

INSPECTION REPORT

MEREWAY LOWER SCHOOL

Northampton

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 121916

Headteacher: Mrs C Ludford-Thomas

Reporting inspector: Mr J J Peacock
25344

Dates of inspection: 3 - 6 December 2001

Inspection number: 195618

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
School category:	Community School
Age range of pupils:	4-9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Winchester Road Delapre Northampton Northamptonshire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Patricia Clement
Date of previous inspection:	23 April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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25344	Mr J J Peacock	Registered inspector	Science Geography Physical education Special educational needs	What sort of a school is it ? How high are standards? The schools results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
14214	Mrs Gillian Smith	Lay inspector		How high are standards? Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
25509	Mrs Judith Clarke	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Art History The Foundation Stage	
21372	Mr Ken Hobday	Team inspector	English Design and technology Music Religious education Equal opportunities Pupils with English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This community primary school caters for pupils from four to nine years of age and is about the same size as other primary schools. It has undergone a period of disruption with seven teachers appointed in the past two years. There are 223 pupils on roll, 119 boys and 104 girls in eight classes, five of which have more than one age group. Numbers have increased by over 10 per cent since the previous inspection. Almost all of the pupils come from the immediate area and the attainment of most when they start in the reception class is below average.

About 17 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is in line with the national average. The school has 50 pupils with special educational needs, which is broadly average and three pupils have a statement of special educational needs, again about average. There are 22 pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and three of these speak English as an additional language. A significant level of pupil mobility exists with 22 joining and 27 leaving during term time in the last full academic year. This equates to over one-fifth of all pupils.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school, which is steadily improving in a number of key areas. This is mainly due to the experience, expertise and dedication of the headteacher who has had to respond to the previous inspection whilst rebuilding the teaching staff and reorganising classes to accommodate additional pupils. The effective governing body has been supportive and shown an equal determination to raise standards. A big increase in the provision of learning support assistants, improvements in the quality of teaching, which is now good, and significantly better monitoring and evaluation of standards and teaching, are other factors which are helping the school to do better. As a result, the well below average standards in national test results each year since the previous inspection have begun to improve. All pupils show a good attitude towards school and behave well. When all these factors are considered, along with the well above average level of funding, the school is providing good value for money.

What the school does well

- Very good leadership by the headteacher and key staff is providing a clear educational direction for the school. All staff are working effectively as a team to improve standards.
- Pupils are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. They do better than expected in art, music and physical education by the time they are ready to leave the school, aged nine.
- The very good range of opportunities in the Foundation Stage, which comprises the two reception classes, gives children a good start to school.
- There is a high incidence of good, very good and excellent teaching. The contribution of learning support staff is particularly effective. As a result, pupils are well-behaved and show good attitudes to their work.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Pupils' independence and sense of responsibility are promoted very well.
- There are very good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress enabling staff to build effectively on pupils' previous learning.

What could be improved

- Standards in writing.
- Opportunities to use computers more in all lessons.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The level of improvement since the previous inspection has been good. As a direct consequence of the school's efforts, pupils' performance in the national tests for seven-year-olds improved significantly in 2001. Five key issues were identified in 1997. The disruption caused by five teachers leaving and seven needing to be appointed and mobility of pupils has added significantly to the workload of the school's management. The school has, nevertheless, brought about good improvements in teachers' planning by providing work which is well matched to pupils' capabilities, in guidance which promotes a balanced coverage for all subjects, in school development planning by matching funding more closely

to identified targets and in the way all absences are monitored and recorded. Satisfactory improvements have been made to curriculum policy documents. In addition, the school has provided a very good outdoor play area for children under six. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have also been satisfactorily implemented and these are helping to raise standards. The school is on course to meet its own targets set for English and mathematics and to achieve national targets in the tests for seven-year-olds in 2002. The school has the skilled leadership and a strong commitment from staff and governors to maintain the recent trend of improvement.

STANDARDS

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

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

Pupils' achievements in the 2001 national tests for seven-year-olds, shown above, represent a significant improvement over the results achieved each year since the previous inspection. These have consistently remained at below or well below average in comparison to all schools. This improvement has been achieved against a background of major disruption caused by numerous staffing changes and many pupils arriving or leaving during term time. When the results in 2001 are compared to similar schools, standards being achieved by pupils are down slightly. Inspection evidence shows that, by the time pupils are seven, overall standards in English, mathematics and science are in line with the national average. This is a further improvement in standards and a reflection of the improved quality of teaching. An analysis of pupils' completed work and test results at seven confirms that pupils' achievement in relation to their prior attainment is good. There is no appreciable difference between the attainment of girls and boys. In fact, boys at this school perform better in the national tests than boys in other schools. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good. They are supported well in class by seven extremely conscientious learning support assistants. Targets for English and mathematics are realistically based on a detailed assessment of pupils' potential and the number of pupils with special needs in the present Year 2.

By the time children are at the end of their reception year, most achieve the early learning goals in the six areas of learning which make up the Foundation Stage curriculum. However, many still experience problems in their communication, language and literacy skills and in their mathematical knowledge, having not had time to compensate for the very low ability levels in these two aspects when they entered the school. Standards for nine-year-olds in English are below average mainly due to weaknesses in writing skills. In mathematics and science, standards are average. Pupils throughout the school do better than expected in art and physical education and in music by the time they are nine. Attainment in information and communication technology (ICT), religious education, geography, history and design and technology is in line with national expectations. Pupils' progress has been good from 2000, when their performance in the national tests was adversely affected by the higher than average proportion with special educational needs.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most enjoy being at school. There is a genuine commitment and desire to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. In 39 of the 46 lessons seen, it was good or very good. Bullying, racism or other anti-social behaviour are not a problem for the school.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils understand the impact of their actions on others. Opportunities for responsibility are widespread. Relationships between pupils and adults are very good.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The trend is one of steady improvement. The above average level of unauthorised absence, caused mostly by the mobility of pupils, is beyond the school's control. However, four out of ten pupils took holidays in term time. There have been no fixed-term exclusions.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

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

In the previous inspection in 1997, teaching was never less than satisfactory and was often good or better. A strong team spirit is evident amongst teachers and learning support staff and, as a result, the overall quality of teaching is now good. This represents a significant improvement, considering the level of change over the past two years. The quality of teaching is beginning to have a noticeable impact on the standards pupils achieve in the classroom. In the Foundation Stage, the overall quality is good with all lessons seen in the two reception classes being good or very good. This is giving children a good start to school and helping most to make good progress towards the Early Learning Goals in their curriculum.

There is strong commitment to give all pupils the best possible education and the basic skills for all subjects are taught well by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff. The above average standards in art, physical education and music, for example, are directly attributable to the quality of teaching. Other strong features promoting effective learning, are the management of pupils, resulting in a firm but fair discipline and the use of learning support staff. These features help to ensure that all pupils are fully included in all activities and, as a result, the climate for learning is good. The identification and provision for pupils with special educational needs are good. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are generally satisfactory. However, on occasions, pupils of all abilities are given similar tasks to complete resulting in a lack of challenge for some. More could be expected in the neatness of pupils' work and some teachers are not making sufficient use of computers. As a result, pupils' computer skills are not being fully utilised in some lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Statutory requirements are met, including those for the new Foundation Stage. Extra-curricular provision is satisfactory. Good curriculum policies are in place for all subjects except personal, social and health education and citizenship. These effectively guide teachers' planning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Those on the register are supported well and given appropriate work to do. However, gifted or talented pupils are not identified.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good, overall. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development are good. Assemblies are well planned and interesting. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. Staff provide excellent role models. Independence is encouraged most effectively from an early age.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good, overall. Procedures for child protection are satisfactory. Those for monitoring and promoting good behaviour, attendance and academic progress are good. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are very good.

This school sees a close partnership with parents as fundamental to its work and is keen to involve them as much as possible. Parents' views of the different aspects of the school are invariably good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The experienced and supportive headteacher has a clear educational vision and succeeds in inspiring all staff to work as an effective team, dedicated to raising standards. She is ably supported by the hard-working senior management team.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Led by the knowledgeable chairperson, all governors carry out their duties well, working effectively to shape the future of the school. All business is conducted with pupils' best interests in mind.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Standards and the quality of teaching are closely scrutinised. Decisive action is taken to bring about improvements, where necessary.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The finances are managed very carefully and best value is sought in all expenditure. Specific grants are spent appropriately.

Staffing levels are very good, particularly in the provision of learning support assistants and specialist teachers of music. The accommodation is satisfactory. There is a very good outdoor play area for children in the Foundation Stage. Resources are good for all areas except religious education and ICT where they are satisfactory. The library is satisfactory but more books on music and art are needed. Pupils use the library well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school • They make good progress • Behaviour is good • The teaching is good • Children are expected to work hard • The approachability of the school • The way the school is led and managed • School helps children to become more mature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework • Information about children's progress • School works closely with parents • The range of activities outside lessons

Inspectors agree with parents' positive responses. Evaluation of all the areas parents would like to see improved, based on detailed evidence, shows that the school is successfully bringing about improvements in each of them and that provision is at least satisfactory. A clear policy exists for homework and the amount is appropriate for pupils of this age. The quality of information about pupils' progress is satisfactory and closer links are effectively being developed with parents. The range of sporting and other activities outside normal lessons is satisfactory for a school of this type.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The school has undergone a major period of change with five teachers leaving and seven being appointed in the past two years. The additional teachers were needed because of a 10 per cent increase in pupil numbers. In addition, the school has had to contend with much mobility of pupils during term time. The standards, reported as meeting national expectations in all subjects observed in the previous inspection, have not been achieved in the national test results in reading, writing and mathematics for pupils aged seven. The results have been consistently below or well below average up to 2000. Under the skilled guidance of the experienced headteacher, staff work effectively in four teams so there is much support for individual teachers and a good level of co-operation between teams. Staff morale is high and there is a very strong determination to raise standards. This has begun to make an impact on test results, which showed a steady improvement in 2001.
2. Children enter the school with a wide range of attainment. Levels of attainment on entry to the two mixed-age reception and Year 1 classes are generally below average for most. Linguistic skills and children's mathematical knowledge are generally well below average. Consistently good teaching enables all children to quickly settle into school routines and approach their learning positively. Reception class teachers are supported very well by the conscientious learning support assistants and on occasions, by students. Children make good progress in all six areas which make up the Foundation Stage curriculum for children under six. Most are well placed to meet the Early Learning Goals in their knowledge and understanding of the world and in their physical and creative development by the time they are ready to transfer to Year 1. In the case of their communication, language and literacy and mathematical development, many do not attain the Early Learning Goals set for them in the Foundation Stage curriculum. Progress is particularly good in their personal and social development as they achieve the standards expected well before the end of the new stage. This is due in part to the level of independence fostered from the very start of their schooling and the many opportunities for children to work co-operatively.
3. Inspection evidence shows that attainment for seven-year-olds in English, mathematics and science is in line with the national average. This represents a good level of improvement from the previous inspection in April 1997. The school has consistently tried to improve standards in all three subjects, with varying success until recently. The satisfactory introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and an improvement in most aspects of teaching, such as planning and the assessment of progress, are beginning to have a noticeable impact. The overall trend shows that the school is keeping pace with improving trends nationally but variations do occur each year in pupils' performance in different subjects. In the national tests for seven-year-olds, for example, the trend goes up or down depending on how many pupils with special educational needs there are in each year group. From 2000 it is rising steadily in reading and writing. In mathematics, there has been a steady improvement each year since 1998. The under-achievement of higher attaining pupils reported previously appears to have been resolved. A similar proportion to figures nationally achieved the higher Level 3 in reading and writing in 2001 for example.
4. In comparison with all schools, standards in reading and mathematics were below average and in writing in line with the average. When the school's performance is compared to schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, their performance is also below the average in reading but below in writing and well below in mathematics. Recent disruptions to the smooth running of the school are the main reason for this. The school's free school meals numbers, the main basis for the comparison with similar schools, is also only one percentage point away from moving the school into the next lower band. Teacher assessments in science show the proportion achieving the expected Level 2 or above to be in line with the average, and that 12 per cent are achieving at the higher Level 3, which is below the national average. On inspection, the overall attainment in science for seven-year-olds was judged to be in line with the national average.
5. The results since 1999 show that girls did slightly better than boys in reading and writing but boys did better in mathematics. This is reflected nationally. The trend since 1996 shows results

fluctuated in reading, writing and mathematics, making it difficult to establish a pattern for improvement or otherwise. In the school's own analysis, comparing the predicted National Curriculum level using data from the assessments on entry to the school, individual pupils mostly do as well as expected. There is no significant difference in the attainment of girls and boys. However, boys did better than boys nationally in reading and writing. The very good start all children have in the Foundation Stage, as a result of the good quality of teaching they experience there, is an important factor helping most to achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.

6. Current work in English in Year 2 is in line with expectations in reading, writing and speaking and listening skills. Overall, standards in English are in line with the average. Pupils are provided with regular opportunities to express themselves in class discussions but a lack of opportunities to write at length in subjects other than English, limits the progress they make in their writing and spelling. Reading is taught effectively, allowing pupils to develop their phonic skills well. They have good strategies to read unfamiliar words. The close liaison between home and school, with parents regularly hearing their children read, is most certainly helping to improve standards. In the literacy sessions, pupils are provided with a good range of opportunities such as re-telling stories and writing letters or poems. Few pupils competently use a joined style of handwriting.
7. In mathematics at Year 2, attainment is in line with the national average with pupils achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. They work out sums involving addition and subtraction, multiplication and division of numbers up to ten quickly. They count forwards and backwards in twos, threes, fives, and tens accurately and have a good grasp of the qualities of regular two-dimensional shapes such as squares, triangles, and circles. In science, much work of a practical nature is undertaken. In Year 1, for example, pupils investigate how toys move. However, there are weaknesses in the recording of results or observations and computers are rarely used. The overall standard of pupils' work is in line with that expected nationally.
8. Pupils attain standards which are above those normally expected for seven-year-olds in art and physical education. In religious education, standards are in line with the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. Standards in design and technology, geography history and in information and communication technology (ICT) are in line with those expected nationally. This represents a good level of achievement by pupils in most subjects. The quality of teaching and clear subject guidance accounts for the higher than average standards in art and physical education. No reasons could be found for the dip in standards in design and technology and history, which were reported as exceeding national expectations in the previous report.
9. The good achievement of pupils after starting Year 1, and the standards they attain by the age of seven, are a reflection of how well they are taught, their good behaviour and satisfactory attitudes towards their learning. Pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science, for example, is good in relation to their prior attainment. Almost all parents (94 per cent) who returned the questionnaire believe that the school expects children to work hard and achieve their best. The inspection team recognised the strong influence that the headteacher's expertise and leadership are having on pupils' attainment. All school staff are deeply committed to improving standards and the national test results in 2001 show that they are succeeding.
10. Pupils' level of achievement is also good by the time they are ready to leave the school aged nine. Most of the standards reported in the previous inspection have been maintained. This is in spite of the restructuring and reorganisation necessary because of the changes in staffing and pupil numbers. Inspection evidence, backed by parents' views, shows that, since 2000, standards are rising steadily. In the current Year 4 class, overall attainment in English is below average. This is mostly due to weaknesses in writing as reading skills and speaking and listening are about average for pupils of this age. In mathematics and science, attainment is in line with that expected. This has been achieved by increasing the number of learning support assistants and evaluating closely the quality of the curriculum and teaching.
11. The good quality of teachers' lesson planning and very good procedures to assess pupils progress is having a positive effect on the level of improvement most pupils make as they move up the school. The implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has undoubtedly helped to raise standards in English and mathematics throughout. Well-chosen

texts and the teachers' skill in drawing pupils' attention to important differences in writing styles and content improve pupils' reading skills and widen their vocabulary. The partnership between home and school in reading remains strong and this also contributes effectively to the achievement and progress pupils make in reading. Lower attaining pupils benefit from the additional support they receive in the classroom from their teachers and the skilled learning support assistants. Inspection evidence shows that pupils have good opportunities to develop their reading skills with parents playing a key role by showing interest and listening to reading most nights. However, insufficient emphasis is given to writing in most subjects. Few pupils in the junior section use a fluent joined style and the presentation of work is often untidy. Pupils read confidently. In mathematics, they can work out problems and successfully explain how they arrive at an answer.

12. In science, pupils have good opportunities to investigate and conduct experiments independently. By the age of nine, they know how to devise a fair test and record their results carefully. However, they rarely use a computer to help them. All teachers in the junior classes show confidence when teaching science and are guided effectively by the good programme of work. Boys and girls both enjoy the practical approach and work hard in lessons to complete their work.
13. In other subjects, standards of attainment are above those normally seen in art, physical education and music. Pupils' better level of attainment in music is mainly because of the very good quality of teaching by the specialist music teachers. In design and technology, geography, history and ICT, standards are in line with expectations. The significant improvements in assessment procedures, a key issue previously, and pupils' behaviour are the main reasons for this. However, insufficient use is made of computers. Pupils have few opportunities to make use of skills learnt in the computer suite in their lessons. In religious education, standards are again in line with the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. Overall, the school is effective as the vast majority of pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.
14. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good throughout the school. Those who are identified and on the school's register for special educational needs are supported well in class. Their individual education plans have clear achievable targets and careful planning by class teachers means that these are taken into account when they plan lessons. Effective support is provided by the learning support assistants, helping most to meet the challenging targets set for them. In all classes, those with recognised behavioural difficulties are fully integrated in lessons. Teachers' high expectations of behaviour and very good level of class control and discipline ensure that they make good progress. However, the way initial concerns are recorded at Stage 1 of the Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs is inconsistent, making it unclear precisely how teachers are going to help pupils.
15. The school did not identify any gifted or talented pupils. This needs to be corrected to afford all pupils with every chance to reach their full potential. Preliminary arrangements are in place to improve this shortcoming, by planning additional work in lessons for pupils of exceptional ability or with special talents in any particular subjects. All pupils, whatever their ability, are fully included in all aspects of school life with teachers ensuring equality of opportunity for all. As a result, all feel valued and this in turn encourages them to do their best in everything.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. The previous inspection found that the majority of pupils had positive attitudes to school and to learning. This continues to be the case. Pupils are polite and well behaved and they are keen to take part in the wide range of activities available. They enjoy coming to school and the majority approach their work with a genuine commitment and desire to learn.
17. Almost every parent who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that their child likes coming to school and that the standard of behaviour is high. This confidence is well placed. Pupils enjoy assembly and they sing enthusiastically and tunefully. During lessons, pupils of all ages and backgrounds quickly settle down to work and persevere with things they find difficult. They usually listen carefully to their teacher and are proud of their work. For example, during a science lesson, children in reception were comparing the properties of various materials that are used to make different toys. They took it in turns to be blindfolded and thoroughly enjoyed trying to identify wooden, metal and plastic toys using only their sense of touch.

18. Pupils behave well during the school day. They are friendly and out-going and get along very well with members of staff and with each other. Pupils of all ages mix freely and, during lessons, they are usually well mannered and polite. All members of staff lead by example and address the pupils with the respect and consideration they deserve. Pupils respond similarly and their positive approach to learning helps to create a lively and vibrant atmosphere. Pupils listen carefully during lessons and usually wait their turn to answer their teacher's questions. On the odd occasion when pupils' enthusiasm gets the better of them, their teacher may have to remind them not to shout out. Pupils' behaviour during lunch and play times is good and there is a pleasant atmosphere in the playground. The school has a very successful policy of social and educational inclusion and pupils from all ethnic groups play energetically and happily together. Bullying, racism or other anti-social behaviour are very rare and any such incidents are dealt with firmly and very effectively. Throughout the school, there is a strong sense of community and relationships between pupils and with members of staff are very good. There have been no exclusions during the last school year.
19. Pupils' personal development is very good. They enjoy taking part in extra-curricular sporting activities and the newly established gymnastics club is proving to be popular. Within each class, pupils willingly undertake a wide range of responsibilities, such as acting as monitors and helping to tidy away equipment. Pupils are independent and work very well on their own and in small groups. When required to do so, they can be relied upon to get on with their work and to complete their homework.
20. Attendance was below the national average at the time of the previous inspection. It has improved over the intervening four years and is now satisfactory. When pupils are absent, it is usually because they are ill or have a medical appointment. A significant proportion of parents, however, book family holidays during the school term. Over the last academic year, four out of ten pupils lost time in this way. They inevitably miss the work that is undertaken by the rest of their class and this places them at a potential disadvantage in the future. Although the school's procedures for following up absences are thorough, the number of unauthorised absences is almost twice the national average. The area served by the school includes a high proportion of temporary housing and this results in a relatively high level of pupil mobility. A significant minority of pupils live in the area for only a few months and the school is not always promptly informed when they have moved elsewhere. Although parents are regularly reminded of the importance of regular attendance, the circumstances behind many of these unexplained absences are entirely beyond the school's control.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21. In the previous inspection in April 1997, the overall quality of teaching was reported as good with 48 per cent of all the lessons observed being good, very good or excellent. Of the lessons seen in 1997, only 12 per cent were very good or better and none were found to be unsatisfactory. Comparisons between then and now are difficult because of the recent major turnover of staff, with five teachers leaving and seven joining the school in the past two years. The additional teachers were needed because of a 10 per cent increase in pupil numbers. Elements of teaching criticised previously, such as the lack of progression and continuity caused by inadequate, outdated subject guidance, no formal homework policy and developing assessment procedures have all been successfully improved since then. Staff now benefit from detailed teaching programmes for all subjects, very good procedures for assessing pupils' levels of attainment and progress and a clear policy for homework. The strongest feature, common to all teachers, which is contributing significantly to the effectiveness of teaching, is the management of pupils. Very good relationships between teachers and their pupils and the effective use of praise mean that a good climate for learning is created, helping all pupils to do well. Little time is needed to enforce class discipline. A strong team spirit is evident amongst staff and there is a very strong determination by all to raise standards.
22. During this inspection, the overall quality of teaching was good in the infant and junior classes. The proportion of good or better teaching is virtually the same in each section of the school. The overall quality of teaching seen during this inspection was satisfactory or better in all 46 lessons observed. It was very good or excellent in 24 per cent, double the previous record. Examples of good, very good and excellent teaching were seen in 76 per cent of lessons, which shows a big increase since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching in the

Foundation Stage, which covers the two reception classes, is good. In fact, all the lessons seen in this section of the school were either good or very good showing that the strengths identified previously has been maintained.

23. Most aspects of teaching in the infant and junior classes, such as teachers' knowledge, teaching of basic skills and the use of time, support staff and resources, are good. Two aspects, teachers' expectations and the use of homework were judged to be satisfactory. All teachers' lesson planning is detailed, with clear learning objectives and effective links made between subjects. In Year 4, for example, a science lesson on fair testing involved pupils using stopwatches to time falling spinners made out of paper and recording their results. Spelling and writing skills from English lessons as well as those from mathematics lessons were put into practice. Teachers' expectations of what pupils, especially higher attaining pupils, can do are generally satisfactory. However, on occasions, pupils of all abilities are given similar tasks to complete resulting in a lack of challenge for some. Expectations about the neatness of pupils' written work also need raising. The good attitude pupils in general have towards their work means that they can be trusted to work diligently. Praise is used well throughout to motivate or raise pupils' self-esteem. This was evident in the supportive comments attached to pupils' marked work and the way in which all were fully included in all activities in class.
24. The quality of teaching in the literacy hours and during numeracy sessions is satisfactory throughout the school. All teachers use the skills that pupils have learned in these sessions well when teaching other subjects. In a design and technology lesson in Year 3, for example, pupils' literacy skills were developed well as they evaluated their photograph frames and wrote down suggested improvements. However, a scrutiny of pupils' work confirms that pupils' access to and use of computers to support their learning in literacy and numeracy lessons are limited.
25. The quality of teaching is beginning to have an impact on the standards pupils achieve. In English and mathematics, teaching is good and, as a result, virtually all pupils achieve the individual targets set for them and many exceed them by the time they are ready to leave the school. This is mostly due to the quality of teaching and successful implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. However, standards are below those normally expected in writing, spelling and handwriting. This is mainly due to the lack of opportunities for pupils to write at length in most subjects in order to consolidate their skills. Low expectations about the neatness of pupils' work and, until recently, the lack of a common scheme for handwriting accounts for the weakness in the presentation of completed written work. In science by the ages of seven and nine, pupils also achieve nationally expected levels of attainment because of the quality of teaching. Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to conduct investigations and experiments independently, often working in groups.
26. In art, music and physical education, pupils achieve better than average standards by the time they are nine years of age. This is a direct result of the good quality of teaching they receive from reception to Year 4. Parents recognise music as a strength and reported this to the inspection team at the meeting for parents. The overall quality of teaching by specialist music teachers, supported by class teachers in all lessons, is very good and has a significant effect on pupils' enjoyment and the standards they attain. Only one lesson was seen involving other staff but planning indicates that all teachers have sufficient knowledge and expertise in the subject. In ICT, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Pupils' achievements are in line with national expectations due to the effective way basic skills are taught in the computer suite situated in the wide corridor. However, there was little evidence of teachers using the computers in their classrooms to help pupils with their work in other subjects.
27. The quality of teaching in design and technology, history and geography is satisfactory and, as a result, pupils achieve standards in line with expectations by the ages of seven and nine. In all three subjects, there is clear guidance provided by the programmes of work and teachers plan their lessons carefully. Pupils enjoy the practical nature of design and technology and all, including pupils with special educational needs, work conscientiously. In religious education, only two lessons were seen. Both of these were good but inspectors did not have sufficient evidence to make an overall judgement about the quality of teaching throughout the school.
28. All teachers work hard to establish a good working atmosphere and promote effective learning. Teachers have developed good strategies to maintain good behaviour and ensure that pupils maintain their level of concentration. In most classes, for example, pupils are given strict time

limits to finish tasks set. Pupils obviously enjoy the calm, orderly atmosphere in lessons and usually behave well. All have a good attitude towards their learning. However, on occasions, the concentration and work rate of higher attaining pupils suffers when they are set the same work as other pupils and lose interest in the undemanding tasks.

29. Teachers use assessment well to guide their planning and this helps them to plan work for the majority of pupils in their class which builds effectively on their previous learning. All pupils' work is marked thoroughly and teachers add helpful comments to give pupils guidance on how to further improve their work. Teachers are well prepared for their lessons with a good range of resources readily available for pupils. This helps to maintain pupils' interest and encourages them to use their initiative and choose suitable materials to use when working independently. Pupils respond positively to all their lessons, sustaining satisfactory levels of concentration. As a direct result, the quality of learning is good in virtually all lessons.
30. The quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage, which comprises the two reception classes, is good. In all six areas of learning which make up the Foundation Stage curriculum, teaching is good, enabling all children to make good progress towards the Early Learning Goals set for them. It is particularly good for children's personal, social and emotional development and this helps them to settle into school quickly, form very good relationships and develop a good attitude to learning. Planning the curriculum is a team effort, with the learning support assistants fully included. All staff show a high level of care for all children. Support for children identified with special educational needs is good in each of the six areas of learning throughout the Foundation Stage enabling them to achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.
31. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good throughout the infant and junior sections of the school. Staff make good use of expert advice and assessment information is closely scrutinised to help with the identification process. Those pupils on the register for pupils with special educational needs have clear individual learning plans and these identify precise and achievable targets in relation to literacy, numeracy, and social behaviour. Teachers take full account of these individual targets in their lesson plans. They work closely with learning support assistants to ensure that the best possible use is made of their time and talents. As a result, these pupils consistently receive the help they need to make good progress in relation to their personal targets. However, no pupils are recorded at Stage 1 on the register and although there are some pupils at this stage, there is no common format for the written record of their difficulties. Teachers rely on their own notes and on the close contact with one another and their knowledge of individual pupils to attempt to bring about improvements before issuing a formal individual education plan if pupils progress to Stage 2. Written details of initial concerns would give all staff a clearer picture of individual pupils' special needs and help to focus attention on these more effectively than at present.
32. Additional booster sessions which focus on English and mathematics, to give pupils extra help to achieve the best they can in National Curriculum tests, have not been funded this year. Instead, the school has invested heavily in the provision of qualified learning support assistants. Seven now work all year round in the eight classes giving much better support to pupils who find learning difficult. This positive decision taken by the school governors is having a significant effect on raising standards for all pupils. It also ensures that all pupils can be fully included and supported in all activities. This was in evidence during the inspection when pupils with physical disabilities were able to take a full part in physical education lessons. Teaching of individual pupils or groups of pupils by the learning support assistants is never less than good. It is characterised by clear targets, well-planned activities, and caring relationships. There were no gifted pupils identified to the inspection team.
33. A small number of parents, in their responses to the questionnaire sent out prior to the inspection, were unhappy with the amount of homework their children were expected to do. At the meeting for parents, some said pupils in Year 4 in particular should have more. Inspection evidence shows that the amount and quality of homework is satisfactory. The school's policy statement gives clear guidance to teachers and parents on homework. This represents an improvement on the previous inspection when there was no policy. Teachers are generally making satisfactory use of homework as part of their very strong commitment to raising standards. As a result, homework is effectively supporting pupils' learning.

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

34. The school's broad and balanced curriculum provides pupils with good opportunities to develop their learning across a wide range of subjects. There has been a good level of improvement since the previous inspection, partly as the result of the school's successful implementation of national initiatives. Appropriate priority is given to developing pupils' skills in English and mathematics. This is illustrated by the deployment of a generous number of classroom assistants and extra part-time teachers in the Key Stage 1 classes so that pupils can benefit from working in smaller groups. Learning support assistants have been trained to increase pupils' literacy skills using a newly designed programme. This is having a positive impact in helping lower attaining pupils to learn to read and write. Teachers use the National Literacy Strategy well, although occasionally lessons are unbalanced. In particular, in some classes, pupils do not have enough time to speak at length or to make a major contribution in shared reading sessions. The National Numeracy Strategy has also been introduced successfully in every class. Teachers use this national guidance well, but there is scope for a more imaginative use of resources, particularly in teaching pupils to use a wider range of mental strategies.
35. The concentration on the important subjects of English and mathematics has inevitably led to less time for other subjects. The school has worked hard to maintain a broad programme, with considerable success. In music, for example, a part-time teacher with expertise in music is employed to teach the subject throughout the school. Class teachers are present in each lesson and use a shorter follow-up lesson to consolidate what the music specialist has taught. The good programme of study in art has led to the maintenance of above average standards. In physical education, a broad programme of activities includes swimming. There are very good arrangements to maintain the status of every subject through an annual curriculum audit, prominently displayed in the staff room. Each subject leader identifies areas requiring development and devises an action plan to ensure improvements are made. A practical approach is especially well-developed in science, art and design and technology. These subjects, along with others, are taught largely through integrated activities, which begin with a whole-class session. After this, groups of pupils work at five or six different subject areas in different parts of the classroom. This approach has been very successful in developing pupils' independence and has helped to maintain a balanced curriculum. Attention has been devoted to the ways in which links between subjects can be used to advance pupils' skills and understanding. However, literacy and computer skills are insufficiently used in other subjects. For example, the potential of history and religious education to provide opportunities for more extended writing has not been fully exploited. Although the school is teaching pupils computer skills, they have few opportunities to employ these skills to support other work.
36. There are suitable schemes of work to guide teachers in most subjects. The school meets its statutory requirement to teach all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. The locally Agreed Syllabus for the latter is in use but the school is close to completing its own scheme. This conforms to the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus but provides more detailed guidance for teachers. In many subjects, the school uses a two-year sequence of topics to help solve the problems arising from having classes containing more than one age group. It is aware that some minor gaps in provision or repetition of subject matter may take place for a few pupils and is working to eliminate these.
37. In all classes the curriculum is enriched by extra activities. Personal, social and health education is included on the timetable each week, but there is no detailed scheme of work. This makes it difficult for teachers to build progressively on pupils' previous experiences and gives no assurance that coverage of this important area will be balanced.
38. At the time of the previous inspection, there were no extra-curricular activities. There is now a satisfactory number, with scope to add a broader range of activities when this becomes feasible. The opening of the Butterfly Centre, housing before- and after-school care, has freed the school hall for activities such as the gym club. Most of the other activities are musical and restricted to pupils in Years 3 and 4. The choir, which used to meet during lesson time, now meets during the lunch break for practices so pupils do not miss other lessons. The school is careful to ensure that pupils have equal opportunities to participate in activities. All clubs, for example, are open to both genders. Within the classroom, teachers and support staff are adept

at giving pupils an equal chance to reply to questions. Learning support assistants often provide very effective and sensitive help to enable less able pupils to respond to these questions. A strong feature of the curriculum is its emphasis on practical activity, particularly for younger pupils. This has enabled boys, in particular, to make good progress so that the 'gender gap' which is evident in most schools by the age of seven, with girls attaining more highly than boys, is far less apparent here.

39. Good use is made of visitors to the school and visits to places of interest. Before they leave the school, pupils aged nine have the opportunity to experience a residential visit. The school's links with the community, particularly with the upper school with which it shares its site, are used to add further to pupils' experiences. For example, an ex-pupil helps to train pupils in football skills and pupils from the upper school assist with reading and environmental science projects. There is an appropriate programme of homework activities. Older pupils are often sufficiently interested in their classroom learning to suggest follow up activities at home.
40. The school makes good provision for spiritual and cultural development and very good provision for social and moral development. This is a further improvement on the previous inspection. Assemblies make a very positive contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Careful attention to introductory music and lighting engenders the sense of a special occasion in the school day. All staff are present, emphasising the importance the school attaches to its daily act of collective worship. There are contributions from the pupils, ranging from Diva lights held by reception children to songs sung thoughtfully by the choir. Religious education lessons also make a positive contribution to this aspect as pupils are encouraged to value the opinions and beliefs of others. The high standard of display of pupils' work underlines the way it is valued. Teachers use spontaneous opportunities to alert pupils to the wonder of the world in which they live, but there are no written guidelines to help teachers to incorporate a spiritual dimension into each area of the curriculum.
41. There are high and consistent expectations throughout the school about the way in which pupils should behave. They are clearly taught the difference between right and wrong. Discussions in class explore moral issues from time to time, helping pupils to understand the importance of honesty and fairness in their dealings with each other. Classroom rules are clear, although not displayed in written form. They are based on respect between teachers and pupils and between the pupils themselves. All staff provide excellent role models in displaying co-operative and considerate attitudes.
42. Many of the school's systems and procedures are effective in promoting pupils' social development. From an early age pupils are encouraged to be independent. For example, reception children undress for physical education lessons with only minimal assistance. The way in which pupils work in groups on integrated activities promotes effectively their independence and sense of responsibility. Pupils in Year 4, as a result, can be trusted to work in groups away from the teacher's direct supervision and to co-operate successfully to complete tasks they are given. When pupils show initiative, this is welcomed and fostered. The school aims to raise the self-esteem of all its pupils, emphasising their successes across a wide range of fields of endeavour. As a result, there is genuine appreciation when pupils perform well. For example, in an assembly for the older pupils, their success in singing a two-part round unaccompanied led to spontaneous applause by all the pupils. A measure of the school's success in this area is the absence of oppressive behaviour or disaffection. Care for those who are disadvantaged is encouraged through the support of local, national and international charities.
43. There is good provision for cultural development. The school develops pupils' understanding of their own culture and enables them to appreciate the pluralistic nature of society. An example of this is their study of the local shoe industry, charting its development and recent decline. Work on Christmas customs gives pupils an understanding of traditional ways in which festivals are celebrated and the reasons for these celebrations. Where there are pupils in the class from ethnic minorities whose customs differ, time is taken to explore and reflect upon this diversity. Much of the programme in religious education enables teachers to extend pupils' understanding of different cultures as well as religions. This begins in the Foundation Stage, for example, as children learn about the festival of Diwali but also discover features of Indian life. The music and art schemes of work give appropriate attention to non-Western European culture. For example, during the inspection pupils from Years 3 and 4 were studying Aboriginal music,

listening and composing their own Aboriginal rhythms. However, there is scope for augmentation of the school library to enable pupils to learn more about music and art from diverse cultures.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. All members of staff have a wholehearted commitment to pupils' welfare and they work hard to ensure that pupils' educational and personal needs are met. Nine of ten parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire feel that members of staff are approachable and they are confident that their children are well looked after during the school day. Good teamwork ensures that pupils are well supported and that the time they spend at school is happy and enjoyable. The high standard of care and guidance provided helps to ensure that newcomers are helped to settle in quickly and to make good progress in their work. Although members of staff are familiar with child protection procedures, governors should ensure that the designated teacher receives formal training. Day-to-day health and safety procedures are good and they comply fully with current legislation and with local authority guidelines.
45. The school is keen to recognise and celebrate pupils' academic success. Teachers consistently praise improvements in their work and their achievements within and outside school. Pupils value the various stickers they receive and are proud to have their efforts acknowledged during the weekly achievement assembly.
46. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are very good. In their planning, teachers clearly indicate the assessment they will carry out. There is a good range of formal assessment procedures in English, mathematics and science. The information collected from these is used to track the progress of pupils and to set targets for the future. It is also used well to identify aspects of the subject which require more attention in subsequent curriculum planning and to check that all pupils, including those from ethnic minority backgrounds or those with special educational needs, are making the expected progress. In English and mathematics, individual targets are set and recorded in pupils' books, sometimes by the pupils themselves. When they are achieved, new targets are set. Occasionally the work which is set is poorly matched to the learning needs of the pupil, however. There are appropriate assessment and recording arrangements for all other subjects. These records are used in writing annual reports, but the latter do not always give enough information to parents about the levels their children have attained. In most classes, the marking of pupils' work helps them to understand their strengths and weaknesses. In some classes, however, there is insufficient reference to how well they are achieving their individual targets or what they need to do next to improve.
47. Although the monitoring of pupils' personal development is largely informal, procedures are good. Relationships between pupils and members of staff are very good and teachers are sensitive to pupils' 'ups and downs'. This helps to ensure that any emerging problems are identified and addressed at an early stage. The high quality personal support provided helps to ensure that pupils enjoy their time at school and maintain a positive frame of mind. They use their time at school productively and caring teachers constantly encourage them to do their best. These factors have a positive influence on the progress pupils make and on the standard of their work.
48. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting behaviour are good. While there is a whole school system of recognising and rewarding good work and behaviour, each teacher also has his or her own system of rewards. These vary from verbal praise to the award of 'Super Stones' to pupils in Years 2 and 3. These various schemes are effective and the school enjoys a warm and settled atmosphere. The school's procedures for eliminating bullying and other oppressive behaviour are very good. Detailed records are kept and any such incidents are dealt with very firmly. Although there are several different nationalities and cultures within the school, racial harmony is very good and related incidents are very rare.
49. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance have improved since the previous inspection and are now good. An electronic system helps teachers to track individual attendance and is used to pick up emerging trends. In addition, the school has recently introduced an attendance shield and pupils with perfect attendance receive certificates and

stickers. Each and every absence is carefully followed up and the headteacher phones each family on the second day of each unexplained absence. In addition, the education welfare officer visits once a month and checks the registers. The relatively high number of unauthorised absences is a reflection of this conscientious approach and of the unsettled circumstances faced by many pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50. This school sees a close partnership with parents as fundamental to its work and is keen to involve them as much as possible. Parents appreciate this open approach and indicate that they find members of staff to be highly approachable. Indeed, analysis of the pre-inspection questionnaire, coupled with comments made at the parents' meeting, indicate that the majority of parents are pleased with virtually every aspect of school life. Almost everyone who voiced an opinion is confident that the standard of teaching is high and feels that his or her child is making good progress in his or her work. Inspectors agree with parents' positive comments. Only one concern was expressed: a few parents feel that the school provides too few activities outside lessons. Inspectors, however, judge that there is no basis for this concern and that the opportunities provided are very similar to other schools.
51. Parents make a satisfactory contribution to their children's education. A few parents offer voluntary help during the school day and the school makes very good use of their skills. For example, some parents have attended the 'Programme of Phonemic Awareness Training' (POPAT) and they come in to help pupils with their spelling and reading. Others help to run the Foundation Stage lending library and this enables parents to borrow games and books that can be used at home to support reading and mathematics. In addition, the friends' association is led by a number of dedicated parents who organise events such as the summer barbecue and Christmas raffle. Money raised has recently been used to enhance the school grounds by, for example, installing wooden playground equipment and by painting games on the playground surface. Links with parents are satisfactory and their help and encouragement motivates their children to learn and to do their best. There is a formal opportunity each autumn and spring term to speak with their child's class teacher and attendance at these meetings is good.
52. The school regularly provides interesting newsletters and these help to keep parents informed about the day-to-day life of the school. The Early Years teachers also provide a very helpful booklet that provides comprehensive information about what children will learn and how they will spend their time once they have started school. They are also given useful hints and tips as to how they can help at home. The parents of older children, however, do not receive advance notice of what their children will be studying each term and this makes it much more difficult to help at home. Pupils' annual reports provide useful background information about what pupils have been studying, what they can do and how hard they have been working. They do not, however, identify what it is that pupils need to do in order to improve their work; nor do they give parents a clear indication of how well their child is progressing in relation to the national average. In addition, the language used in pupils' annual reports and the school prospectus is too full of educational jargon and the significance of various statements is unclear for parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

53. The quality of leadership and management is very good and this has a positive impact on the daily life of the school. As reported previously in 1997, the headteacher commands the respect of pupils, staff and parents. She is very experienced and has a clear picture of what needs to be achieved for the benefit of the pupils and community. As a direct result of her commitment, knowledge and high quality leadership, the school is steadily improving its standards. Staff and governors share her very strong commitment to improve and work hard with her to meet the clear and specific aims of the school. These aims and values are strongly reflected in all aspects of school life such as pupils' good attitudes to their work and good behaviour.
54. The effective delegation of responsibility to senior staff and teachers is a strong feature. The senior management team, which comprises the headteacher, acting deputy headteacher and two senior teachers responsible for the infant and junior departments, provides an effective

forum in which the school's current successes can be evaluated and its future planned. Individual staff who co-ordinate the development of subjects within the curriculum and the special educational needs co-ordinator take their responsibilities seriously, giving much support to one another. Their roles and responsibilities for monitoring the quality of the curriculum are clearly defined, answering a previous criticism. The newly formed Foundation Stage for children under six years old is currently managed well by the early years team which is made up by the two mixed-age reception and Year 1 classes. Learning support staff feel part of the 'school team' and value the guidance and support they receive from teachers. The quality of their work adds to the success of pupils' learning experiences.

55. The governing body carries out its statutory duties effectively and works extremely hard to support the school. The chair of governors has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through regular weekly meetings with the headteacher. Individual governors are linked to a specific subject of the National Curriculum as well as areas such as literacy, numeracy and special educational needs. This gives them a clear overview of learning in particular subjects. All approach their duties conscientiously and are proud to be associated with the school. Importantly, all appreciate the level of improvements brought about by the headteacher and express confidence in her. Minutes of the governing body's meetings indicate that meetings are well attended and business is conducted efficiently. The statutory requirements for the special educational needs Code of Practice and for the act of collective worship are met.
56. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching, a key issue in the previous inspection, is very good for the core subjects of English and mathematics. When other subjects are identified for improvement in the school development plan, appropriate emphasis is given to a review of standards in teaching. Consequently, all subject co-ordinators have a clear overview of their subject throughout the school. As a result, they are able to support colleagues in any identified areas of insecurity. In the recent national initiative to reward high performing teachers, the school's procedures and documentation for assessing individual teachers' performance were satisfactory. The headteacher is constantly striving for high standards and has a regular programme for analysing national test results. When the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies were introduced, for example, careful monitoring enabled areas of difficulty to be quickly identified and put right. Alongside test results, this led to writing being identified as an area for improvement. Inspectors confirm the conclusion the school reached about standards in writing requiring improvement.
57. In the previous inspection, the school had five key issues to address. The headteacher had to respond to these whilst coping with the many changes in teaching staff and a 10 per cent increase in pupil numbers which meant re-organising class groupings. All five issues have been tackled conscientiously. Good improvements have been made to teachers' planning and as a result, each lesson has clear objectives and work is usually well matched to pupils' capabilities. Clear subject guidance promotes a balanced coverage for all subjects and helps to ensure that pupils build effectively on their previous knowledge. The school development planning closely matches funding to identified targets and all absences are monitored and recorded carefully. Satisfactory improvements have been made to curriculum policy documents. However, there is no up-to-date curriculum policy document to provide guidance for teachers in personal, social and health education and citizenship. Involvement with other local schools in the Peel project sponsored by Worcester University has helped teachers to identify how pupils best learn. It was found, for example, that boys work more effectively with a partner or in a group. Teaching styles now take account of this.
58. The school secretary runs the school office very efficiently. All her duties and responsibilities are carried out cheerfully and calmly and this helps to give a positive first impression of the school to visitors. Good use is made of new technology in the office, with an electronic mail facility for parents and computer programs for managing the finances and registration. Government grants are used effectively and correctly. Government funds for computers, for example, means that there is a favourable ratio of pupils to each system compared to other similar schools and money for booster classes and additional literacy support was used wisely last year, benefiting all pupils. The special educational needs co-ordinator is meticulous in making sure that funds are applied to the best effect.

59. Overall financial control is very good. The large contingency budget, resulting from funds held over to pay for major roof repairs, has been reduced from 10.4 per cent to 4.7 per cent, well within acceptable limits. The governors decided, in an attempt to raise standards, to appoint additional learning support assistants. The number has virtually doubled since the previous inspection. The subsequent steady rise in standards points to the success of the policy decision. A bursar, employed by the school, maintains the finances in good order and supplies good quality up-to-date information for the headteacher and governors to use as the basis for financial planning. There has been an audit since the previous inspection and only a few minor items for improvement were found. These were promptly dealt with. The school buys its resources at the most competitive prices and pays careful attention to quality. Taking into account the background of the school, the very effective way in which it is led and managed, the standards achieved, the good quality of teaching and pupils' good attitudes, it is providing good value for money.
60. The school is very well staffed at present with only one vacancy caused by a maternity leave. The expertise of specialist music teachers is used well, resulting in above average standards in music by the time pupils are nine. The induction of new teachers into school is good and training opportunities, identified through regular professional development, are always readily available for all staff. The school has established satisfactory links with a local university and is used often to train new teachers. In the previous academic year, for example, three trainee teachers worked in the school and some student nursery nurses were trained. The seven extremely conscientious learning support assistants work closely with class teachers and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning.
61. The building, dating from 1954, is satisfactory overall. However, inspectors noted some areas requiring improvement to bring it up to acceptable modern day standards. The imminent conversion from a first school to primary school status will inevitably lead to a major building project. Improvements since the previous inspection have included access to a very good outdoor play area for children in the Foundation Stage. This very effectively helps to develop their physical and social skills. Facilities for disabled pupils have been upgraded with internal ramps and toilet facilities. The grounds are spacious with a good-sized hard play and grass areas. Plans are well advanced to develop a nature area in cooperation with former pupils now attending the upper school. The school caretaker, who takes an obvious pride in her work, keeps the school meticulously clean. She is supported well by two conscientious cleaners. Classrooms and corridors contain many interesting and colourful displays of pupils' work, adding interest for pupils and showing that their work is valued.
62. The range and quality of teaching resources are satisfactory, overall, and they are used effectively throughout the school. Resources are particularly good in music, art and physical education and this is one factor which is contributing to the above average standards in these subjects. In ICT, there is a favourable ratio of computers to the number of pupils. However, pupils have few opportunities to make use of computers in most of their lessons. Resources such as large wheeled toys for children in the Foundation Stage to use outdoors are very good. In the library there is a satisfactory supply of books for most areas. However, the sections on music and art need improving. Pupils make good use of the library for research, often working independently.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

63. Standards are beginning to rise steadily. In order to maintain the current trend of improvement, the school should now:
- (1) Improve pupils' writing by;
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to write at length when completing work in subjects other than English;
 - developing a more rigorous approach to spelling;
 - raising teachers' expectations for the presentation of pupils' written work;

- developing handwriting skills throughout the school.

(Paragraphs 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 23, 25, 80-93, 124)

NB. The school has already identified writing as an area for improvement in the current management planning. A new scheme for handwriting has recently been introduced.

- (2) Plan more opportunities for pupils to use computers in all National Curriculum subjects.

(Paragraphs 13, 24, 26, 103, 119, 123, 129, 131-135)

The following less important weakness should also be considered by the school:

- Develop a detailed curriculum policy for personal, social and health education and citizenship.

(Paragraph 37)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	46
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	23

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	8	24	11	0	0	0
Percentage	6.5	17.4	52.2	23.9	0	0	0

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

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)	N/a	223
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/a	37

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/a	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/a	50

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	22
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	27

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.3
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	23	19	42

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	21	21	20
	Girls	17	17	17
	Total	38	38	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (67)	90 (71)	88 (73)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	20	21
	Girls	16	17	18
	Total	36	37	39
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	86 (67)	88 (69)	93 (80)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	4
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	201
Any other minority ethnic group	12

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)	11
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.3
Average class size	28

Education support staff: YR – Y4

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	166

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	0
Total number of education support staff	0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	0
Number of pupils per FTE adult	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	453,257
Total expenditure	452,048
Expenditure per pupil	1,948
Balance brought forward from previous year	45,960
Balance carried forward to next year	47,169

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	7
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

29.6 Per cent

Number of questionnaires sent out

223

Number of questionnaires returned

66

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	23	2	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	50	44	3	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	52	42	2	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	53	8	3	9
The teaching is good.	59	33	2	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	48	8	6	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	30	3	3	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	38	0	2	5
The school works closely with parents.	36	48	8	8	0
The school is well led and managed.	59	33	5	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	45	2	2	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	18	39	12	9	21

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. This section of the report focuses on the children under six years of age who are taught in the two reception classes alongside some of the Year 1 pupils. At present there are 36 reception children in the classes. Children start school in the reception class in September of the year in which they are five. Some have had some pre-school experience before they start school. The class teachers and learning support assistants have very good systems in place to help the children and their parents and carers to have a happy and secure start in school. The children are taught in four groups with the Year 1 pupils making up one of the groups. This is so that the learning for the Year 1 pupils can be appropriately focused in the National Curriculum, whilst the reception children's learning is clearly structured through the Early Learning Goals for children of their age. Teachers manage these two curricula very well with children making good gains in their learning. This is in part due to the good teaching of all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum.
65. The majority of children enter school with attainment in all areas of learning that are below that expected of children of their age. The positive provision for these young children at the time of the previous inspection has been maintained and improved still further. The outdoor accommodation has been very well developed with hard areas, soft surfaces and grassed areas. Picnic tables and *Anne's cottage* allows the children to have access to a wide range of activities out of doors. The corridor outside the classrooms has also been used to create an intimate language development area. The wealth of experiences provided by the very good curriculum ensures that the children make consistently good progress throughout their time in the reception classes in all areas of learning. Most children will reach the expected level of attainment in their personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development by the time they reach Year 1. In communication, language and literacy and in their mathematical development however, although the children make good progress, the majority of children will not attain all the Early Learning Goals by the time they reach the end of the reception year.
66. The policy and programme of work has been reviewed in the light of the Foundation Stage for children aged under six and the recommended Early Learning Goals. The class teachers and learning support assistants place a clear emphasis on developing the whole child and learning through interesting, stimulating activities and play with the outdoor environment making a positive contribution to all areas of learning. Planning is thorough. The children are assessed as soon as they begin school; this assessment is used very effectively by the class teachers to plan the children's work. Children who have special educational needs are identified early and specific work and support are planned for these children. The school gives good help within the classroom for those children whose first language is not English and the teachers and learning support assistants ensure that they fully understand the tasks set for them and are engaged in all activities.

Personal, social and emotional development

67. In children's personal, social and emotional development, most children will achieve the nationally agreed standards by the time they are six. Children make good progress in this area of their work because they receive patient, caring supportive teaching. The children are sociable; they sit together whilst they have their snack and talk about their activities. They explain what they have to do in lessons and try hard with the tasks set. They have been in school less than a term but already they sit on the carpet and listen to the teacher as she reads stories such as *Just like Jasper* and *Little Bear*. Outdoors they play together well and take each other for rides on the tandem bicycle. Teachers and the learning support assistants encourage the children to take turns and share resources. All children undress themselves for physical education and manage well with good levels of encouragement. They use equipment properly and replace it carefully after use; they tidy up well at the end of their sessions. Children talk to each other and help each other with their work. All respond well to the staff; they listen carefully and follow the instructions and guidance they are given. Children clearly know the school routines well and line up to move the length of the school for lunch and assemblies. They have

made Diva lamps and plaques of paisley prints and peacocks decorated with sequins as they studied Indian traditions and culture.

68. The teaching of personal and social education is particularly good. Members of staff are patient and consistent with the children and consequently they develop their social awareness well. Staff show a great deal of care and concern for all children; they know them well. Children are helped to join in the class activities and all have opportunities to take part in every aspect of school life. They are encouraged to play in sociable groups and to listen and care for one another. Staff promote clear ideas of what is expected including the difference between right and wrong. The patience and quality of care shown by the staff alongside interesting, exciting and challenging tasks mean that the children learn well in a calm working environment. Children are both happy and confident and they make good gains in their lessons. The staff are good role models for the children; they are unfailingly polite to children and set them a splendid example.

Communication, language and literacy

69. In communication, language and literacy, children make good progress as a result of the good teaching they receive. The majority of the children however will not attain all the Early Learning Goals expected of them. This is because many have well below average linguistic skills when they start school. The children enjoy singing rhymes and songs. In assembly they are learning a wide range of Christmas songs and the actions that go with them. They play *Mr Crocodile*, in the outdoor area, singing the rhyme and then see if they have the chosen colour on their clothes. This generates great excitement. They talk about their work and what they are doing and what they think makes the *Jack in the Box* spring out of its box. They enjoy looking at a wide range of books. They are confident as they *read* their books and talk about what might happen next and what they know from the illustrations. They particularly enjoy listening to their teachers and the learning support assistants reading to them and sit enthralled. The children handle books well; they have reading books, which they take home to share with their parents and carers and the children are making good progress with their reading skills. Writing is displayed in all areas of the classroom and the children's writing is clearly displayed in the language area. Children make good progress with their writing skills, learning to form their letters correctly. The more able children are beginning to write underneath the teachers' writing.
70. The teaching of language and literacy is good. Staff work hard to improve the fluency of all the children by constant discussions and conversations. This has a high priority in the class. No opportunities are lost by members of staff in discussing children's work and play with them. Reading and the learning of the sounds and names of letters are very well promoted in the classes. A number of parents have been trained by the school to teach a specific phonic approach and they make a valuable contribution to the children's learning. They come to the school each morning to work with children to reinforce their learning of letter sounds. The staff choose books to read to the children carefully. They choose books that are exciting and interesting for the children so they are really involved and their learning is exciting and fun. The children are shown how to write their letters and the correct way to form them so that they develop a clear style of writing.

Mathematical development

71. In mathematical development, most children will be just below the standards that are expected for this area of learning by the time they enter Year 1. Children make good progress through the good quality, practically-based teaching they receive. They count along with the teacher to ten and are beginning to sort and choose coins to buy toys which cost two, three and four pence each. They enjoyed playing a game of skittles in the outdoor area. They counted how many skittles there were and then how many they managed to knock down. The higher attaining children decided who had scored the most and by how many. They recorded their answers in a range of ways carefully on the chalkboard. The children identify and know the names of simple shapes, for example, circles, triangles and squares. They recognise the terms 'empty' and 'full' and apply them in their work in the water and the sand.
72. The teaching of mathematical understanding is good. Class teachers and learning support assistants take every opportunity to develop children's understanding of number through practical activities and play. This very practical approach to teaching number and

measurements ensures that all children are fully involved in their learning and keen to contribute. The children's learning is well developed and built securely lesson after lesson. The wide range of practical activities is designed to consolidate and extend children's learning through interesting tasks, games and play. Role-play in the toyshop gives the staff good opportunities to develop their understanding of coins and their value as they work together to buy and sell toys.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

73. In knowledge and understanding of the world, most children achieve the standards expected for this area of learning by the time they finish the reception year. Good teaching ensures that children make consistently good progress. The staff provide a wide range of activities to interest and intrigue them. Children look at the flowers, at the colour of the petals and their leaves. In the grassed area they are at present busy digging a rather large hole to bury a time capsule. They look at a number of toys and consider how they work. All make models of wheeled vehicles using wood and fix them together using hammers, nails and glue. They make toy boxes from recycled materials and decorate them beautifully with paint. Afterwards they draw pictures of toys to put in them. Children have many opportunities to use a wide range of construction kits and they create a huge variety of models and scenes. They work alongside each other to create their models. All use a floor robot competently to programme moves so that it would go underneath two bridges made from wooden blocks, without knocking the bridges over. They enjoy using the computer to send the dragon in the computer program through different doors to experience different adventures. They experiment with a range of materials and cut, glue and stick to make interesting pictures, and they use a wide range of fasteners to put things together. For example, the children used split pins to make jointed creatures.
74. The teaching of knowledge and understanding of the world is good. The class teachers and the learning support assistants plan a large range of activities so that children are intrigued by their learning. For example, they had the chance to look at a range of springs and learn about the wide range of sizes of springs and their many uses.

Physical development

75. In physical development, most children attain the standards expected by the end of the reception year. Good teaching enables good progress. The children use a range of equipment and materials and their skills develop well, with scissors, for example. They use a range of equipment as they draw and write, with a particular favourite being the writing table. They use construction toys and paint brushes with good levels of dexterity and, in physical education, they improve their skills as they move as toy soldiers or ballerinas. Children enjoy climbing on and off, and moving in and out of the vertical poles in the outdoor play area and also playing with the tricycles. They work together as they play.
76. Teaching is good. The staff provide a wide range of activities and good levels of individual support to help extend fine and gross motor skills. Children try hard to improve and develop their work as a result of good teaching. The class teacher's energetic contribution ensured children's enthusiasm.

Creative development

77. In creative development, most children attain the standard expected in this area of learning by the time they enter Year 1. They make good progress as they are taught well. Children use paint expressively. They paint brightly coloured pictures of Bruin with his blindfold firmly on. They recognise that the reason Bruin did not make a good job of his observational drawing of a wooden parrot on a perch was because he could not see what he was drawing. Consequently he had not used the correct colours and his drawing was not right, in fact just scribble. In this way the children learnt that they had to look carefully and take great care as they drew and coloured in their own drawings. In this way the learning support assistant was effective as she used the puppet to show children how not to do their work and all enjoyed the puppets naughtiness. In music lessons, children enjoyed playing their instruments and carefully watched the conductor to make sure they were playing at the correct time.

78. Teaching is good. Staff provide an ample variety of opportunities for the children to develop their creative ideas through painting, drawing, and music. Children's interests are stimulated by good lessons.. A particularly positive feature is the use of the puppet to aid the children's concentration and perseverance. The children are encouraged to express their feelings creatively and expressive. The classroom areas and the corridors are bright and attractive with the children's work effectively displayed.
79. Children make a very positive start to their education in all areas of learning. They listen carefully to instructions and behave well. All concentrate on the activities set for them and persevere with them, even if they find them hard. Children are engaged by practical activities and the very broad, exciting curriculum. Assessments are very thorough and ensure that all tasks are carefully matched to children's individual needs. All children are well provided for and individual needs are addressed effectively. They quickly settle into the class and develop an understanding of the pattern of life in school.

ENGLISH

80. Inspection evidence shows that standards in English are average at the age of seven but below average at the age of nine. By the end of the school year, pupils aged seven are expected to reach broadly average levels in all aspects of the subject, although reading is better than writing. Nine-year-olds are currently attaining below average levels in all aspects, although listening and reading skills approach national average levels more closely. The structure and content of pupils' writing is better than technical aspects such as handwriting and punctuation, which are well below expectations for this age. Standards are not as good as they were at the time of the previous inspection, when attainment was reported to be in line with national expectations at both ages. However, the decline in standards at the age of nine is the consequence of a weaker year group of pupils with high levels of special educational need.
81. Results from the national testing programme at the end of Key Stage 1 improved steadily from 1997 to 2000. In 2001, there was a much more substantial improvement. In reading, nine pupils in every ten reached the expected Level 2, a proportion above the national average. About three pupils in ten reached the higher Level 3. In writing, again nine pupils in every ten reached the expected level but only a small proportion reached the higher level. These results were slightly below those of schools with a similar intake.
82. Pupils currently aged nine performed poorly in their tests at the age of seven, their results being well below average in reading and writing. Consequently, they are achieving well in relation to their previous attainment. Similarly, pupils aged seven are achieving well when their levels of attainment on admission to the school are taken into account. This good achievement results from several factors, which include consistently good teaching, the provision of additional teaching by dedicated and hard-working learning support assistants and a firm focus on the targets for individual pupils.
83. Throughout the school, standards of speaking and listening are broadly average, with listening better than speaking in most age groups. Most pupils listen attentively to their teachers but listen with rather less attention to their peers. When teachers ask questions, many pupils remain silent and when further encouraged to respond, answer very briefly. This is because some teachers tend to ask 'closed' questions requiring only a limited response and there are too few opportunities for pupils to speak at length using reasoned argument. Drama is not used consistently in each class as a way to promote confident speaking.
84. When children enter the reception classes, their levels of attainment in communication, language and literacy tend to be low. Because there is good attention to the acquisition of reading skills, they make good progress and their ability to read is close to and sometimes better than the expected levels at ages seven and nine. In Years 1 and 2 , the use of a well-structured programme to increase pupils' awareness of the sounds of letters, singly and in combination, is markedly helping lower attaining pupils to learn to read. The structure of the literacy hour is used effectively to provide whole-class phonics teaching. The presence of additional adults enables class teachers to organise practice for pupils in smaller groups where necessary. As a result, pupils in Year 1 know the initial sounds of words and use the illustrations in books to provide further cues to extract meaning from print. By the age of seven,

pupils have acquired a basic sight vocabulary and read simple texts accurately. Some higher attaining pupils read fluently and are beginning to read more expressively.

85. Pupils in Years 3 and 4, including those with special educational needs in literacy, continue to make good progress in reading. Those in Year 3 use punctuation well to add fluency and expression to their reading and they describe characters in detail. By the age of nine, most pupils have acquired a good range of strategies to tackle varying texts, including non-fiction, confidently. Higher attaining pupils refer to the text as they explain the reasons for their answers. Pupils have suitable methods of choosing new books, but as yet most have not developed strong personal preferences. All remain enthusiastic about reading and many use public libraries regularly. They have developed appropriate reference skills. They use contents and index pages competently and many know how to scan for particular information. Pupils know how libraries are organised and have good opportunities to make use of the school library independently. They are not yet familiar with the Dewey classification system used in this library.
86. At the age of seven, attainment levels in writing are slightly below average, but some features of writing are stronger than others. As they write stories, pupils compose well-structured sequences of sentences, some of which are complex. An example of this was the contribution of a pupil to a shared writing session of, 'We were just about to swim when a great wave came crashing down'. Pupils use their imaginations well and often employ adventurous vocabulary. Words are either spelt correctly or at least conform to phonetic requirements. Handwriting and punctuation are much weaker features. Pupils take too little pride in the presentation of their work. Some insert capital letters in the middle of words and not enough write using correctly positioned letters of consistent size. Only a few pupils have begun to join their letters to increase fluency. Most use capital letters and full stops in isolated sentences but forget to do so in continuous narrative.
87. The overall quality of writing in Year 3 is satisfactory, reflecting the better results in national testing for this year group, but standards of handwriting and presentation are below average. Nine-year-old pupils are beginning to adapt their style to different forms of writing, such as instructional or narrative. Most are writing at good length, using vocabulary well and recognising parts of speech, including adverbs in some instances. However, spelling and punctuation skills are below average and handwriting skills well below average. A few pupils use punctuation, including speech marks, accurately, but the majority fail to insert basic punctuation correctly in more extended writing. The reason for this is that teachers have concentrated their efforts initially on motivating pupils to write by providing many stimulating opportunities, but have devoted less attention to the processes of drafting, editing and proof-reading to ensure a better quality of finished product. A new handwriting scheme has been implemented recently, but is not yet having an appreciable impact on pupils' everyday writing. This is because teachers' expectations about the quality of handwriting are too low and there is insufficient insistence upon the new skills being used across all subject areas.
88. In the English lessons seen during the inspection, the quality of teaching was good. In all lessons it was either good or satisfactory and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. An analysis of pupils' work suggests that the overall standard of teaching is similar to that at the time of the previous inspection. Although teachers are using the structure of the literacy hour effectively, there remains an element of under-expectation, particularly for average and above average pupils.
89. A strong feature of most lessons is the way in which all pupils are encouraged to contribute, with a particular emphasis on ensuring that pupils with special educational needs or English as an additional language are fully included. A successful strategy to achieve this was noted in the initial whole-class teaching. Whilst most pupils sit on the carpet, lower attaining pupils are seated around a nearby table and given good, yet unobtrusive, support by a learning support assistant. The teacher ensures that these pupils are involved in responding to her questions. The tasks for subsequent group activities are chosen carefully to enable pupils to work at the correct level, although higher attaining pupils could often achieve more with harder tasks. Teachers use books very well. They read expressively and treat books as sources of excitement and adventure. As a result, pupils value the experience of reading together. For example, in an older class, there were audible gasps of wonder and pleasure as the teacher

showed impressive photographs in a non-fiction text. Rather surprisingly, though, few books are used in classroom displays to stimulate interest further.

90. In all classes, teachers manage their pupils well and in some classes the relationships between teacher and pupils are exemplary. This leads pupils to work hard and do their best. Instances of unsatisfactory behaviour are extremely rare as a result. In many classes, notably those containing the oldest pupils, levels of independence and co-operation are high as teachers are able to trust pupils to work away from their direct gaze and to use their initiative when necessary.
91. In good lessons, teachers explain the objectives to the pupils and activities are carefully planned to meet those objectives. Teachers set appropriate targets for individual pupils which they, or sometimes the pupils themselves, record in their books. Occasionally too little work is done to address these targets. When they mark work, teachers do not refer enough to specific targets, nor indicate the next steps to be taken to advance pupils' learning. The weakest feature of teaching, however, is the generally low expectation relating to the presentation of pupils' written work.
92. English is well co-ordinated by an experienced subject leader. She has sufficient time to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning. The arrangements whereby teachers plan in teams effectively ensure that pupils of the same age in parallel classes experience very similar lessons. There are good systems of assessment that are used well to plan and adapt future work as well as to provide evidence of individual progress. There are plenty of reading books of good quality, including 'big' books for use by teachers in teaching a whole class. However, some non-fiction sections of the library require augmentation. For example, the range of information on art and music is too narrow. There is little use of drama, either to explore situations, characters and emotions across a broad range of subjects, or to promote speaking skills in English more specifically.
93. The headteacher and senior staff of the school are aware of several areas requiring development in the subject and have taken appropriate action to address most of them. This is confirmed by the steadily rising standards. To raise these further, a more rigorous approach is required in addressing weaker features such as handwriting and spelling, coupled with continued monitoring and evaluation to gauge the success of new initiatives.

MATHEMATICS

94. In the previous inspection, standards in mathematics were judged to be in line with national averages at the ages of seven and nine. Inspection evidence shows that, by the ages of seven and nine, pupils still attain the standards expected of them in numeracy and all areas of mathematics which includes problem solving, algebra, shape space and measures and data handling. This represents an improvement on the 2001 National Curriculum test results for seven-year-olds, which show that pupils attained standards below the national average. Pupils throughout the school achieve well in mathematics, with some individual pupils at the age of seven achieving standards above those expected. All this is against a background of disruption caused by frequent changes in staffing, a significant number of pupils moving in and out of the school during term time and higher than average numbers of pupils with special educational needs in some year groups. These factors influence different year groups in the school and results vary from year to year because of this. The school monitors test results and tracks pupil performance. As a result it is able to give extra focused support exactly where it is needed. This strategic use of resources is beginning to have a positive impact upon standards. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs and those pupils for whom English is not their first language are provided with work well matched to their levels of ability. In this way all pupils make good progress and achieve well. In the lessons observed during the inspection the quality of teaching was consistently good. The pupils respond to this effective teaching and learn well.
95. By the time pupils are seven, they are all keen and excited by the challenges given to them by their teacher. They listen attentively as they are challenged to replace the missing numbers from the number square. Most succeed as they are familiar with numbers up to 100. The activity part of the lesson was particularly well organised with all tasks well matched to the

individual needs of the pupils. The class teacher and the extra support teacher worked very effectively to monitor all the work of the pupils in the class. This ensured that the pupils were given good help and so they achieved well. The extra teacher helping with the learning in this lesson is part of the school's initiative to improve the pupils' attainment in mathematics. This additional help is having a positive impact upon the levels of confidence of the pupils as well as their attainment.

96. By the time they are nine, pupils are frequently encouraged by their teacher to work together, deciding for example how many lines of symmetry are present in each of the shapes they are given. Good use of mirrors and cutting out of the shapes meant that the pupils were able to work accurately and work out their answers together. The good level of co-operation led to a good discussion between pupils and effective learning. In Year 4, the teacher's good allocation of carefully matched tasks and the pupils obvious enthusiasm meant that the pupils tried hard and gained good results in their number problems involving addition and subtraction of two digit numbers. Throughout the junior department, the extra help given by the learning support assistants to the lower attaining groups means that these pupils have good opportunities to ask questions and learn securely in a supportive and positive atmosphere. The learning support assistants are skilled at ensuring that these pupils remain securely on task and learn well. Resources in the form of digit cards enable the pupils to practise their number puzzles before they decide exactly where the numbers should be. In this way the pupils' confidence and self-esteem rise and this has a positive impact on the way they learn. The atmosphere within the class was one of intense concentration; with the levels of discussion, active involvement of the pupils at appropriate levels and their levels of motivation ensuring that the teacher's high expectations led to good learning.
97. The overall quality of teaching is good. An important feature of the effective teaching of mathematics and numeracy throughout the school is the way the teachers have adopted the National Numeracy Strategy. Teachers try hard to make sure that mental calculations, at the start of lessons include all the pupils in the class. The staff have an appropriate range of resources to facilitate this part of the lesson. All pupils are challenged and achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs, and those few for whom English is not their first language, are given good support by the learning support assistants who help them to succeed during this part of the lesson.
98. In the good lessons observed during the inspection the teachers' planning is thorough and they are clear about the pupils' learning. The class teachers tell the pupils what it is they are to learn and in this way the pupils are fully involved in their learning and consequently they learn well. The class teachers have good subject knowledge and they ensure that they explain clearly to the pupils what they have to do. For example, in the Year 1 mathematics lesson the pupils listened very carefully to the class teacher and approached the task enthusiastically. In this way the pupils were able to solve the number problems they were working on.
99. Teachers support all pupils well and this ensures that they learn effectively. However, teachers do not always insist that pupils present their work in a neat and systematic way and for example, use rulers to draw lines for their graphs. This leads to some untidy work in pupils' exercise books. Computers are beginning to be used to support pupils' learning in mathematics; for example, Year 3 pupils were busy putting information into the computer and then creating graphs from it. Teachers encourage pupils to use mathematical skills in other subject areas, for example in science and design and technology.
100. The school has very good procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' achievements in mathematics and this information is used well by the teachers to organise and plan their work. A strength of the teaching in the school is the good relationships the pupils have with their teachers and learning support assistants, which helps to create a productive working atmosphere in which the pupils are supported in their work and helped to achieve well. Teachers frequently praise pupils for their efforts and this encourages them to ask for help and volunteer answers confidently.
101. The co-ordination of mathematics is very good with the newly appointed co-ordinator having a good grasp of the subject's requirements in all departments of the school. The monitoring of teaching and learning has been thoroughly addressed and areas of strength and weakness quickly identified. Improvements have been effectively carried out to correct weaknesses such

as giving pupils the chance to work independently on problem solving or providing more challenge for higher achieving pupils. She has then monitored teachers' planning and teaching and learning in classes to ensure that the areas highlighted for improvement have in fact been targeted in lessons and consequently improved. The school has also employed extra teaching staff to give supplementary focused help for different groups of pupils to enable them to improve still further. The school feels that these improvements alongside accurate assessments and careful monitoring of individual pupils are beginning to have an impact upon the overall levels of attainment in the school. Resources are satisfactory and are stored appropriately.

SCIENCE

102. In 2001, teachers assessed seven-year-old pupils as having standards close to the national average for those attaining Level 2 or above. The proportion attaining at the higher Level 3 however, was below average. These assessments represent a significant improvement on 2000 when standards were below and well below average respectively. Standards are similar to those reported in the previous inspection. Inspection evidence shows that overall standards for the current Year 2 pupils are in line with those expected. By the time pupils are ready to leave the school at the end of Year 4, standards are also in line with expectations for pupils of this age. The steady improvement from 2000 is due to the quality of teaching, with an emphasis on pupils conducting experiments or investigations for themselves and very good assessment procedures. Pupils achieve well in science throughout the school. There is no difference between the performances of boys and girls.
103. By the age of seven, pupils name parts of the body, the senses and they know what constitutes a healthy diet. In their work on forces, they identify toys that require pushing or pulling to make them move. However, recording skills, following their investigations, are insufficiently developed by teachers, with pupils having to write very little. Computers are rarely used. Pupils remember much about different sorts of materials and know how to make an electrical circuit. Pupils with high attainment identify the need for sun, water and soil for a plant to grow. All, including those with special educational needs, enjoy the practical approach to lessons. In a mixed age Years 1 and 2 class lesson on electrical conductors, for example, pupils confidently used the correct vocabulary and all were able to test different materials in their circuits. Learning support assistants work very well with individual or groups of pupils to make sure all are fully included in activities. The satisfactory level of resources ensures all pupils have the equipment they need.
104. By the age of nine, pupils have a broad background in experimental procedures, life processes, the properties of materials and physical processes. They know, for example, how muscles work, the effects of friction and forces such as air and water resistance and the importance of keeping healthy and clean. They understand what a fair test is and the need to vary only one factor at a time. In Year 3 for example, when pupils were testing how waterproof materials were, they varied the amount of water or time they left it on the material. Pupils record results well, demonstrating good mathematical skills in measuring, and in presenting and analysing data. However, computers are not used often enough to research facts or to record and analyse data.
105. Overall, teaching is good. Lesson planning is very good throughout and resources, such as electrical equipment very well organised. In most lessons, pupils know in advance what they are expected to learn and teachers use good questioning skills to review previous work and draw information from pupils. This was particularly obvious in a lesson in Year 4, when pupils were discussing how to make testing the air resistance on falling paper spinners. Very good opportunities are provided for pupils to make their own decisions and develop an inquiring mind and self-confidence. In the one excellent lesson seen in science, the Year 1 teacher made learning exciting and interesting for pupils, encouraging them to investigate for themselves how various toys move. In some lessons, speaking and listening skills are developed alongside scientific exploration. For example, in a Year 3 lesson on waterproof materials suitable for a market stall, pupils were encouraged to make their own predictions before testing and explaining their thoughts to the rest of the class. Teachers make very effective use of learning support assistants and their contribution is in part responsible for the improving standards. Classroom management skills are very good and teachers are taking care to establish good routines early in the year. This is setting clear boundaries for future work so that time is not

wasted. Pupils treat equipment responsibly and tidy up quickly so that no time is wasted in lessons. Marking in some classes is not always rigorous enough to give pupils clues on how to improve. Procedures for assessing levels of attainment and pupils' progress are very good, and national tests are carefully analysed to find the key weaknesses in the subject knowledge of the pupils and hence teaching.

106. The subject is well managed by the knowledgeable co-ordinator. Planning by all teachers is checked carefully each term to see that teachers intend to cover all the areas of science and there is frequent monitoring of standards through checking work in pupils' books and the quality of teaching. Resources, as in the previous inspection, are satisfactory, easily accessible to teachers and used well in lessons to give pupils good first-hand experiences.

ART AND DESIGN

107. Standards are above average at the age of seven and nine. Judgements have been based upon interviews with the pupils, observations of the pupils' work and the co-ordinator's monitoring file, as only two lessons were observed during the inspection. A similar judgement was made in the previous inspection. Art has a secure place in the work and life of the school as it is a subject in which all pupils achieve well. The main reasons for this are; staff working hard to make sure that classrooms are bright and stimulating, the good quality of teaching and pupils' work being displayed in such a way that it captures their imagination and encourages them to do their best at all times.
108. The programme of work ensures that art is taught, not only in its own right but it is also used to support work in other subjects. For example, pupils drew pictures of Roman soldiers in their history topic.
109. By the age of seven, pupils use a range of media to record their observations. They study a wide range of artists and their work, looking at the particular styles. In Year 1, for example, pupils painted a number of children's figures in the style of the artist Mackenzie Thorpe and these made a jolly display in the corridor. In Years 1 and 2, pupils created colourful paintings in the style of Kandinsky. Pupils use pastels, paint, charcoal, chalks and pencils to record their own observations and are adept at using different media within their work. They are encouraged to look closely at their work and to use their imaginations and a range of media to give free reign to their ideas. In this way the pupils created pictures of the local St Matthew's church. They added stained glass windows and doors to the pictures to considerably enhance the overall effect. The resulting pieces showed a fine quality of work.
110. By the age of nine, pupils have built/are building upon the skills and techniques acquired when they were younger and have developed/are developing a critical awareness of their own and others' work. They speak knowledgeably about their work. For example, in the Years 3 and 4 class the pupils spoke about each other's work and said what they particularly liked and what they thought could be improved. In this way, the class teacher encouraged pupils to give constructive criticism and positive observations about one another's work. This detailed analysis was put to good use when pupils completed their own pictures. The class teacher showed the pupils how to decorate their leatherwork with the wide range of materials available. In this way the pupils were acquainted with the range of effects possible with the different media. Pupils study a range of artists and their work and look at different cultures and the patterns and techniques they use. For example, in Years 3 and 4, the pupils have studied a wide range of artefacts created by the Aboriginal people of Australia. The pupils then produced their own prints and patterns in this distinctive style. Year 3 pupils, in their art and design lesson, looked at making prints using a press print technique, then produced some interesting pieces of their own.
111. The quality of teaching in the two lessons seen was good. The teacher in the Year 3 class, for example, was effective in using the pupils' mistakes to further develop their ideas and skills. This ensured that the pupils made good gains in their understanding. Overall, taking into account teachers' planning, their expectations of pupils, their use of learning support staff and their management of pupils, the quality of teaching is good in art and design.

112. The enthusiastic and knowledgeable subject co-ordinator gives very good support to her colleagues. She has made a positive impact upon the development of art throughout the school. In the recent Art Week, pupils had a wide range of experiences, studied a number of different artists and looked at a culture very different from their own. There are good quality resources in the school and they are used effectively by the staff.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

113. Pupils achieve expected standards in design and technology at the ages of seven and nine. This represents a decline from the situation reported in the previous inspection, when attainment was average at age seven but good at age nine. A strong concentration upon new national initiatives in literacy and numeracy has left less time for design and technology and, in particular, less time to evaluate the quality of pupils' work. Skills relating specifically to the subject are not always thoroughly taught, especially those of design and evaluation.
114. In Year 2, pupils make a carriage using boxes. They have little idea of the intended use of their finished product and most of their time is taken up with painting and sticking to decorate the boxes. Other pupils making bookmarks understand that their design is influenced by a consideration of who the bookmark is for. As they design the object, few consider how they will make it, nor do they use their knowledge of materials as they plan. Pupils of this age successfully plan and make sandwiches and evaluate the tastes of a variety of breads. They have also explored wheels and axles and learnt a range of techniques to join paper.
115. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have studied how objects can be made to stand in stable positions as a preparation for designing photo frames. They know how to cut from the centre to produce square internal corners. Year 4 pupils demonstrate they have progressed by adding more variety to shape and size and to the ways in which the frames are supported. The resulting photo frames are poorly finished, largely because the only tools used to cut thick card are scissors. These pupils also have had experience of shaping and cutting wood, of designing and using moving mechanisms and of using simple pneumatic devices to create movement.
116. The quality of teaching in the subject is satisfactory but there is also some very good practice. It is taught as an integrated activity alongside several other subjects. After an introductory lesson for the whole class, pupils in groups work at different times during the week, sometimes taught directly by the teacher, sometimes supported by a learning support assistant, sometimes working independently. This arrangement is mostly effective in advancing pupils' learning and enables pupils with special educational needs to receive extra support on occasions. In the best lessons, involving older pupils, teachers provide a good proforma for pupils to record all the designing, making and evaluating stages as they manufacture a product. Knowledge of the subject is good, pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own work and 'mistakes' are retained for future reference. However, pupils are not taught to use more sophisticated and accurate methods of cutting and joining. As a result, their making skills are underdeveloped and they are unable to improve their finished products.
117. In less accomplished lessons, teachers lack sufficient subject knowledge. Although their organisation of activities is very good and the management and control of pupils is effective, many decorative activities undertaken by pupils, taking up a high proportion of the subject's time allocation, belong to the art and design curriculum. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to create individual designs. For example, all are given an identical piece of card to act as the template for a bookmark. Few examples were found in a scrutiny of work to show that pupils are given opportunities to use a computer to complete tasks in this subject.
118. There are suitable arrangements to assess work in the subject. The results of this assessment are not yet used to provide more specific activities to develop the skills of individual pupils from their current levels. Teachers' marking concentrates upon surface features of written work instead of noting their progress in acquiring skills and understanding.
119. By combining a programme of work written by the school, national guidance and the local authority's suggested scheme, the school has developed a balanced programme in the subject. It now needs to instigate further monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure that pupils' skills

are developed progressively and more opportunities for pupils to work with computers are included in teachers' planning.

GEOGRAPHY

120. Timetabling arrangements by the school and the inspection team meant that only one lesson was seen in the junior department. However, a scrutiny of pupils' completed work and displays around the school show that standards of attainment in geography are in line with expectations for pupils aged seven and nine. This is the same judgement as reported in the previous inspection when no lessons were seen. However, improvements have occurred in the curriculum guidance, and teachers' planning now ensures that pupils build progressively on their previous learning. Good assessment procedures mean that work is also now well matched to different pupils' abilities. The level of achievement for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory throughout the school.
121. By the time pupils are seven, they are familiar with the main features of their own area, drawing maps of their route home and drawing plans of their school grounds, classroom or a room at home. They know the countries of the United Kingdom, compass directions and how to carefully and methodically make weather recordings. All show good gains in their geographical knowledge as they move through the infant classes. In Year 2, most could identify features to be found in and around school. Using an Ordnance Survey map, most were able to locate important buildings such as a post office or church.
122. Pupils' interest in the subject is maintained throughout the junior section of the school because of the well-planned curriculum. In the mixed age Years 3 and 4 class, for example, pupils showed how much they knew about settlements all over the world. When talking about slides showing a village in Nepal, they demonstrated a good knowledge about the requirements common to all people such as water, the ability to grow food and build homes. The added support during the lesson for lower achieving pupils provided by the learning support assistant was particularly effective in enabling pupils to maintain a good level of concentration and complete the task set for them. All demonstrated good local knowledge as they compared features of the area in Nepal, such as terraced fields on the side of mountains, and tried to explain the differences between this area and their own. By the time pupils are nine, they use maps confidently, know about scale and recognise symbols used to show different features. They have studied the towns of Corby, Market Harborough and Rockingham comparing these places with their own locality. They also have a satisfactory understanding of places further afield such as the Australian outback. Pupils' achievements in geography throughout the school are satisfactory, largely because of the quality of teachers' lesson planning, their effective use of learning support staff for pupils with special educational needs and the careful assessment of individual pupils' progress. As a result, all pupils produce work to the standards expected for their age.
123. Good links with other subjects, such as art, design and technology and history, help to further develop pupils' geographical skills. For example, in art, pupils create aboriginal pictures and designs for their display of work on Australia and design and make models of the interior of the local church. Year 4 used maps to find historical place names associated with the Vikings. However, opportunities to use computers are not being routinely planned and little evidence was seen of pupils' work resulting from using a computer in geography lessons. Attractive displays of work around the school contribute positively to the standards achieved. These include one on Australia in the Years 3 and 4 classroom showing examples of Aboriginal artefacts and printed cloth, reinforcing links between geography and art and design.
124. The standard of teaching overall is satisfactory. In the one lesson seen, a secure knowledge of the subject, a well-prepared and interesting range of resources such as slides and photographs were the main strengths of this lesson, resulting in a satisfactory level of learning for all pupils. A scrutiny of teachers' planning shows that all teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and most plan lessons carefully, matching activities closely to pupils' individual capabilities. Good use is invariably made of a wide range of resources such as maps, globes and aerial photographs to hold pupils' interest. Higher attaining pupils are sufficiently challenged, often researching information on their own either at home or in lessons, using reference books. Skilled questioning challenges pupils constantly, as in the discussion in the Years 3 and 4

class, and carefully prepared worksheets keep pupils interested and motivated. All lessons have clearly identified learning objectives. As a result, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, concentrate well to finish the tasks set for them and in the junior classes in particular, produce a satisfactory amount of written work. However, the presentation of this is often spoilt by untidy handwriting. Pupils with special educational needs also make satisfactory progress, benefiting from working as part of a group or from the support of learning support assistants.

125. Management of the subject is satisfactory overall. Following recommendations in the previous inspection report, guidelines to help teachers plan their lessons have been developed and have been further updated to take account of the latest Curriculum 2000 guidelines. They now give teachers a clear framework for their lesson planning. Pupils' progress is assessed carefully by monitoring their performance on a termly basis against the specified learning objectives. Teachers' planning is checked termly by the headteacher and co-ordinator as well as the effectiveness of teaching as it happens in the classroom. Resources are satisfactory and the school effectively uses visits to contrasting areas such as local towns to enhance the curriculum further. As with all subjects in the school, there is a strong commitment shown by all staff to raise standards.

HISTORY

126. Standards in history at the ages of seven and nine are in line with those expected. This is a similar position to that at the time of the previous inspection. The standards pupils achieve reflect the interesting and stimulating curriculum available to pupils and the good use of the immediate locality to promote pupils' understanding of the past. Judgements have been based upon interviews with pupils, observations of the pupils' work and interviews with the staff as timetabling arrangements meant that no lessons were observed during the inspection.
127. By the age of seven, pupils have developed their knowledge and understanding of people in the past and how they lived. They use a range of sources for their lessons and, through careful observations of pictures and artefacts, gain a clear understanding of the lifestyle of people from different periods in the past. Pupils learn about famous people such as Guy Fawkes and why we celebrate with bonfires and fireworks on the 5th of November each year. They learn about the Great Fire of London and why it was that so many homes were destroyed. Pupils in Year 1 are at present looking at a range of artefacts from 1953, the year of Queen Elizabeth's Coronation. They looked at the special clothes she was wearing during the ceremony and recognise that the Queen has altered since then. One of the tasks for the pupils was to put into chronological order illustrations of the Queen. Pupils particularly enjoyed looking at the Coronation pictures, mugs and photographs from the time. Through this enquiry the pupils were learning to look carefully at articles from the past and recognise the many clues to be found.
128. By the age of nine, pupils have a good knowledge of different periods of British history. They have developed an understanding of life during Celtic and Roman times. Pupils learn about the life of the local people who worked in the shoe industry in Northampton and reflect on the great changes that have happened throughout the centuries. They have visited a local shoe museum and used this excellent visit to find out more about how the shoe industry developed from a cottage industry into large-scale factories. They found out about the kind of shoes Henry the VIII wore. All pupils develop an understanding of the significant part children played in the industry and how hard they worked in stitching the uppers of shoes. The emphasis in all lessons is clearly one of finding out information from a wide range of sources. After careful examination of these sources, pupils develop an understanding of how people from the past lived and the homes and environments in which they lived. Good illustrations and accurate guidance encourages the pupils to make careful observations and well-considered deductions so that they gain a good understanding and sense of time.
129. The quality of teaching throughout the school, judged from pupils' work and subject documentation, is satisfactory. It is clearly rooted in first hand enquiry. To support this policy of learning, teachers organise visits to a wide range of local educational venues. The use of timelines, a chronological list of dates, clearly fixes the pupils' learning in the sequence of events. Areas to improve are planning more opportunities for pupils to use computers to aid the

pupils' learning and more opportunities for pupils to write at length, supporting literacy skills taught in literacy sessions.

130. The subject co-ordinator is newly appointed. She is enthusiastic and has good ideas for the further development of the subject throughout the school. Resources in the school are satisfactory and the school makes effective use of a wide range of resources in the locality.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

131. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are similar to those reported at the time of the previous inspection. By the ages of seven and nine, pupils reach standards that are in line with those expected nationally. The maintenance of pupils' standards of attainment is largely due to the development of the computer suite, which along with the provision of computers within the classrooms is providing the pupils with more opportunities to learn more about using computers and to practise their skills. Teachers have also become more confident in using the computers as a result of the training they have received. This is an improvement since the previous inspection where some teachers on the staff were reported to have limited subject knowledge. Alongside this is the support from the subject co-ordinator and, more recently, the extra help from the school bursar, who shares her computer knowledge and skills with staff and pupils alike. This has enabled teachers and pupils to become more confident.
132. By the age of seven, pupils attain average standards as the result of the good teaching that they receive and the good opportunities they have to learn new skills and consolidate their understanding. All teachers have worked effectively to ensure that pupils are independent in their use of the computers. They teach new skills and then ensure that the pupils have ample opportunities to practise using them. For example, in the Years 1 and 2 class, the teacher taught pupils how to use the program 'Colour Magic' to create a picture in the style of the artist Hokusai's *The Great Wave*. Pupils talked about the different tools, how to create different kinds of lines on the screen and how they could infill parts of the picture they had created. Most pupils are clear about the different uses of technology in the home and at school and they understand that microwave cookers have computers which need to be programmed according to what you need the microwave to do. At the end of the taught lesson the pupils were reminded how to save their work to the hard drive and print off their work. Pupils have good opportunities to work on their own illustrations and to practise the skills they have been shown in the taught lesson. Less secure are opportunities to practise and use their skills in all subjects of the National Curriculum. This aspect of the pupils' work is not consistently developed through teachers' planning. However, teachers are becoming more aware of the potential for development in this area. For example, the Years 1 and 2 teacher took photographs of the pupils' 'coronation' ceremony in support of the pupils' history learning. Although this was not built into the planning for the lesson, she recognised and acted upon an excellent opportunity to capture this significant moment using modern technology.
133. By the age of nine the pupils have effectively developed their understanding and skills in information technology further. In a good lesson in Year 4, for example, the class teacher demonstrated how the pupils could create a repeated pattern. The teacher demonstrated by making a pattern, copying it and pasting it into the correct place. In this way the pupils built up a page of repeated patterns. In the same session, pupils were shown how to use a scanner to scan a stained glass window design. This design was then coloured in and printed off. In this way, the teacher reinforced previous learning well and also taught new skills to extend and develop the pupils' understanding. Pupils use the word processor competently to copy out pieces of text and poems but they do not consistently use the computers in support of their literacy lessons to draft and redraft their work.
134. The quality of teaching throughout the school is good. Time in the computer suite is used well with the teachers ensuring that the pupils have as much support as possible during the follow-up sessions. In this way, all the pupils have the chance to have their work carefully monitored. The teachers ensure that all the National Curriculum requirements are met.
135. The subject co-ordinator is very knowledgeable and gives good support to all staff. Resources are satisfactory. Each year, the subject is featured in the school development planning as the school recognises the need to keep up-to-date. More computers and a bigger suite are in the

plans for the future along with more planned opportunities for pupils to use computers to help them with their work in all subjects.

MUSIC

136. The teaching and learning in this subject are strengths of the school. One result of the high standard of teaching is that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, enjoy music making. Standards at the age of seven are average, although the quality of singing is better than this. By the age of nine, pupils reach standards above those expected at this age. This is an improvement from the previous inspection.
137. A part-time specialist music teacher teaches all classes in the school, each week. Class teachers remain with their pupils throughout each lesson and teach a follow-up lesson later in the week. This excellent arrangement enables all classes to benefit from specialist teaching and to have the opportunity to consolidate their learning. It also provides effective in-service training for each class teacher.
138. Pupils in Year 1 copy the teacher's simple clapping pattern successfully. All are eager to 'conduct' groups by using hand signals indicating dynamics, starting and stopping, although they sometimes forget to stop their group! All pupils, including those with special educational needs, have made good progress by the age of seven. Pupils of this age sing tunefully. With the support of adults, they are able to sing 'London's Burning' rhythmically as a two-part round. They listen carefully to detect the precise end of a long note emitted by a percussion instrument. Higher ability pupils use a damping technique to produce a short note on a triangle and explain this as 'stopping the vibration'.
139. All pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 and 4. Pupils aged nine have built a substantial musical vocabulary, knowing the meaning of *pulse*, *ostinato* and *accompaniment*. Groups of pupils sustain an ostinato clapping rhythm as the class sings a song. Singing is accurate, rhythmic and with clear diction. Pupils sing individually with confidence and enjoyment in a question and answer 'telephone song'. When they sing as a whole school or key stage, as in assemblies, a very pleasant quality of sound is achieved.
140. The overall quality of teaching is very good and all the teaching by the part-time specialist is at least very good. The specialist teacher uses her excellent subject knowledge and expertise to plan exciting lessons which add steadily to pupils' skills. Activities are always appropriate to the age of the pupils. She has a very good relationship with each class and enthuses pupils to try hard and achieve success. Consequently, pupils' behaviour is very good and often, as in the Year 4 lesson observed, exemplary. This excellent lesson on the theme of Australian music began as pupils were led into the hall to form a circle as Aboriginal music played. After warming-up activities that included solo singing, singing in unison and in several parts followed. Instruments were used to play drones and ostinati. The highlight was the teacher's demonstration of how to play a didgeridoo, followed by a recorded example of good playing, giving pupils a good opportunity for sustained listening. Throughout the lesson there was careful attention to detail, for example, in playing techniques, and steady reinforcement of musical vocabulary. The quality of learning by pupils of all levels of ability was high.
141. Although there was only a single opportunity to observe class teachers teaching music, it was evident from their participation in the specialist teacher's lessons that many possess at least sufficient subject knowledge and expertise to complement each initial lesson effectively and to consolidate pupils' learning. In the lesson observed, for reception and Year 1 pupils, the teacher emphasised well the importance of both watching and listening, structured her lesson well and was particularly successful in including the more reticent pupils in each activity.
142. The quality of music is significantly enhanced by extra-curricular activities, although these are only available for Year 3 and Year 4 pupils. There is a substantial choir. Practices are in the lunch-break, avoiding the problem noted in the previous inspection of unequal access to the curriculum caused by absence of choir members from lessons. There are recorder groups and a steel pan group. Their remit is not interpreted too narrowly. For example, the specialist teacher asked two pupils to sing their own composed words to a well-known tune during a recorder practice. A visiting teacher provides tuition on the violin.

143. There is a strong emphasis upon performance, with all groups playing regularly in daily assemblies. In one assembly for younger pupils, the enjoyment of singing was very evident as pupils spontaneously sang whilst the piano played to accompany their exit. The high status of the subject makes a considerable impact upon the musical development of all pupils. It also enhances the self-esteem of many pupils who are less proficient academically.
144. The programme of work used conforms closely to National Curriculum requirements and the co-ordinator, who is the specialist teacher, is able to assure a progressive acquisition of musical skills and understanding through the school. There is a good balance between performing, composing, listening and appraising. There is very good attention to music from other cultures, such as the Aboriginal music experienced during the inspection, and this enhances pupils' multicultural understanding. Resources for music are good, except that the school library contains books representing too narrow a range of musical genres to enable pupils to follow up their interests.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

145. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, attain the standards expected. This is similar to the findings in the previous inspection. The learning support assistants play a vital role in enabling all pupils to take a full part in, and enjoy, the gymnastics and dance lessons seen during this inspection. A scrutiny of teachers' yearly planning shows pupils are provided with sufficient opportunities to take part in games sessions as well as, for the older pupils, athletics and swimming. Outdoor adventurous activities, criticised previously, are also provided, mostly in the summer months. However, the good range of playground climbing frames, installed after the previous inspection are used well by pupils all year round. Statutory requirements in the physical education curriculum are met.
146. By the age of seven, pupils know the importance of warming up before exercise and the effects of this on their heart and muscles. Year 2 pupils show a good awareness of space, running, skipping and jumping around the hall. They move with confidence, demonstrating control and co-ordination when performing curling or stretching movements. Balance and control are developed well in Year 1 as pupils take part in dance, responding to music to show how toys, such as a clockwork ballerina, toy soldier or jack-in-a-box, move. Imaginative responses to thunder and lightning or the sound of rain also result in carefully controlled movement sequences. By the age of nine, pupils successfully develop sequences of movements in dance or gymnastic sessions, showing a good level of control. Pupils work hard and behave well in lessons. When trusted with setting out large pieces of apparatus, for example, all work carefully and responsibly, considering one another's safety. They take turns when using apparatus and readily evaluate each other's performance with a view to making improvements. The agility, balance and confidence demonstrated during sequences involving a jump, travel and roll in Year 4 reflects the above average performance of all pupils. Standards in swimming are good with most Year 4 pupils achieving the expected competency.
147. The overall quality of teaching is good. In three of the six lessons seen, teaching was very good in two and excellent in one. As a result, higher than average standards were achieved. Year 4 pupils, for example, enjoyed performing their gymnastic sequences using apparatus effectively for jumping and rolling movements. In the excellent Year 1 dance lesson, the teacher's knowledge and enthusiastic demonstration successfully encouraged pupils to do their best when devising a sequence of controlled movements. All the activities, including the warm-up session and cooling down period, were controlled perfectly without marring pupils' own enthusiasm or enjoyment. Planning files show that all teachers have a good understanding of the subject and of how pupils learn and develop their skills. The quality of planning allows for a steady development of skills as the pupils move from class to class. Teachers have high, but realistic, expectations of pupils and are very sensitive in encouraging those whose skills need more developing to improve. This sensitivity to people's feelings is reflected by the pupils, who are supportive of one another and who have good attitudes towards the subject. When teaching is enthusiastic, it encourages the pupils to be enthusiastic about improving their skills and understanding, as it did in the mixed reception and Year 1 class lesson. In all lessons seen, class teachers manage to control even the most excited pupils and maintain very good discipline throughout. As a result, pupils listen carefully to instructions and behave well. This creates an effective climate for learning in which pupils can concentrate on developing their

skills in safety. The quality of teaching is well maintained by regular in-service training for teachers. This is particularly effective as it includes support staff as well as the teachers. Assessment of pupils' attainment is undertaken at the end of each teaching unit and shows a good consistency of approach from class to class, making it easy for teachers to accurately track individual pupils' progress and plan future work which builds effectively on pupils' prior learning.

148. The management of the subject is good, largely due to the co-ordinators enthusiasm and knowledge. The curriculum guidance for teachers is informative and kept up-to-date. Regular opportunities each term are provided for the co-ordinator to monitor the quality of teaching during lessons. All staff show a strong determination to raise standards by attending training sessions and sharing ideas in staff meetings. The grounds are generous in size with adequate hard play areas to supplement the grass. The development of a large adventure play area has undoubtedly helped to improve the physical skills of balance and coordination for pupils. The resources provided in school are good and well cared for. Music is used effectively in dance lessons and teachers are beginning to make effective use of a digital camera to record pupils' actions for a more detailed evaluation of their performance. Additional sporting activities, such as football and gymnastics outside of normal school time, broaden pupils' experiences and help to raise their self-esteem as well as improving their competitiveness and games skills.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

149. It was possible to observe only two lessons in this subject. These were lessons with very similar content for parallel classes in Key Stage 2. In addition, pupils' work in books and in a portfolio of evidence was examined and a discussion was held with the subject leader. The evidence indicates that standards at age seven and age nine are in line with the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus. This is the same as at the previous inspection. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress in learning both about religion and from religion.
150. Pupils in Key Stage 1 have learnt about the Torah and know some stories from the Bible. They have learnt that the story of the Good Samaritan illustrates the nature of friendship, but have not extended that understanding into the concept of tolerance. Pupils aged seven have visited a local church. They understand some of the symbolism associated with its interior and have learnt about ceremonies such as infant baptism. Pupils with higher levels of attainment know the significance of such ceremonies but understanding is occasionally inhibited by an over simplified or wrong interpretation. For example, several pupils when writing about John the Baptist record that, 'John washed the people to forgive them'.
151. In Years 3 and 4, pupils study Islam but some of the work is rather superficial. They examine examples of Christianity in action by studying people such as Martin Luther King and the work of various charities. Work on racism and resolving arguments contributes well to pupils' moral, social and cultural development. During the inspection week, pupils of this age were learning the meaning of Advent and discovering ways in which people prepare for Christmas. Those from non-Christian backgrounds were included as they described their own preparations for festivals such as Diwali. Pupils know the basic details of the Christmas story and the reasons for many traditional practices associated with the season. Acts of collective worship contributed strongly to this understanding.
152. Not enough teaching was observed to make a general judgement on its quality across the whole school. In the two lessons observed, teaching was good. Learning objectives were clear and activities were planned well to enable pupils to reflect on the true significance of Christmas preparations. In both lessons teachers' very good relationships with their pupils resulted in a very positive atmosphere and good gains in understanding. Sometimes, because of a perceived lack of time, teachers undertook tasks which pupils could have more profitably carried out themselves, such as checking the spelling of the word their acrostic poem was to be based upon, or evaluating the writing of their fellow pupils.
153. There are satisfactory arrangements for the co-ordination of the subject. The co-ordinator has opportunity to monitor teaching and pupils' work and has begun to compile an assessment portfolio. This requires further annotation to indicate the circumstances under which each piece

of work was completed and how it illustrates a particular level of understanding. The programme of work, based on the locally Agreed Syllabus, requires completion to ensure teachers have sufficient guidance to plan successful lessons. Good use is made of local resources including places of worship and visitors to the school. Other resources are adequate rather than generous; further artefacts and illustrative material is needed to bring the subject alive. The potential of ICT to support the subject is underdeveloped.