highly effective system of 'contracts' which promote good sportsmanship and a sense of fair play, and these have helped to reduce aggressive or inappropriate behaviour during lunchtime games.

41. The previous inspection report identified weaknesses in some aspects of pupils' cultural development. There have been considerable improvements in this area and provision is now good. The religious education curriculum includes opportunities to widen pupils' understanding of the major world faiths, while the strong link established with a school with many pupils from ethnic minorities enhances pupils' awareness of different cultural traditions. This is developed further through special events, including 'India Day', when pupils participate in ethnic cooking, art and dance, and when sharing the celebration of the Hindu festival of Diwali. The pupils' own cultural tradition is celebrated well during visits to Pershore Abbey and to museums such as the Avoncroft Museum of Buildings. Music is a strength of the school and is used effectively in assemblies when pupils and staff join enthusiastically in songs from a wide range of cultures. Pupils also benefit from visits by specialists, such as a musician skilled in guitar and percussion, and a local historian. The school building is bright and colourful, and is enlivened by stimulating displays of pupils' paintings, sculptures and models, together with photographs and writing depicting a wide range of school activities. Its attractive grounds contain interesting habitats, such as ponds and wildlife areas, which are used effectively to widen pupils' understanding of the environment.

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

42. The school is a happy and safe place in which to learn. There are good procedures to ensure pupils' welfare and guidance. All adults are sensitive to individual pupils' needs, and there is good collaboration between staff to ensure effective personal and academic support for all pupils.

43. The school promotes high standards of behaviour well. It has a clear code of conduct that is on display in all classrooms and is applied consistently by all staff. At the parents' meeting held before the inspection, parents reported that very little bullying takes place in the school. On rare occasions when thoughtless or unkind words are expressed, teachers intervene quickly to explain how careless remarks can cause hurt. The school recognises that pupils need to learn how to cope with setbacks and failure and this is done in a positive manner. Diagnostic assessments are used to devise ways in which pupils with emotional or behavioural problems can be given effective personal and academic support.

44. The school is aware of its duty to protect children from harm and rigorous attention is paid to child protection procedures. Key members of staff have undergone appropriate training and ensure that information is passed on to other members of staff. The child protection co-ordinator is due to attend a further training session to ensure that the school's policy is kept in line with best practice. First aid arrangements are well managed and staff training ensures that there is a proper level of awareness regarding allergies. Health and safety arrangements are generally secure, though a few minor matters relating to safety were drawn to the school's attention during the inspection.

45. Procedures for promoting and improving attendance are good. The previous report indicated that a number of pupils were arriving late in the morning. The school has addressed this effectively. Whenever a pattern of lateness or irregular attendance is detected the matter is followed up without delay, with the assistance of the educational welfare officer if necessary. Parents who withdraw their children for holidays during term time are made aware that this may have an adverse effect on their child's learning. As a result, the number of holidays taken remains at a modest level. School registers and admission records are maintained accurately, but the information the school obtains regarding parents' legal status could be clarified to comply with national guidance.

46. There are effective procedures for monitoring and recording pupils' attainment and progress. Since the previous inspection, the assessment procedures in English, mathematics and science have been extended to include all curriculum subjects. Standardised procedures are now in place for Year 4 pupils so that their attainment can be compared with national results. The school's assessments of standards in writing and science have been inaccurate until recently, and pupils have not been given sufficient credit for work of average or high standards. Following a local authority audit of pupils' writing, the school has addressed this problem, and recent training with the assistance of a county advisor is beginning to produce more accurate assessment of the level of pupils' work. Data from national curriculum tests and optional tests is analysed thoroughly, in order to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning and to identify where extra support is needed. Teachers are rigorous in identifying pupils who encounter difficulties in their learning, but the criteria for placing pupils on Stage 1 of the special educational needs register are not clear enough. There is also a register of high-attaining pupils who require additional stimulus and more challenging work. Pupils' progress is tracked effectively, and successfully informs teachers' future planning. Ongoing records are detailed and contain a summary of individual pupils' progress in all subjects. Records of achievement show pupils' progress from year to year along with examples of their work.

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

47. The school has a very positive relationship with its parents. This is confirmed by the large number of parents who assist in the classrooms, the high attendance levels of the majority of pupils and the willingness of many parents to support the activities of the Friends of Abbey Park School.

48. Almost all those who attended the parents' meeting or who completed the questionnaire agreed that the school works in an effective partnership with parents. The school tries hard to keep parents informed about its activities, and the range and quality of information provided by the school is very good. Annual reports informing parents about their children's progress explain clearly what has been achieved during the year and whether teachers' expectations have been reached. There are three occasions each year for parents to meet teachers for formal reviews of their children's progress. Access for day to day informal discussions is equally good. Each pupil has a home activities book through which parents can be informed and involved on a regular basis. The school prospectus and the governors' annual report are also high quality documents that provide all the information parents need. A few parents feel that, in the past, they were not always informed promptly if teachers had concerns about their children's progress. Parents are now contacted immediately if teachers consider their children may have special educational needs.

49. The Friends of Abbey Park First School is a well-organised and active body linking parents, staff and the community effectively to ensure that fundraising and social activities enhance the reputation of the school. Funds are used wisely to extend facilities in the school. Pupils are often commended for the contribution they make to the community. Parents value this involvement because it creates a sense of belonging, especially for those new to the area. Pupils recently received an award for their involvement in the town's carnival. The school is grateful to a parent who has recently provided children's costumes for the pilgrimage project being developed in collaboration with the local abbey. The staff of the abbey value pupils' involvement in assemblies and concerts as "their singing brings an exquisite quality to these occasions".

50. Parents expressed a range of opinions regarding the amount of homework the school expects their children to do. Inspectors found that the amount of homework is broadly in line with national recommendations. Pupils' activities books contain plenty of helpful information regarding the topics being studied during the current term. As a result, parents who wish to be involved in their children's learning at home have sufficient information to assist them.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

51. The management and efficiency of the school are good, as at the previous inspection. The headteacher and key staff provide good leadership of the school. The headteacher has clear aims and appropriate plans for the future, and is well supported by an effective deputy headteacher and senior management team. As a result, the school is moving forward with clear educational direction. During her five years in post, the headteacher has established very good relationships with parents and has gained the respect of her pupils. She is committed to raising standards in the school and has developed good aims and values to support the effective learning of pupils. She has many strengths. However, she took some time to recognise the inaccurate assessment of standards in the National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 1 and to introduce appropriate training to improve teachers' skills in assessing the level of pupils' work.

52. The headteacher monitors teaching and teachers' planning effectively, and this has helped to raise standards of teaching. She visits classrooms regularly and has observed every teacher at work. During the last year she has observed literacy in all classes, together with some other lessons. She feeds back her observations to individual teachers, making suggestions for future development. These visits form part of the performance management system introduced to identify teachers' professional development needs. The headteacher systematically checks the standard of pupils' written work by looking at a sample of work. She analyses National Curriculum assessments, optional tests and baseline assessments to identify areas that need improvement, and discusses her findings with subject co-ordinators in order to identify and take action to address pupils' learning in weaker areas of the curriculum.

53. The aims and values of the school are reflected clearly in its work. The school works hard to create a stimulating, caring environment in which every child can develop strengths and skills, and relate well to others. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils, and ensure that each child has an equal opportunity to succeed. They share a strong commitment to improving the quality of teaching and learning and a very good capacity to improve pupils' standards. Realistic targets have been set for standards in English and mathematics in Years 2, 3 and 4 in 2001. To meet these targets, the school has focused on raising standards of pupils' writing and numeracy skills and effective support for pupils with special needs. All teachers have had the opportunity to improve their professional skills during the current year by observing a colleague teaching writing or numeracy.

54. Responsibility for subject areas is delegated to subject co-ordinators who manage spending on resources and feed back information to other staff after attending training courses. During the last year, the literacy and numeracy co-ordinators have observed teaching in their subjects and have fed back points requiring action to individual teachers. This has helped to raise standards in English and mathematics. All co-ordinators monitor teachers' planning and evaluate pupils' work, and all have been given time to discuss their subject with pupils in different year groups. As a result, co-ordinators have been able to identify areas of learning

requiring more attention. Not all, however, have had the opportunity to observe lessons in their subjects. All staff have job descriptions which specify their roles clearly.

55. The special educational needs co-ordinator provides good support both for teachers and for individual pupils. She helps to ensure that pupils' individual education plans give clear targets that meet their specific needs. Good use is made of assessments to check pupils' progress, but the lack of centralised records makes it difficult to gain an overall view of the progress of individual pupils. Pupils' individual education plans are reviewed regularly and amended to take account of their needs. The initial identification of pupils with special needs is left to the discretion of individual class teachers. The assessment criteria for placing pupils on Stage 1 of the special educational needs register, however, are not defined accurately enough. There are far too many pupils being placed on the register as the criteria used do not identify pupils who have special needs clearly enough.

56. The governors provide good support for the headteacher. Governors have a good working knowledge of the school and have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They are kept up-to-date by comprehensive reports from the headteacher and by regular presentations from subject co-ordinators. The chair of governors and several others visit the school regularly to assist in the classroom, look at pupils' work and talk to teachers and pupils. The full governing body meets half-termly and committees meet regularly to discuss staffing, buildings and finances. They discuss management and budget issues, and play an effective role in helping to shape the future direction of the school. They fulfil all their statutory responsibilities well.

57. The school supports educational priorities well through its financial planning. The school improvement plan identifies appropriate targets and ensures that the resources available are directed towards raising pupils' attainment. The personnel, resources and costs involved are identified clearly, and there are specific criteria by which the impact of these developments can be evaluated. The large carry-over is earmarked for building a new teaching area for group work, external re-decoration and for improving the provision of ICT resources. The school makes good use of funding that is allocated to support specific areas such as special educational needs. The governing body monitors the school budget regularly and satisfactory financial controls are in place. The principles of best value are applied to all major decisions to ensure that spending is effective. Day-to-day administration is efficient and computers are used effectively for placing orders and for keeping pupils' records.

58. Teachers have an appropriate range of expertise and experience to provide good coverage of the National Curriculum. Classroom assistants have a wide range of expertise and the help they provide is highly valued by teachers, parents and pupils. They work alongside teachers effectively to provide good support during lessons, although occasionally, more could be done to ensure their efficient deployment at the start of lessons. The high level of expertise offered by classroom assistants ensures pupils with special needs make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. Support staff such as the caretaker,

administrative staff and midday supervisors make a good contribution to the efficiency and positive atmosphere of the school.

59. Arrangements to ensure that newly appointed teachers are supported in their work and informed about the school's policies and procedures are good. A senior member of staff acts as mentor to newly qualified teachers and there is adequate non-teaching time to ensure that lessons can be planned and prepared well. Effective induction procedures ensure that teachers are made aware of all school policies including those designed to protect children from harm. This valuable support enables new members of staff to be integrated into the life of the school quickly and to contribute effectively to raising standards.

60. The school buildings are very well maintained and provide an attractive learning environment. The location of the school office ensures that all visitors receive a friendly welcome, and the range of displays, including studies of other cultures and traditions, greatly enhances the classrooms and corridors. Storage space for items such as design and technology and art materials, however, is limited and the layout of the corridors and classrooms makes access to the resources difficult. The school is aware of this problem and has plans to improve the storage areas.

61. The range of resources for teaching and learning is good in most subjects, enabling the curriculum to be delivered in an effective manner. It is unsatisfactory, however, in ICT where the lack of sufficient computers, printers and Internet connections does not enable the full potential of the latest technology to be realised in raising standards across the curriculum. The school library is adequate and the wide range of books enables pupils to develop independent study skills and reading for pleasure. The acquisition of more non-fiction and drama books, however, would enhance the provision further.

62. The school playground is well laid out and there is adequate space for pupils who want to play energetic games as well as for those who wish to socialise or to be quiet and reflective. The provision of large play equipment for children in the nursery is good and teachers make innovative use of the "big" playground when it is available. The attractive environmental area, ponds and extensive flowerbeds are used effectively to study plants and animals in a wide range of different habitats. The school shares a playing field with the adjacent middle school and this provides plenty of space for team games.

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

63. In order improve the quality of education provided, the governing body, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) improve the assessment of pupils' standards and the levelling of pupils' work in writing and in science so pupils are given sufficient credit for the work they produce.  
(see paragraphs: 3, 4, 46, 74)

*(The school is aware of this issue and has already begun to train staff in more accurate assessment procedures in writing and in science.)*

- (2) revise the criteria for placing children on Stage 1 of the special educational needs register in order to identify pupils with special needs more accurately, and set up centralised administrative procedures for tracking the progress of pupils with special educational needs. (see paragraphs 46, 55)
  
- (3) improve the number of computers, printers and Internet connections for ICT and develop wider use of ICT for teaching and learning across different subjects of the curriculum.  
(see paragraphs: 7, 11, 61, 83, 90, 94, 109, 114, 115, 118, 119, 133)

In addition to the key issues above, the school should consider including the following minor issues in its action plan:

- More non-fiction and drama books along with those of an easier reading level would further enhance the library provision. (see paragraphs: 61, 79)
- Improved storage would enable resources in art and design and in design and technology to be accessed more efficiently. (see paragraphs: 99, 103)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	41
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	22

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	27	56	17	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y4
	Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	12.5
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	29

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y4
	Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	5	94

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	23
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	3.8
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.07
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*

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	13	17	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results	Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	11
	Girls	14	15
	Total	25	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	83 (80)	87 (83)
	National	83 (82)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments	English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	8	8
	Girls	13	13
	Total	21	21
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	70 (71)	70 (68)
	National	84 (82)	88 (87)

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

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	165
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

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

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

### *Teachers and classes*

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.5
Average class size	28

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y4**

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	129

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	15

Number of pupils per FTE adult	12.5
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### *Financial information*

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	413 232
Total expenditure	408 883
Expenditure per pupil	1 938
Balance brought forward from previous year	49 493
Balance carried forward to next year	52 842

## *Results of the survey of parents and carers*

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	222
Number of questionnaires returned	87

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	30	5	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	49	44	3	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	48	51	0	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	55	10	1	2
The teaching is good.	56	38	0	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	45	41	8	5	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	66	32	1	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	39	1	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	47	39	10	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	59	34	2	2	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	62	34	1	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	44	15	1	2

### Other issues raised by parents

Six parents made additional comments:  
Two expressed their support for the school;  
Four supplied additional information.

## **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**

64. The school has continued to make high quality provision for children in the foundation stage since the previous inspection. Children are provided with a good start to their education. The good teaching and the broad curriculum have a positive impact on children's learning. Children enjoy their time in the nursery and reception classes. They are enthusiastic, listen carefully to their teacher and make good progress. Their behaviour and their attitudes to learning are good because they are managed well and do not have time to get bored. A wide variety of interesting activities is well planned by the teachers and assessments are used effectively to track the progress of individual children. Homework activities such as reading and counting exercises are used effectively to consolidate and extend children's learning in class.

65. Children join the nursery part-time when they are three years old. They join the reception class at the beginning of the autumn term of the school year in which they become five. During the inspection, there were 25 children attending part-time in the nursery and 28 children attending full-time in the reception class. When children enter the nursery, they have a range of skills broadly typical for their age. All children, including those who have special educational needs, make good progress and most will have reached the levels expected for their age in all areas of learning by the time they leave the reception class.

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

66. Teachers place great emphasis on developing social skills in the nursery and reception classes. Teaching is good and children learn quickly. Activities during lessons are organised so children are encouraged to make choices and to take decisions. This soon builds up children's confidence. Children settle into the nursery well and quickly become familiar with classroom routines. They know they have to put their hand up to answer questions and they quickly learn to take turns. They are keen to discuss the work they have achieved, and listen patiently to each other's contributions. At snack time in the nursery, children locate their milk by identifying their own name correctly on a label. They are encouraged to try new tastes such as banana and pineapple pieces and raisins. The growing confidence of the reception class children was well illustrated during a visit to the local supermarket. Small groups of children soon located the selection of fruits on their shopping lists, and carefully weighed the items to check which were *lighter* and *heavier*. They were keen to examine the coins they received as change when they paid for their goods at the checkout. All staff develop very good relationships with the children. Consequently, the atmosphere in the nursery and reception classes is very positive and children respond well to this by being polite, kind and helpful to others. Most

children will achieve the level of personal, social and emotional development expected by the end of the reception year.

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

67. Most children speak clearly when discussing stories they have been reading together. They enjoy talking about the work they have done during lessons, and are keen to answer the teacher's questions. Children in the nursery chat together happily as they dress up as policemen, and explain why they are going to 'arrest' someone. In the reception class, children discuss their holiday destinations at the *passport desk* and order meals at the *Bushy-tail Beach Café*. They make effective progress in developing their communication skills and most will achieve the expected level by the end of the reception year.

68. Children in the nursery enjoy looking at books. They turn the pages correctly and re-tell the story by following the pictures. They listen carefully when the teacher reads a story, and respond well to questions about the characters in the story. They listen to recorded stories on their own, and follow the pictures and text in their own books. Children in the reception class learn the sounds and names of letters, and associate the letters successfully with the initial sounds of common words. Average and higher-attaining children recognise common letter patterns and read simple words with understanding. Most children will have learnt to read a variety of simple words by the end of the school year.

69. Children are given many opportunities to develop their writing skills. Children in the nursery attempt to write out a list for the 'shop'. In the reception class, they successfully trace over letters, and most can write letters accurately without assistance and copy words and names correctly. Children write Father's Day messages, ranging from a few words to several short sentences. Most children can write their own name unaided, while higher-attaining children can write short sentences with some assistance. Overall, as a result of good teaching, levels of attainment in speaking, reading and writing are close to those expected for children of their age.

### **Mathematical development**

70. Skilful teaching ensures that children are given many opportunities to develop mathematical skills and knowledge. In the nursery, children sing a range of songs and number rhymes, and most can count and recite numbers from one to ten confidently. Children enjoyed counting the number of teddies in bed, and placed the numbers 1 - 9 correctly in order on a number line. Children begin to have some knowledge of simple mathematical vocabulary. They cut teddy bear shapes out of play dough, for instance, and identify accurately the *big*, *medium-sized* and *small* teddies. In the reception class, children play with a variety of jigsaws and puzzles to encourage recognition of similar shapes and familiar colours. Children use number jigsaws, role-play in the *airport travel agency*, and counting exercises on the computer to improve their number recognition, and most can read and write numbers from one to twenty confidently. Many can perform simple additions such as 7+2 by counting on beyond 7, and some can subtract 2 from 10 by counting back.

Teachers use questioning effectively to develop children's mathematical language and to solve simple problems. Children can identify *half* a circle or triangle, and can estimate which items of fruit are *heavier* or *lighter* and check the accuracy of their estimates by using weighing scales. By taking part in everyday activities, children develop their language and number skills. Children visiting the local supermarket, for example, developed early skills in recognising coins and in receiving change for the purchase of fruit and vegetables. The nursery nurses and parent helpers are used effectively to support groups and individuals during mathematical activities to ensure that all children are fully involved and make good progress. By the end of the reception year, the majority of children will have mastered the skills and knowledge expected for their age.

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

71. Teachers provide many opportunities for learning within the classroom, during outdoor activities and on visits out of school to ensure that children make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world. Observational skills are developed as children visit Pershore Abbey and the Avoncroft museum of buildings. They draw simple maps showing the main features of their local area and make comparisons with different localities. Scientific concepts are developed as children look carefully at the life cycle of a caterpillar. They understand that a butterfly begins as an egg, then moves through the caterpillar and chrysalis stages, which are repeated as new life begins and ends. An understanding of the changing seasons develops as children begin to understand where rain comes from, and children go outdoors to observe the variety of cloud types. As a result of the good teaching, most children achieve the levels expected for their age at the end of the reception year.

### **Physical development**

72. Children make good progress in developing physical skills as a result of good teaching. Most children's physical development is in line with what is expected nationally by the end of the reception year. Teachers provide many opportunities for children to handle construction equipment, play in the sand and water trays and use scissors, crayons and paintbrushes. Children learn to develop control and co-ordination to express their feelings and emotions. In the nursery, for instance, children march with their knees held high as they join in a 'bear hunt', while children in the reception class develop a sequence of kick steps, bows, curtseys and turns to reflect the happy mood of the music. Outdoors, children use large wheeled toys to negotiate their way around the playground. They race down the slide and pump water with a hand pump. They develop manipulative skills by assembling large polystyrene jigsaws and by 'painting' the fence with water. They learn to take turns and share resources well, using the outdoor space safely and imaginatively.

### **Creative development**

73. There is a rich variety of opportunities to develop creative skills, and children have access to a wide range of tools and materials. They work hard, concentrate well and use the resources effectively. As a result of the good teaching, they make

good progress and achieve the skills typical for their age by the time they leave the reception class. Teachers ensure that activities help to develop the main themes and topics of the lesson. In the nursery, for example, children used pencil crayons to decorate teddies' pyjamas with colourful patterns. They draw pictures using pastels, and paint self-portraits using powder paints. In the reception class, children make models using a variety of materials, and use large and small construction equipment to make imaginative structures. Children create attractive models of their bedroom inside a cardboard shoebox, and make snowman and fairy glove puppets by cutting out and sticking together pieces of felt. Children use a 'painting' program on the computer to create imaginative artwork. They make observational drawings of flowers using coloured pastels, and paint cardboard models of local buildings which are stuck onto a large wall map of the local area. Most older children mix colours confidently to achieve a variety of tones and shades.

## **ENGLISH**

74. Standards in English are broadly in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1. In the National Curriculum tests for seven-year-olds in 2000, pupils achieved standards in reading that were in line with the national average and close to the average in similar schools. In writing, results were well below the national average in writing and were very low when compared to similar schools. Inspection findings indicate that standards in the current Year 2 have improved in reading and have improved significantly in writing. Standards are now above those expected nationally in reading and at the expected level in writing. This represents good progress overall since the previous inspection, with very good progress in writing. Over the last three years, standards in reading have risen faster than the national average. In writing, standards fell in writing before recovering this year. This substantial improvement in writing is due partly to good teaching, but is also because inaccurate assessment of the level of pupils' work by the school resulted in scores that were too low for the standard of work produced in the national tests in 1999 and 2000. Girls perform better than boys in reading but standards are similar in writing. The difference between boys' and girls' achievements in reading and writing has narrowed because the school has been successful in raising boys' attainment.

75. In Year 4, inspection findings indicate that the majority of pupils are achieving a satisfactory standard in writing and are on course to reach the standard expected nationally by the end of Key Stage 2. This is similar to standards at the previous inspection. In reading, standards have improved since the previous inspection and pupils are on course to achieve standards above those expected nationally. Higher standards are a consequence of good teaching, more accurate teacher assessment procedures in writing and the very good attitudes of pupils to their learning. All pupils, including those with special educational needs make good progress. Teachers are confident and effective in teaching literacy and provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills in other subjects such as religious education, physical education and science.

76. Standards in speaking and listening are above national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1. Most pupils are confident speakers and readily engage in discussions during lessons. Pupils in Year 1 speak clearly and coherently as they successfully identify the different story settings of *The Rainbow Fish* and *Goldilocks*. Teachers are successful in using many opportunities across the curriculum to develop and extend vocabulary, so pupils are constantly engaged in relevant discussions. In a Year 1 physical education lesson, for example, the poem *When the Twilight Ticks* was used effectively to find associated words such as *skittering*, *creeping* and *slinking* to stimulate pupils' movements. Pupils listen carefully to the views and opinions of others and co-operate sensibly when working in small groups.

77. By the end of Year 4, pupils' speaking and listening skills are well developed and they achieve standards above those expected for their age. Most pupils speak with humour, sensitivity and confidence. A good level of discussion is encouraged by teachers, and in response, pupils include relevant detail and express their ideas clearly. They listen with increasing attention, sustain longer conversations and make mature contributions to class discussions. In Years 3 and 4, pupils extend their vocabulary as they discuss different types of poems such as limericks, cautionary tales and riddles. Pupils listened attentively to limericks such as *There was a young lady from Dover*, Hilaire Belloc's poem *Rebecca* and the more sophisticated content of *Foolish Questions*. Pupils perform publicly in poetry competitions, in Pershore Abbey and in school productions. These offer valuable opportunities for pupils to use spoken language in more formal settings.

78. Standards in reading have continued to improve and are above the national average at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils enjoy shared reading activities during the literacy hour and join in enthusiastically when reading stories and poems. When reading independently, higher-attaining pupils read fluently, accurately and with expression, while most pupils have secure strategies for working out unknown words. Most pupils have a real enjoyment of books, read regularly at home and are beginning to identify favourite books and authors. The school has worked hard to address the lower achievement of boys, and the gap between girls and boys has now narrowed. Standards have improved as a direct result of well-targeted reading initiatives following interviews with pupils about their likes, dislikes and enjoyment of reading activities. The introduction of homework diaries has encouraged children and parents to work together to improve standards.

79. Pupils in Year 4 achieve standards in reading above those expected nationally. Most read fluently, expressively and with confidence. They identify key features and characters and refer to the text to justify their opinions. Teachers give pupils many opportunities to read for a variety of purposes. Most pupils use the contents, index and glossary pages effectively to gather information from books. The school library area is small, but is attractive and generally well stocked. The acquisition of more non-fiction and drama books along with those of an easier reading level would further enhance the library provision.

80. In writing, pupils' attainment is broadly in line with the national average at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils are beginning to write simple plans before they embark on story writing. They write about characters of their own choice and extend their



ideas logically into short stories. Sentences are usually punctuated with capital letters and full stops. Some higher-attaining pupils understand the use of question marks and exclamation marks. Spelling continues to be satisfactory. Pupils write in a clear, legible style and careful attention is given to supporting pupils with handwriting difficulties.

81. In Years 3 and 4, pupils achieve standards that are in line with those expected nationally. The basic skills of writing are taught well. In a mixed class of Year 3 and 4 pupils, very good teaching encouraged pupils to learn how language is used to create atmosphere, and pupils composed appropriate phrases such as *in a trembling voice*, *turned round really slowly*, and *biting my finger nails*. Year 4 pupils write formal letters to officials and informal letters to favourite aunts. They write plays such as *A really awful day!* and take notes while listening to stories such as *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. Pupils begin a letter to prospective parents, persuading them to send their children to the school, with the opening statement *This is a good school and I'm going to tell you why!* Handwriting has improved since the previous inspection and is joined and legible. Attractive displays show a wide range of independent writing. Literacy is also developed successfully in other curriculum areas such as history and geography. Pupils consolidate their writing skills as they write about a Victorian child's classroom and recount their experience of the school's 'Indian day'.

82. Teaching is good. It is never less than satisfactory and in the majority of lessons it is good or very good. In the best lessons, pupils are left in no doubt as to what they are expected to do and effective management ensures all pupils work hard, are enthusiastic and make very good progress. Lessons are well planned with appropriate activities for higher-attaining pupils and for those with special educational needs. A group of higher attaining Year 2 pupils, for example, worked with a teacher outside the classroom, studying the same theme at a more difficult level. The pupils' book reviews immediately captured the reader's attention with opening lines such as *Fancy a book to make you jump out of your skin?* The introduction of pupil's individual whiteboards, used for brainstorming, drafting and redrafting purposes has enabled pupils to write confidently, knowing that mistakes can be rectified and erased quickly. A very successful weekly Writing Club gives pupils additional opportunities to write in an informal setting. Pupils work enthusiastically when compiling lists of fruits in Italian, making invitations to join a fitness club or recounting the legend of the black knight.

83. Leadership of the subject is good. The co-ordinator has worked effectively with teachers, governors, pupils and parents to raise standards. The results of tests and assessments are analysed effectively and this has enabled the school to put appropriate strategies into place to improve standards. Assessment is used well to track the progress of individual pupils. Challenging targets are then set to raise standards. Parents are encouraged to work in school, attend workshops, and support homework and reading activities. Computers are used to support reading and spelling, but their effectiveness for drafting and improving pupils' work is limited by a lack of sufficient computers and printers.

## MATHEMATICS

84. Standards in mathematics are broadly in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils in Year 4 are on course to attain standards in line with the national average by the end of Year 6. In the National Curriculum tests for seven-year-olds in 2000, standards were below the national average. In comparison with similar schools, standards were also below average. Inspection evidence indicates that standards of attainment are in line with those of the previous inspection. However, in some areas of mathematics, and for a significant minority of higher-attaining pupils who are achieving well above national averages, standards are rising at both key stages. This is due to good teaching, improved planning and monitoring, and the increased rigour provided by the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy.

85. At Key Stage 1, the continuity and structured approach provided by the National Numeracy Strategy enables pupils to build effectively on prior learning. In a Year 1 class, for example, pupils were able to count in fives and then use this example to identify missing numbers in other sequences, such as multiples of two up to twenty. A significant minority of higher-attaining pupils can explain the rules governing number sequences, for example, that 15, 13, 11 is part of a series of odd numbers counting back from 20. Frequent practice during mental mathematics sessions ensures that most pupils in Year 2 quickly recall addition and subtraction facts within twenty, while higher-attaining pupils calculate two-digit numbers up to a hundred with consistent accuracy. While investigating symmetry, most pupils can identify, fold and then mark lines on regular shapes. Higher attainers, who make up a significant minority of the year group, can explain their findings in appropriate terminology such as *these lines are diagonal, this is an octagon, and a circle has an infinite number of possibilities.*

86. At Key Stage 2, good use is made of mental mathematics. Most pupils display a satisfactory knowledge of the four rules of number and can apply them appropriately to solve simple mathematical problems. Their quick recall is encouraged by the effective application of mathematical games such as 'number bingo', 'beat the teacher' and 'find the partner', which pupils play with obvious enjoyment. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 4 can calculate the multiplication of numbers greater than twelve, such as  $18 \times 8$ , accurately in their heads and explain their methodology with clarity. There is a good emphasis on investigative work throughout the key stage. During a Venn diagram activity most pupils were able to sort and categorise a variety of 'logic people' into three intersecting circles, and could explain their decisions using appropriate terminology. Higher-attaining pupils extended the concept, completing a more difficult task and then identifying their own criteria for inclusion in the circles. Pupils demonstrate a very good knowledge and understanding of mathematical terms such as factors and multiples of numbers to a hundred, which they apply confidently when making up and solving their own examples.

87. Teaching is good at both key stages. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has improved planning and most lessons have clear and

attainable learning objectives for all ability groups. Assessment is good and is used effectively to inform the content and delivery of lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge and motivate their pupils well, developing an interest and enthusiasm for the subject. Relationships are very good, and pupils generally respond well to their teachers' high expectations for behaviour and quality of work. Questioning is generally challenging across the ability range, and pupils often display sensitivity to the contributions of their peers. A Year 2 pupil, for example, responded to one suggestion by commenting, *"I think he's got it!"*

88. Work is usually planned according to the ability of pupils and additional examples are provided at an appropriate level to challenge the more able. Most pupils display high levels of concentration throughout lessons and collaborate well during practical activities. Pupils in Year 2, when cutting out shapes, drawing lines of symmetry and using mirrors to test their findings, shared resources and equipment well. At Key Stage 2, pupils investigating Venn diagrams discussed ideas sensibly in groups, and tested their hypotheses maturely and with a high level of interest. There is good coverage of all the National Curriculum attainment targets and, in most lessons, pupils undertake investigative work before consolidating their understanding by completing exercises in workbooks. Recorded work is generally neat and well presented. Where marking is most effective, teachers make helpful comments enabling pupils to reflect on their work and improve its quality, but not all marking indicates how the work could be better.

89. The effective use of introductory mental mathematics sessions motivates pupils well, and reinforces and develops new concepts. These sessions are generally well structured and learning is made more enjoyable through the regular inclusion of mathematical games. Teachers and classroom assistants provide good support for different ability groups during lessons. Support staff are briefed well on the learning objectives of lessons and have a beneficial impact on the progress of pupils, especially those with special educational needs. On some occasions, however, particularly during the initial whole-class element of lessons, assistants are under-occupied and their supporting role lacks focus.

90. The co-ordinator provides good leadership of the subject. Her expertise and enthusiasm have raised the profile of mathematics throughout the school and are contributing towards higher standards. Effective analysis of statutory and optional tests highlights pupils' strengths and weaknesses, and is used to direct future planning and practice. Numeracy skills are reinforced well when used in other subjects of the curriculum such as in science and in history. Resources are adequate and are used effectively to assist pupils' learning. Coloured plastic models of people, for example, were used innovatively to categorise groupings in a lesson on Venn diagrams. However, although some use is made of computers in learning and practising mathematical skills, there is insufficient use of ICT to develop mathematical skills at present due to a shortage of appropriate hardware.

## **SCIENCE**

91. Standards in science are broadly in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils in Year 4 are on course to attain standards in line with the national average at the end of Year 6. This is similar to standards at the previous inspection. In the teacher assessments for seven-year-olds in 2000, standards were below the national average. In comparison with similar schools, standards were also below average. Inspection findings indicate that the discrepancy in standards is due partly to the inaccurate assessment of levels of attainment by the school in recent years, while standards are also rising due to the impact of good teaching. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls.

92. The quality of teaching is good overall at both key stages, and some teaching at Key Stage 2 is very good. This has helped to raise standards, particularly where teachers have a high level of expertise that inspires pupils to make good progress. Pupils conduct investigations quietly and sensibly, matching the expectations of their teachers and thoroughly absorbed in what they are doing and learning. Teachers encourage a scientific approach from an early age. In Year 1 and Year 2 lessons, pupils discussed sources of light and predicted which areas around the school might be very light or much darker. After pupils had listed their predictions, they walked round the school observing the lighter and darker areas and tested whether their predictions were true. Good use of questioning by the teachers encouraged pupils to explain why certain areas were dark. One boy explained that the area under a shelf was dark because *"it doesn't get the light coming from the lights and from the window"*.

93. Teachers stress the importance of investigative and experimental science at both key stages. Older pupils are encouraged to use their investigations as a springboard for further personal research. Pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 lessons, for example, carried out an investigation to compare the plants and animals living in contrasting habitats around the school grounds. Pupils observed the location of plants and mini-beasts in the environmental area, the flowerbeds and around the two ponds carefully. They recorded their work in a scientific manner using diagrams and tables, and annotated sketch maps where suitable. They did this well because the teachers had taken care to lead them through the method step by step. They predicted the outcome of their investigations and showed an understanding of the need for careful observation. Their work contained suitable conclusions explained in terms of scientific knowledge and understanding. Pupils then used information books to find out more for themselves about the plants and animals they had discovered. This was a good use of resources that pupils thoroughly enjoyed, and they learned effectively from it.

94. The subject is currently being led well by a temporary co-ordinator who is maintaining the high profile of science in the school curriculum. The adoption of a scheme of work based on national guidelines has helped to raise standards in the subject, and regular assessments of pupils' progress at the end of each topic ensure that future work is well tailored to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. Resources are generally adequate, but the school's lack of computers with printers and Internet connections prevents teachers from developing the possibilities of using ICT in science. In the Year 3 and Year 4 lessons on habitats, for example, pupils were not able to use the class computers to illustrate results from their

investigations or to discover more about the plants and animals they had found. This limits the progress pupils make in using ICT to support and extend their learning in science. Very good use is made of the school's environmental areas, and of visits to the Birmingham Sea Life Centre.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

95. Standards in art and design are above those expected nationally at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils in Year 4 are on course for achieving standards above national expectations at the end of Key Stage 2. Standards have improved at Key Stage 1 since the previous inspection and have been maintained at Key Stage 2. The school has achieved higher standards by adopting a scheme of work based on national guidelines that offer a more structured step-by-step development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. The school intends to refine these plans to avoid an inappropriate overlap with design and technology. Procedures to check pupils' skills are well linked to the objectives in the National Curriculum.

96. At Key Stage 1, pupils are given many opportunities to explore colour, pattern, texture, line and tone, and to combine and organise them for different purposes. Observational drawing and sketching form the foundation of pupils' two-dimensional work. They experience a range of media and apply colour in pastels, chalk, paint and crayon. They produce still-life drawings of what they see, remember and imagine. Younger pupils' sketches of Pershore Abbey and of musical instruments show a developing eye for detail. High quality textured paintings, using neutral colours, reflect a variety of techniques and an increasing use of media such as salt, sand, shavings and glue. Throughout Key Stage 1, pupils develop their modelling skills well as they learn new techniques and use a variety of materials to model flowers and decorate them with vibrant colours. Good use is made of famous artists and sculptors as pupils re-create well-executed figures and objects in the style of Andy Golworthy. Year 1 and Year 2 pupils become aware of perspective. Viewfinders are used to explore ways of framing images from photographs recording a visit to a sea life centre. Computer-generated art work, used to produce a variety of designs based on *Joseph and his coat of many colours*, demonstrates pupils' skills in selecting a range of colours and controlling their application.

97. By Year 4, pupils express their own ideas and interpretations with increasing confidence and sophistication. Techniques in drawing, painting, printmaking, collage, sculpture and textiles develop well. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 successfully create print-press patterns using primary coloured paints and build up the texture by the application of cut-out stencils. They continue to develop their understanding of the formal elements of line, tone, pattern, shape, texture and colour as they acquire increasingly accurate observational skills and techniques. Pupils' observational drawings of ammonites, feathers and musical instruments, for example, reveal a perceptive eye for detail. Year 4 pupils created very attractive, detailed collages of *An Imaginary Journey*, inspired by the work of Wassily Kandinsky. This provided good links with other subjects, demonstrated by the pupils' range of imaginary journeys to the 'Viking land', Greece and Space. Pupils consolidate their knowledge of famous artists and re-create paintings in the style of William Morris and Charles Rennie Mackintosh, linking their work to Victorian history and furniture design.

98. Only two lessons were seen, but photographs, displays and examples of pupils' work indicate that the teaching is good. The high quality of art displays in the school entrance and around the school confirms that the standard of pupils' artwork is above national expectations. Good use is made of careful planning to develop pupils' ideas over a series of lessons. In a Year 3 and Year 4 lesson, for example, good planning encouraged pupils to recap on their previous work before engaging in a discussion on how Kandinsky built up the background 'mood' of his paintings with large patches of various colours. Pupils then followed the artist by using their own patterns, signs and symbols to add the detail of events. Lower-attaining pupils were supported with appropriate resources, whilst higher-attaining pupils were encouraged to use less literal symbols and pay more attention to detail. The good range of techniques and resources used by teachers to stimulate pupils' imagination and the use of sketchbooks to develop ideas are strengths of the teaching. Pupils' cultural development is enhanced by the study of aboriginal art techniques.

99. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and has clear ideas of how she wishes the subject to be managed. She monitors and evaluates teachers' planning and a limited amount of teaching has been observed. Resources are good, but access to them is restricted as they are stored in one teacher's classroom. The school has plans, however, to access them via a new door on the outside corridor.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

100. Standards in design and technology are in line with those expected nationally at the end of Key Stage 1, and pupils in Year 4 are on course to achieve standards typical for their age by the end of Key Stage 2. No lessons were observed as design and technology is taught in a block of lessons each term, and was not being taught during the time of the inspection. Photographs, displays and examples of pupils' work, however, indicate that pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress. Standards are similar to those recorded at the previous inspection.

101. At Key Stage 1, pupils use models, pictures and words to describe their designs. They learn to cut, shape, join and combine materials to make models such as bedrooms, houses, and puppets. They use templates to cut out components accurately and join them with split pins, staples, glue and thread. Pupils introduce movement with simple levers and use construction toys to make moving vehicles such as cars with axles and wheels fixed to a simple chassis. Computers are used effectively to produce a variety of attractive coat designs. Teachers place a strong emphasis on evaluation of finished work so that pupils make good progress in understanding how design affects the outcome of a product. Most pupils are able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their designs and begin to evaluate their finished products by seeing how well they fit the original purpose.

102. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 build on the knowledge and skills acquired at Key Stage 1. They have a good knowledge of the design process. They use sketchbooks well and carefully plan, design, construct and evaluate their work. Pupils decide what materials they will need and critically assess their work to see how they can improve their designs. They design and make money containers to detailed specifications, build model chairs from wood, and use pneumatics to operate 'moving monsters'. They learn about fabric construction, decorating techniques and appliqué, and use advanced joining techniques such as running stitch and backstitch. High quality purses and bags made by Year 3 and Year 4 pupils, for example, show good attention to detail and pupils expressed their enjoyment when making them.

103. Leadership of the subject is good. There is an effective scheme of work that has addressed the previous inspection report's criticism of a lack of continuity and progression, and the school is currently trialling national guidelines for assessing the standards of pupils' work. Teachers' planning is monitored by the co-ordinator, but presently there is no observation of classroom practice. The school intends to refine its planning to avoid an inappropriate overlap with the art and design curriculum. There is effective liaison with the middle school to ensure that there is

appropriate coverage of the curriculum by the time pupils transfer. Pupils' work is celebrated well in attractive displays in the entrance hall and around the school. Overall, resources are good and are used well, but storage space is unsatisfactory. An after school engineering club, led by a retired engineer, gives valuable technical support to pupils and promotes a keen interest in the subject.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

104. No geography lessons were observed as geography was not being taught in any year group during the time of the inspection. Discussion with pupils and a scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work, however, indicate that standards are broadly in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils in Year 4 are on course to attain standards in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 2. This is a good



improvement compared with the previous inspection when standards were unsatisfactory at both key stages.

105. The school has achieved these higher standards through improvements in the quality of teaching. Teachers' planning has benefited greatly from the introduction of a good scheme of work based on national guidelines and adapted to meet the needs of the school and its locality. As a result, pupils now learn systematically, step by step, and make good progress as they move up through the school.

106. At Key Stage 1, pupils have a sound knowledge of their own locality and compare some of its features with more distant places. Pupils use the area around the school to study types of housing and to develop mapping skills. They draw maps of their route to school using pictorial symbols. They compare their own locality with the Caribbean island of St. Lucia, pointing out the contrasts in features such as housing, clothing, transport and jobs. They look at the features of a traditional British seaside resort and contrast this with other resorts around the world.

107. At Key Stage 2, pupils identify the effects of industrial and commercial development on a changing landscape and contrast life in Britain with life in a developing country. Pupils in Years 3 and 4, for example, look at ways of improving the local environment. They study life in an Indian village and contrast local farming and settlements with those found in Britain.

108. A strength of teaching is the consistent emphasis on practical investigations. Teachers of even the youngest pupils place a strong emphasis on fieldwork and begin to build up a good geographical vocabulary topic by topic. Pupils in Years 1 and 2, for instance, draw maps of their route from home to school and name features such as the abbey and local shops. Pupils use holiday brochures to extract information about seaside resorts and share information on the places they have visited themselves. By the time pupils reach Year 4 they have a good knowledge of the local environment and compare this with an urban environment in Britain and with Chembakolli village in India. They visit a primary school in Birmingham and compare the surrounding built-up area with their own country town. Pupils were keen to explain how they made chapatis while celebrating 'India Day', and examined Indian artefacts such as a fan and a basket for winnowing rice.

109. Pupils' knowledge of different countries is broadened by the helpful co-operation of parents who provide photographs and information about places they have visited. Parents regularly take 'Nuts', the school squirrel, abroad with them and send postcards back to the children. These postcards, and photographs of 'Nuts' in different countries, are shared with pupils during school assemblies. Resources are generally good, but pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to use computers to assist their learning, mainly because of the lack of suitable CD-ROMs and Internet connections. Good use is made of a visiting drama group to teach pupils about the benefits to the environment of re-cycling waste products.

## **HISTORY**

110. Standards are close to those expected nationally at the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils in Year 4 are on course to achieve standards above national expectations at the end of Key Stage 2. This is a good improvement compared with the previous inspection when standards were unsatisfactory at Key Stage 2. This is because of the successful introduction of a good scheme of work based on national guidelines, which has led to better, more consistent and clearer teaching.

111. Teaching is good at both key stages, with some very good teaching at Key Stage 2. Teachers use a wide range of approaches to make lessons interesting and this ensures that pupils are keen to learn. They provide pupils with a good range of educational visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum. At Key Stage 1, pupils visit the Avoncroft Museum of Buildings and the Black Country Museum, while at Key Stage 2, pupils visit Chedworth Roman Villa and the South Wales Folk Museum. During the inspection, each of the Year 3 and Year 4 classes visited Pershore Abbey dressed in the habits of medieval monks. The pupils entered into the spirit of the pilgrimage by processing to the abbey in silence. They were spellbound as the 'abbot' greeted them and lit candles and incense before leading them in quiet meditation and prayer. They enjoyed eating the simple food that monks would have eaten, and were amazed to hear the story of Abbot Holbricht, depicted on a stained glass window. This valuable experience fascinated the pupils, and will be remembered by them for a very long time.

112. Visitors to history lessons include *Annie, the Victorian housemaid*, a local historian, and a group of *Viking warriors*. These visitors help to bring the past to life, and are another way in which history becomes memorable. As pupils get older, teachers build on the children's ability to discover and interpret information for themselves. Teachers use pupils' enthusiasm well to develop their historical understanding of chronology and to examine how objects can be used to discover information about the past. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 studying Victorian times, for example, are able to compare present technology confidently with the past when they examine artefacts such as a washboard and a hand mincer, on loan from the local museum.

113. Teachers introduce pupils to many different sources of information. At Key Stage 1, pupils take home a questionnaire to identify the favourite toys enjoyed by a parent or grandparent when they were a child. In a Year 2 lesson, the teacher used challenging questions to help pupils identify vehicles, buildings and clothes in order to sequence a series of seaside holiday photographs from three different time periods. At Key Stage 2, pupils compare photographs of the royal family, a middle-class family and a poor family in Victorian times. They read first-hand accounts of children pulling wagons in a coal mine, and write their own pen portraits of Dr. Barnardo and Lord Shaftesbury. They experience a lesson in a Victorian school classroom and listen to a local historian who tells them about the history of Pershore. As a result, pupils develop their historical research skills well, and by the age of nine are able to distinguish between historical facts, opinions and stories. The high level of pupils' interest in lessons is reflected in the way they are eager to join in discussions and to listen carefully to others.

114. The good quality of leadership in the subject gives the school the capacity to continue to drive up standards. Resources are generally adequate, but there is a need for more information books to assist individual research at Key Stage 2. In addition, teachers do not use computers sufficiently to support and extend lessons in history, mainly because of insufficient CD-ROMs and Internet connections.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

115. Standards in ICT are in line with national expectations at both key stages. This is similar to standards at the previous inspection at Key Stage 1, but not as good as standards were at Key Stage 2. The school recognises that the inadequate provision of computer hardware currently constrains opportunities for pupils to improve their skills across the curriculum.

116. At Key Stage 1, pupils have sound skills in using a 'mouse' to convey suitable instructions to the computer. In a mixed Year 1 and Year 2 lesson, for instance, older pupils used their prior experience to access a CD-ROM encyclopaedia, retrieve information about weather systems and feed back their findings to the rest of the class. Younger pupils made good progress during the lesson and were able to operate the mouse effectively, click onto appropriate screen icons and explain the function of important keys on the keyboard, such as the return key, space bar and delete.

117. At Key Stage 2, pupils develop their word-processing skills and begin to use data-handling programs. In Years 3 and 4, for example, pupils transferred recorded data about travelling to school from a tally chart to a pictorial representation, using a graphing program on laptop computers shared between two or three pupils. However, opportunities for pupils to print out their findings were severely limited, as only one printer was available and the system is not networked throughout the school. All classrooms are equipped with at least one computer and pupils at both key stages have some opportunity to practise keyboard skills. They word-process written text such as poetry and stories, but most use only one finger to type and those with limited prior experience struggle to find the letters on the keyboard. Inspection evidence indicates that most pupils at Key Stage 1 can colour in a shape using a colouring program, for instance, when designing *Joseph's coat of many colours* for a design technology project, and can design their own Christmas cards using computer-generated graphics. Pupils at Key Stage 2 utilise a variety of fonts when using a word processing program to edit and redraft poems and stories, and create intricate patterns using a program to control the movement of the screen cursor.

118. Teaching was good in the small number of lessons observed. Teachers have good subject knowledge, set attainable learning objectives for their pupils and manage whole class lessons well despite logistical difficulties. Pupils work effectively in groups, with higher-attaining pupils often providing good support for less able or less experienced class mates. Laptop computers were used effectively by a small number of pupils in a Year 1 and Year 2 mathematics lesson to produce symmetrical patterns and there was some use of databases in science to record pupils' eye and hair colour. However, there was limited evidence of pupils using computers to enhance their work in most subjects. The school's computer workstation is an attractive facility but is currently under-developed and there is only one access point to the Internet. The most serious deficiency, however, is the insufficient number of laptop or personal computers to aid teaching and learning

across different areas of the curriculum and the small number of printers on which to print out pupils' work.

119. The headteacher is currently fulfilling the role of subject co-ordinator on a temporary basis. The school has introduced an effective scheme of work since the last inspection, ensuring adequate coverage of National Curriculum programmes of study, and teachers plan well for weekly ICT lessons. Targeted staff development has raised the level of teachers' expertise and the school has benefited further from local education authority advice and the recent appointment of a part-time ICT technician. However, the detailed ICT development plan recognises deficiencies in provision. It has identified the need for a permanent subject leader with responsibility for monitoring and evaluating ICT teaching and learning across the curriculum, an increased amount of computer hardware and the development of the ICT work area with improved Internet access as matters for urgent attention.

## MUSIC

120. Standards are above those expected nationally at the end of Key Stage 1, and pupils in Year 4 are on course to achieve standards above national expectations at the end of Key Stage 2. This is similar to standards at the previous inspection. By the time they leave school, pupils have been introduced to a wide range of musical styles, and their own compositions are beginning to convey a good range of different moods and textures.

121. Teaching is very good at both key stages. Teachers plan work carefully and lessons have appropriate learning objectives. These are explained clearly to pupils at the start of lessons and this helps them to understand what they should be learning. Teachers make good use of correct musical terms and introduce a variety of activities and resources to gain pupils' interest. In a Year 4 lesson, for example, the teacher made good use of a hiding game to reinforce pupils' understanding and practical application of pitch. Pupils develop their musical appreciation effectively by listening to a variety of music from different countries. They understand how changes in musical elements such as tempo, texture and dynamics create different moods in a piece of music. Pupils in Year 2, for instance, listened to a variety of music representing different types of weather, and discussed how *Summertime* conveys the atmosphere of the summer season.

122. There is a strong emphasis on composing and performing, and pupils are keen to create a range of moods by using different instruments, rhythms and textures. Pupils in Year 4, for instance, described a painting of flowers as "*peaceful*" and "*calm*", and then used a variety of percussion instruments to re-create this mood in their music. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils used their voices to make *sh* and *whoo* sounds to represent the wind, and then chose suitable percussion instruments to compose a piece representing a hailstorm. This emphasis on practical activities helps to maintain pupils' interest and concentration. As a result, pupils enjoy music lessons and have very good attitudes to music. They work well in groups and listen attentively to other pupils' performances. Teachers have very good relationships with the pupils. As a result, pupils listen carefully to instructions and behave very well when singing, playing instruments or listening to music. This helps them to make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs join in enthusiastically and make good progress.

123. Pupils listen to a variety of music when entering and leaving school assemblies and opportunities are taken to discuss the composer, the instruments and the mood conveyed by the music. Pupils sing a variety of hymns and modern songs from around the world during assemblies and collective worship. During one assembly, for instance, pupils sang an Israeli-style worship song, a Negro spiritual and a rhythmical song from West Africa. They sing tunefully and enthusiastically, often singing in two or three parts, and maintaining the pitch and rhythm well. The choice of a 'singer of the week' from each class encourages pupils to sing enthusiastically, with clear diction and an interesting range of dynamics.

124. The subject is currently being led by a temporary co-ordinator who is maintaining the high standards. The scheme of work, based on national guidance, ensures that pupils develop musical skills in a logical progression. The school benefits from a good range of percussion instruments and a broad selection of recorded music. Listening to a wide variety of music and singing songs from a range of countries help to develop pupils' appreciation of different cultures. Approximately eight pupils receive guitar lessons and many pupils learn to play the recorder at a lunchtime club. There is no school choir at present, but pupils take part in singing for the Christmas production, and regularly sing in assemblies and special services at Pershore Abbey. Musicians visit the school each year to perform for the pupils, and a recent choral project culminated in a joint performance with two other local schools in the abbey.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

125. Pupils' standards are in line with national expectations at Key Stage 1, as at the previous inspection. As no lessons were observed at Key Stage 2, it was not possible to make a judgement about attainment in Years 3 and 4. Pupils receive a wide range of experiences in different aspects of physical education as they move through the school, and overall provision is good.

126. Pupils at Key Stage 1 explore basic skills in dance, games and gymnastics. In a Year 1 dance lesson, in which the teacher used a poem as a stimulus for movement, pupils responded well to instructions. They used prior knowledge and the teacher's suggestions to interpret key words such as *skittering*, *creeping*, and *sideways slink* through their movements. More idiosyncratic phrases, like *smarm and grow or eyes fire high green sparks*, produced imaginative responses as pupils made effective use of stretching and darting movements to convey meaning. In a Year 2 outdoor games lesson, pupils displayed sound levels of achievement in developing ball skills. With practice and appropriate advice from the teacher, most improved their accuracy in aiming, throwing, catching and striking the ball during the course of the lesson. These skills were then transferred into small team games, which pupils organised effectively themselves, collecting equipment and setting out the pitch. Most pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the need to co-operate and conform to rules when playing team games.

127. The quality of teaching is good overall. Lessons are well structured, with clear learning objectives, and are generally well paced to allow for the practice and refinement of specific skills. Teachers act as very good role models. In a Year 1 dance lesson, the teacher demonstrated key features of movement effectively and generated a positive response from pupils, who improved their level of performance. Teachers make good use of pupils to demonstrate good practice. In a Year 2 games lesson, pupils were encouraged to evaluate their own and other pupils' performances, focusing on the development of essential skills. When practising catching, for example, the emphasis was on concentration, preparedness and watching the thrower. An appropriate level of friendly competition was introduced to generate interest among pupils, speeding up their responses and improving

accuracy. Pupils enjoy physical education lessons. They make consistent efforts to meet their teachers' high expectations and generally behave well.

128. The co-ordinator provides good leadership and manages the subject well. Her expertise and enthusiasm for physical education has given the subject a high status in the school. Planning has improved since the previous inspection and schemes of work now make good provision in all areas of the curriculum, including dance. At the time of the inspection, however, the local swimming pool had been closed for a lengthy period, denying Year 3 and Year 4 pupils access to an important part of the curriculum. At Key Stage 2, pupils participate in the *Ten Step* athletics programme and all pupils enjoy involvement in traditional and creative dance sessions. Football, skittleball and unihoc teams compete regularly against other local primary schools. The school provides a wealth of extra-curricular opportunities, many of which contribute significantly to pupils' physical development. These include games sessions led by qualified coaches, skipping, skittleball and yoga clubs. Pupils at Key Stage 2 have the opportunity to attend an annual residential weekend at the Malvern Outdoor Centre, and the co-ordinator leads orienteering trails around the local area.



## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

129. Standards have risen since the previous inspection and now meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus at both key stages. The introduction of an effective scheme of work, based on national guidelines and the locally agreed syllabus, ensures good coverage of world faiths, an area identified as a weakness in the previous report.

130. At Key Stage 1, pupils develop a sound understanding of religious beliefs and practices and the importance of places of worship. Pupils in Year 1, for instance, prepared for a visit to Pershore Abbey and devised a series of questions for the 'abbot'. By creating a reverential atmosphere in their classroom, they understood that places can be made special and were able to identify qualities such as peacefulness, quietness and tidiness. They reviewed previous work on religious artefacts such as the cross and the candle, and one pupil remembered that *"the candle shines like the light of the world"*. Some pupils showed good knowledge of Christian rituals and one higher-attaining pupil remarked that, *"when you get christened, you get welcomed into God's family"*.

131. At Key Stage 2, pupils widen their experiences to include knowledge of some major world religions such as Judaism and Hinduism. In Years 3 and 4, pupils increase their understanding of 'faith' by listening to, and re-enacting, the story of Abraham and Isaac. Most are able to feel personal sympathy with Abraham and can suggest appropriate links with moral dilemmas from their own backgrounds. They have a sound knowledge of the important Christian festivals such as Christmas and Easter, and are aware that other world faiths celebrate religious events. They talk knowledgeably about Hindu festivals, including Divali and Holi, and name the characteristics of gods such as Ganesha.

132. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages. The scheme of work provides satisfactory coverage of key areas of religious knowledge, although occasional over-emphasis on aspects of personal and social development at Key Stage 2 constrains the depth of study. All pupils benefit from the strong links with the abbey, which is widely used as a teaching resource. For example, during a whole-school assembly on the feast of Corpus Christi, held in the abbey, pupils from different year groups contributed sensible and thoughtful answers about the need for providing food, shelter and warmth for all. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, valuable experience of a multi-faith community is gained by visits to a Birmingham school with a large multi-ethnic intake. Pupils' understanding of spiritual and moral issues is supported by the effective use of stories from a range of cultures. Many opportunities are taken to link religious education with other subjects. Younger pupils are encouraged to re-write bible stories in their own words, while older pupils increase their understanding through imaginative activities such as sending a Christmas postcard from Bethlehem. Pupils' artwork includes high quality illustrations of Hindu gods, religious symbols such as Aum, and artefacts from Christian services.

133. The subject co-ordinator provides strong leadership and has worked hard since the previous inspection to improve the quality of provision for religious education. There is now an effective scheme of work in place and teachers have a sound understanding of how to make the subject interesting and relevant. Resources and artefacts are generally adequate, but the use of ICT to support and extend pupils' learning is underdeveloped due largely to the lack of appropriate computer hardware.