

INSPECTION REPORT

NEWTOWN CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Wem

LEA area: Shropshire

Unique reference number: 123490

Headteacher: Mrs C Brown

Reporting inspector: Mr C Parker
11897

Dates of inspection: 22nd -24th April 2002

Inspection number: 195753

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Newtown Wem Shropshire
Postcode:	SY4 5NU
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P Lane
Date of previous inspection:	9 th June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
C Parker	Registered inspector	Art Information and Communications Technology Design and technology Equal opportunities.	The school's results and achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
A B Anderson	Lay inspector		The 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?
M Powell	Team inspector	Foundation Stage English History Music Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
J Iles	Team inspector	English as an additional language Special educational needs Mathematics Science Geography Physical education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The number of pupils on role has grown since the school was last inspected, and there are now 120 pupils taught in five classes. A nursery has recently been added and considerable building work has created an attractive environment within the school. All of the pupils are of white UK heritage and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils who take free school meals is below average. The children's attainment on entry fluctuates from year to year, but is usually at least average and sometimes above. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is broadly average; one pupil has a statement. The school has been through an unsettled period with disruption to staffing throughout the current academic year. A new headteacher recently took up her post.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Although the school promotes personal development very well, the pupils are not attaining the standards they should in all subjects. The teaching is now good overall, but in the recent past its effect has been lessened by weaknesses in planning, monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance. The new headteacher is providing strong leadership and a commitment to rapid improvement. However, at the present time the school is not as effective as it should be, and is not providing satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in English, art and design and design and technology are above average.
- The pupils' personal development is very effectively promoted. Consequently, they have very positive attitudes to learning and behave very well.
- The teaching is good overall, and is particularly strong in Years 2, 3 and 4.
- The provision for educational visits and extra curricular activities is very good.
- Relationships within the school, and with parents are very positive and productive.
- The leadership and direction generated by the new headteacher are important improvements.

What could be improved

- Standards in mathematics and science.
- The use of information and communication technology across the curriculum.
- The consistent implementation of policies and procedures.
- The monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school's performance.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was last inspected in June 1997 progress has been barely satisfactory. In music and design and technology, there have been improvements in provision and standards have risen. There has been considerable investment in information and communication technology facilities, but they are not used widely to support learning. There have been improvements in the teachers' planning, but more work is needed to ensure that all aspects of the curriculum are covered in sufficient depth. The roles of the co-ordinators have been extended, but they have not been sufficiently effective because of weaknesses in the school's procedures for monitoring its own performance.

Some weaknesses identified in the last report relating, for example, to the procedures for recording attendance, teacher appraisal, and child protection have not been adequately addressed. However, in a very short time the new headteacher has begun to make positive changes to eliminate these weaknesses. She has the enthusiastic support of key members of the staff and consequently the school is very well placed to make rapid improvement.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	C	E	A	C
mathematics	B	E*	B	C
science	D	E*	C	E

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

By the end of the Foundation Stage, most of the pupils attain the expected goals in all areas of learning. Over recent years, the results in the national tests at the end of Year 2 have been well above average. However, in 2001 the results fell to average in reading and mathematics, but remained above average in writing. These results were generally below the average for similar schools. This fall can largely be attributed to the unusually high proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register in this cohort. The national test results at the end of Year 6 have fluctuated over recent years. In 2000, they were well below average, but here again there was a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. The results improved considerably in 2001 and were well above average in English, above average in mathematics and average in science. When compared with similar schools, the results are average in English and mathematics, but well below average in science.

Overall, the improvement in the results over the last five years is broadly in line with the national trend. However, on further analysis the results suggest there is room for improvement in mathematics and that science results are considerably lower than they should be. The inspection evidence supports this view. The school's good information and communication technology facilities are not being used effectively either to develop the pupils' knowledge and skills or to extend and enhance learning across the curriculum. Conversely, in art and design and design and technology standards are above average because the pupils have a good range of opportunities and their skills are developing very well as a result.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The pupils consistently demonstrate very positive attitudes to their work. They are confident, motivated, enthusiastic and eager to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The standard of the pupils' behaviour is very good. The teaching and non-teaching staff, parents and the pupils themselves have very high expectations of the standards of behaviour that are acceptable in the school.
Personal development and relationships	The pupils' personal development is very good. They are learning a very good range of social skills that is helping them to develop into well-rounded individuals. Relationships are very good throughout the school.
Attendance	The attendance rate at the school is above the national average.

Although the school has declared that there is no unauthorised absence, scrutiny of the class registers indicates that, for the last couple of years, the rate of unauthorised absence has been very high. However, this is the result of poor maintenance of class registers, and a lack of rigour in following up reasons for absence, rather than actual unauthorised absence.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The teaching is good overall. All of the lessons seen were at least satisfactory; almost half were good, and a further quarter were either very good or excellent. However, the strong teaching is not evenly distributed throughout the school. Effective teaching was seen in classes across the school, but it was found most consistently in Years 2, 3 and 4 where it is always lively and the activities move along at a good pace. The teachers make very good use of interesting resources and set imaginative tasks.

The new headteacher's weekly monitoring of the planning has already brought improvements and the teachers' preparation for most lessons is very thorough. They now set out very clearly what they want the children to learn and make the aims clear to the pupils at the start of the lesson. In literacy and numeracy lessons the targets are reviewed at the end of the lesson, but the teachers do not take full advantage of this opportunity to assess what the pupils have learned. Furthermore, the lesson planning needs additional development, particularly in how assessment is recorded and is used to plan the next stage of learning,

The pupils with special educational needs are given good support in most lessons. The teaching assistants are particularly effective in this role.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a curriculum that overall is broad and balanced and relevant to the pupils. However, some aspects of mathematics, science, geography and history need to be developed in greater depth in order to improve standards.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The pupils with special educational needs are included fully in all aspects of the curriculum. The activities are planned to match their stages of learning and they are well supported by the teaching assistants.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The importance of this aspect of learning is reflected around the school in the many displays celebrating the pupils' work across a wide range of subjects.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Many of the arrangements for ensuring the pupils' welfare are unsatisfactory. Although all members of staff place a very high priority on pastoral care, there is a lack of whole school guidance to ensure consistency of practice.

The school's relationships and communication with the parents are very good. The school enjoys the active support of the vast majority of the parents who hold it in high regard particularly for its very effective work on the personal and social development of the pupils.

The core areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum are compatible with the national guidelines, but the provision for the pupils' physical and creative development is barely satisfactory. There is also a pressing need for the school to make better use of the new computer facilities to provide a broader range of experiences and meet more fully the national curriculum requirements for information and communication technology.

Not all the required health and safety inspections, checks and risk assessments are systematically carried out and formally recorded. The procedures for the recording and monitoring of absence are poor.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The new headteacher has brought direction and a clear vision to the school's work. She has secured the enthusiastic support of key members of staff and is working to improve the effectiveness of the subject co-ordinators. However, there are still many inherited weaknesses in the management of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body meets its statutory responsibilities, but has not been rigorous enough in ensuring that all health and safety requirements have been fully implemented.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Overall, the school's self-evaluation procedures are not effective in establishing what it is being done well and where improvements are needed. However, recent developments have provided a major step forward.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses its funds appropriately and recent extensions to the building have created for the pupils a pleasant learning environment with good resources.

Sensible investment in learning resources, for example in science, provides the teachers with the equipment they need to create interesting and challenging lessons for the pupils. At the present time, the school has sufficient teachers for the number of pupils on roll. The accommodation provides adequate space, except for the hall, which restricts the range of activities in physical education.

Many of the school's policies and ad hoc procedures are unclear, inconsistently implemented and often ineffective. These weaknesses undermine the school's mission statement that prominently identifies its commitment to 'the pursuit of excellence' and limit its ability to apply the principles of 'best value' to its performance.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The help and support given to pupils, particularly those with special educational needs. • The effective personal development of the pupils. • The pupils' very good behaviour. • The good relationships between parents and teachers. • The good range of educational trips and visits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The inconsistent approaches to homework • The range of extra-curricular activities.

The inspectors agree with the positive views of parents particularly in respect of relationships and personal development. They also agree that the arrangements for homework are inconsistently implemented. However, they also judge the range of extra curricular activities to be very good and observed almost three-quarters of the pupils involved in a number of 'club' activities.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. By the end of the Foundation Stage, most of the pupils attain the early learning goals in all areas. Most are achieving satisfactorily, but in some areas of learning more could and should be expected of some of the more able children.
2. Over recent years, the results in the national tests at the end of Year 2 have been well above average. However, in 2001 the results fell to average in reading and mathematics, but remained above average in writing. These results were generally below the average for similar schools. This fall can largely be attributed to an unusually high proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register in this cohort. Almost a quarter of the pupils did not attain the expected level in reading and writing. Nevertheless, the school's own analysis indicates it is adding satisfactory value to the pupils' attainment on entry.
3. The national results at the end of Year 6 have fluctuated over recent years. In 2000 the results were well below average, but here again there was a high proportion of a pupil with special educational needs. The results improved considerably in 2001 and were well above average in English, above average in mathematics and average in science. Although results in English and mathematics have fluctuated and reflect variations in the different cohorts, in science the results have remained average or below. When compared with those of similar schools, the results are average in English and mathematics, but well below average in science. A further analysis of the results shows that the girls have performed slightly better than boys, although this is not evident in the pupils' current work.
4. Overall, the improvement in the results during the last five years is broadly in line with the national trend. However, on further analysis the results suggest there is room for improvement in mathematics and that science results are considerably lower than they should be. The inspection evidence supports this view.
5. Standards in English, mathematics and science are in line with expectations at the end of Year 2. In Key Stage 2, the pupils' achievements in English are good and standards remain above average, but in mathematics and science the pupils are not consistently reaching the standards they should by the end of Year 6. In both subjects, the pupils are not covering some areas of the curriculum in sufficient depth and the important areas of investigation and problem solving are not given enough prominence for the pupils' to progress quickly. The pupils' current standards and achievements have been affected by the unsettled staffing situation in the school in the recent past. In addition, weaknesses in monitoring, development planning and evaluation have resulted in inadequate improvements in standards, notably in mathematics and science. In order to raise standards, the school must ensure all aspects of mathematics and science are taught thoroughly and that the pupils have adequate opportunities to solve problems and carry out investigations. **This is a key issue for action.**
6. The deputy headteacher, whilst acting headteacher, analysed last year's results thoroughly and set out priorities for improvement. She tellingly concluded, 'We must not make the assumption that because these children performed well at Key Stage 1 that they will continue to progress at the same rate throughout Key Stage 2. They haven't been stretched as much as they could have been....'
7. This is major step forward for the school because it has begun to clearly evaluate its own performance and recognize its weaknesses. The new headteacher has immediately started to tackle the underlying issues that are undermining the considerable efforts of the teachers and restricting the pupils' achievements.
8. Similar inadequacies in the depth of the work are found in history and geography and these also have a negative influence on standards. Conversely, in art and design and design and technology, standards are above average because the pupils have a good range of opportunities and their skills

are developing very well as a result. However, the school's good information and communication technology facilities are not being used effectively to develop the pupils' knowledge and skills and to extend and enhance their learning across the curriculum. Urgent steps must be taken to ensure that the pupils make effective use of information and communication technology right across the curriculum. **This is a key issue for action.**

9. The children with special educational needs are making steady progress. The teachers and their assistants work well together to support these pupils and ensure their full inclusion in all aspects of the curriculum.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Nearly all parents agree that their children enjoy coming to school. They are interested and fully involved in all school activities, including the very good range of extra-curricular activities that are offered to them. They are confident, motivated, enthusiastic and eager to learn. They quickly settle down in registrations, assemblies and in class, and consistently demonstrate very positive attitudes to their work. They are attentive to their teachers, willingly ask and answer questions, and freely offer their own ideas and opinions. They are capable of sustaining high levels of concentration. Their attitudes to learning have a positive effect on their progress and achievements.
11. The standards of behaviour are very good. The teaching and non-teaching staff, parents and the pupils themselves have very high expectations of the standards of behaviour that are acceptable in the school. The vast majority of parents agree that behaviour in the school is good. The pupils behave very well and act in a mature and responsible manner at all times. Their conduct in the classrooms, at breaks and at lunchtime is consistently very good, and they move around the school in a quiet and orderly manner. There were no signs of either bullying or isolation of individual pupils. Consequently, the children work and play in an environment that is free from oppressive behaviour. There have been no exclusions in recent years.
12. The relationships in the school are very good. The pupils relate very well to their teachers, to other adults and also to one another. They are polite, courteous and welcoming to visitors. Children of different ages and ability work very well together in the classrooms. They collaborate well, share resources, take turns and listen to each other. All pupils consistently show respect for their teachers, each other and the environment. Those with special educational needs respond very well in lessons and are pleased when they are praised for their efforts. They have positive attitudes to their work and are keen to succeed. A pupil new to the school, who came with a challenging reputation, settled very quickly because of the positive and welcoming attitudes of the pupils and adults. During assemblies, the pupils are respectful of the occasion, willingly join in hymn singing and bow their heads reverently during prayers.
13. The pupils' personal development is very good. The vast majority of parents agree that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. The children are learning a very good range of social skills that is helping them to develop into well-rounded individuals. In the classrooms, most pupils take responsibility for their own work very well, and in lessons many were frequently observed working independently and showing initiative in tackling their assignments. On the few occasions when the pupils are required to take on formal responsibilities around the school, they respond in a mature and sensible manner and would clearly benefit from further opportunities. The school raises funds for national and international charities and the pupils are becoming aware of others less fortunate than themselves. They are taken on a good range of visits, including residential experiences for the older pupils, and encounter an appropriate range of visitors.
14. The attendance rate at the school is above the national average. Although the school has declared that there is no unauthorised absence, a scrutiny of class registers indicated that, for the last couple of years, the rate of unauthorised absence has been very high. However, this is the result of poor maintenance of class registers, and a lack of rigour in following up reasons for absence, rather than actual unauthorised absence.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

15. The teaching is good overall. All of the lessons seen were at least satisfactory; almost half were good and a further quarter was very good or excellent. However, the strong teaching is not evenly distributed throughout the school. Effective teaching was seen in classes across the school, but it was found most consistently in Years 2, 3 and 4.
16. In the Foundation Stage, the teaching is satisfactory and in some lessons it is good. Some activities are well prepared, but there are weaknesses in the planning because insufficient reference is made to the early learning goals and the structure of the Foundation Stage curriculum. This is particularly evident in respect of provision for the children's creative and physical development. In some mathematics lessons, for example, the activities are well matched to the needs of different groups of pupils, but in others insufficient demand is made on the more able pupils.
17. In year 1, a temporary teacher is providing the pupils with a good range of opportunities. The teaching is satisfactory and in some instances it is good. In Years 2, 3 and 4 the teaching ranges from good to excellent. It is always lively and the activities move along at a good pace. The teachers make very good use of interesting resources and set imaginative tasks. In one science lesson in Years 2 and 3, for example, the teacher provided the pupils with a spectacular display of flowers and plants to help them to learn about the parts of a plant and the important jobs they do. They responded enthusiastically and made excellent gains in their learning. Similarly, in Years 3 and 4, consecutive literacy lessons provided the pupils with motivating activities that promoted their learning very effectively. They listened carefully to the teacher, concentrated on the tasks they were set and developed a good understanding of the language used to convey different messages, including different forms of letter writing.
18. Routinely, in Years 5 and 6, the teaching is satisfactory, but is very good when the pupils are taught by the new headteacher. In literacy, the class teacher challenges the pupils and most make gains in their learning, but for some pupils the tasks are not well enough matched to their needs and consequently their progress is too slow. In other lessons, for example, in geography and information technology, the pupils are too tightly directed and, although they learn what is expected, these lessons fail to generate the enthusiasm that accelerates learning. Conversely, when these pupils are taught by the headteacher she makes considerable demands on them to take responsibility for organising, carrying out and recording their scientific investigations. Similarly, in mathematics they are expected to explain clearly the methods they use to solve problems. In both lessons, it was evident that many of the pupils have not been used to these approaches and some have not developed the skills and knowledge that they should have by this stage in their schooling.
19. In most of the lessons observed, the teachers displayed good subject knowledge and used it well to interest and inform the pupils. However, in information and communication technology, the teachers' knowledge varies widely and as a consequence, the school's good facilities are not being used adequately.
20. The new headteacher's weekly monitoring of the planning has already brought improvements and teachers' preparation for most lessons is very thorough. Nevertheless, the planning still needs further development, particularly in regard to the way that assessment is recorded and used in the preparation of subsequent lessons. The teachers now set out very clearly what they want the children to learn and share these targets with the pupils at the start of the lesson. In literacy and numeracy lessons, these targets are reviewed at the end of the lesson, but the teachers do not take full advantage of this opportunity to assess what the pupils have learned. They set the pupils homework, but it is not always closely related to what they have been learning in lessons and the arrangements are not consistent throughout the school.
21. The pupils with special educational needs are given good support in most lessons. The teaching assistants are particularly effective in this role. They provide careful explanations, support for specific activities, question the pupils well and help them to maintain their concentration. As a result, these pupils are making steady progress towards the targets set for them.

22. During the inspection, the pupils were clearly learning very effectively in most lessons and relishing the challenges set for them. In the recent past a number of changes of personnel have caused some disruption to learning, which some parents regard as having unsettled their children. This is evident in some of their work and the standards they are currently attaining, which are not as high as they should be in some subjects. It also illustrates the lack of clear guidance, in the form of a staff handbook and consistent approaches to planning, to help temporary teachers to continue to build on the work of the class teachers. The considerable level of disruption experienced by the school explains in part why the good teaching observed during the inspection has not resulted in the high standards and rapid progress that might be expected. However, the new headteacher has immediately set higher expectations and generated a momentum for improvement. Her teaching has highlighted that expectations of what can be achieved by the end of Key Stage 2 have not been as high they could. Further steps should now be taken provide the oldest pupils with a greater range of well matched, challenging opportunities for them to develop their skills and knowledge to a higher level through investigative approaches particularly in mathematics and science. **This is a key issue for action.**

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

23. The school provides a curriculum that overall is broad and balanced and relevant to pupils. Areas of weakness identified at the last inspection, such as the provision for music and design and technology, have been strengthened, but aspects of mathematics, science, geography and history need to be developed in greater depth in order to improve standards. Recent initiatives have been directed towards improving curriculum planning but these have not been successful in ensuring that all aspects of every subject are taught in sufficient depth. As part of this activity the teachers are identifying how they can best use information and communication technology to extend and enhance learning but at the present time it is not a prominent enough feature of the curriculum. There is a pressing need for the school to make better use of the new computer facilities to provide a broader range of experiences to more fully meet the national curriculum requirements for information and communication technology. **This is a key issue for action.**
24. The core areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum are compatible with national guidelines, but the provision for the children's physical and creative development is barely satisfactory. The curriculum for religious education fully meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The school is successfully implementing the national literacy and numeracy strategies, but in Key Stage 2 the range of opportunities for mathematical investigation is not as extensive as it should be.
25. The pupils with special educational needs are included fully in all aspects of the curriculum, and the activities are planned to match their stages of learning. They are well supported by the teaching assistants who are well briefed by the teachers. This ensures that the presentation of the curriculum is consistent and all pupils have equal opportunities.
26. The provision for the pupils' personal, social and health education, including sex education and drugs awareness, is good. There is a well-planned programme of work that now includes an element of citizenship. These features of learning are a very positive ingredient in the pupils' developing sense of responsibility that is further supported by contact with a range of local people, such as local clergy and others who make valuable contributions to worship and to lessons in religious education and history. The provision for extracurricular activities is a considerable strength. A very good range of opportunities is provided for all of the pupils including, for example, line dancing, ball skills, computer and football clubs. The pupils find the activities challenging and enjoyable. Many pupils commented very positively about opportunities to sing with other schools in a large auditorium in Birmingham. In addition, residential experiences and day visits considerably enhance the pupils' social and intellectual development. The children enjoy challenging experiences, such as those engaging them in energetic outdoor pursuits. The pupils with special education needs are fully included in all aspects of the curricular and extra-curricular activities.

27. The provision for the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The importance of this aspect of learning is reflected in the many displays around the school that celebrate the pupils' work across a wide range of subjects. Their artwork, for example, is very well displayed and the children and adults are encouraged to linger over it and absorb some of the messages it conveys. Periods of school worship provide times for quiet reflection and for celebration.
28. The school continues to promote the already well-developed social skills and mature moral attitudes that the children bring to school. They have a highly responsible and caring attitude towards each other. Older pupils take care of younger pupils at lunchtime, and the girls participate amicably in games of football with boys. The pupils are prepared to give a helping hand wherever it is needed and are unfailing courteous to visitors. The pupils have a well-developed sense of the inter-dependence of people and their environment that is evident in their interest in the 'Eco' club and the way they ensure that there is neither litter nor any other defacing of the school building and its grounds. In their classroom, the youngest children have some small animals that are cherished and lovingly cared for.
29. The school fosters the pupils' cultural development well. Work about the environment and the past is used very effectively to enhance the pupils' cultural understanding. For example, some have learned about what life is in other parts of the world and participated in historical role-play activities. Their work in art is stimulated by examining examples of the work of famous artists from Europe and Asia. The pupils' social skills and their cultural development received a memorable boost when a group of Indian women visited the school to exhibit and talk about aspects of their culture. They also engaged the pupils by allowing them to try on Indian clothing. The Chinese New Year celebration is also a focus of interest in the form of a lively display of Chinese cards, food and writing.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

30. Many of the arrangements for ensuring the pupils' welfare are unsatisfactory. All members of staff place a very high priority on pastoral care and are very approachable and totally supportive. However, there is a lack of whole school guidance to ensure consistency of practice in this aspect of the school's provision. For example, there is no staff handbook containing summaries of the school's policies and procedures and newly appointed and temporary teachers are not made fully aware of the pastoral and welfare arrangements. A formal child protection policy has been put into place since the last inspection, but there are no procedures for making temporary teachers and the non-teaching staff aware of their roles and responsibilities in this important area. Not all the required health and safety inspections, checks and risk assessments are systematically carried out and formally recorded. Some health and safety concerns were brought to the attention of the headteacher and the governing body during the inspection. The members of the non-teaching staff are caring, committed and give very good support to both teachers and pupils. Conscientious teachers, who are alert and vigilant, supervise the pupils very well at breaks. The lunchtime supervision is also diligently exercised, and the standard of care is high. However, the number of midday supervisors is insufficient to fully cover the area and the number of pupils playing outside.
31. The very good standard of behaviour is the result of the very positive relationships and ethos that are evident within the school. However, the school's procedures for promoting and monitoring discipline and good behaviour are inadequately documented. The behaviour and discipline policy is very general and does not give sufficient guidance to ensure consistent implementation by all staff. The procedures for recording and monitoring absence are poor and have not improved since the last inspection. The attendance registers are still not completed correctly and reasons for non-attendance are not recorded either consistently or rigorously followed up. The untidy state of the class registers indicates a lack of pride in ownership of these vitally important documents. The new headteacher is very aware of these deficiencies and has already started to improve the procedures. Improvements to, for example, health and safety procedures and the accurate recording of attendance are urgently needed. **This is a key issue for action.**
32. The class teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils extremely well and have a very good understanding of their individual personal needs. The special educational needs coordinator works

with pupils, parents, support staff, teachers and outside agencies to ensure that the needs of each pupil are fully met.

33. Elements of an assessment strategy are emerging, but they do not yet form a coherent whole. The links between the marking of the pupils' work, ongoing assessment in lessons, planning and record keeping although identified in policy statements are not secure in practice. The recording and tracking of formal assessments as the pupils move through the school provide a basis for an effective strategy, but at the present time the results are not used well to set individual targets and raise attainment. The school should begin by improving assessment and record keeping in mathematics and science. **This is a key issue for action.**

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

34. Relationships between the school and parents are very good. The school enjoys the active support of the vast majority of the parents. A good number of parents regularly help in the classrooms, accompany the children on school trips and give of their time to help in other ways around the school. For example, two parents currently run the extra-curricular football on a Wednesday evening. Most parents are fully involved in their children's work in school and at home. They support homework and home reading, and consistently enter appropriate comments in the home-school reading journals. There is a very active Parent Teacher Association, the Friends of Newtown School, which organises social and fund raising events. A considerable amount of money has been raised for the school in this way. The vast majority of parents consistently expressed an extremely high level of satisfaction with most aspects of the school. A few registered their concerns about the provision of homework and the range of activities outside lessons. The inspection team judged the use of homework to be satisfactory, although they agree that the arrangements are not consistent throughout the school. They found provision for extra-curricular activities to be very good. During the inspection, seventy-eight pupils were observed attending five different activities after school.
35. Communication between the school and the home is very good. The majority of parents agree that they are kept well informed about how their children are getting on. The school sends out regular, informative newsletters and frequent notices of specific events and activities. It publishes a comprehensive, informative prospectus. The governors hold an annual meeting with the parents and publish an annual report. The parents receive an informative annual report that clearly indicates what their children can do, the progress they are making and areas for improvement. They are offered the opportunity to attend appropriate consultation meetings to discuss their children's work and progress with their teachers. Targets for the forthcoming term are discussed and agreed at these meetings. The school makes every effort to involve the parents in the provision for the special educational needs of their children. They are invited to termly reviews and their children's targets are made known to them. The parents who attended the pre-inspection were very pleased with the school's provision.
36. The new headteacher and her staff are very welcoming and approachable. They make themselves readily available to parents at the start and end of each day. There are also plenty of opportunities for them to speak informally to their child's class teacher. Overall, the partnership with parents is very strong and has a positive influence on the pupils' learning and personal development.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

37. The school is emerging rapidly and positively from a very unsettled period because the new headteacher has brought direction and a clear vision to its leadership. She has quickly identified where improvements are needed because she has worked closely with the acting headteacher during the period between her appointment and arrival at the school. In a very short time, she has secured the enthusiastic support of key members of staff. Together, they have the capacity to bring about rapid improvement. The headteacher leads by example. She plans her lessons in detail, demands high standards and motivates the pupils to learn very effectively. Her high expectations are already permeating the school so that both pupils and staff know they may be questioned about possible improvements to their work.

38. At present, there are still many inherited weaknesses in the management of the school that the headteacher has not yet had time to tackle. For example, the school development planning is not sufficiently focussed on raising standards and performance management is not fully implemented. Moreover, the monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance is not effective in establishing what it is doing well and where improvements are needed. In addition, many policies lack clarity, are inconsistently implemented and the procedures are ad hoc and often ineffective. These weaknesses undermine the mission statement, which prominently identifies its commitment to 'the pursuit of excellence', and limit the school's ability to apply the principles of 'best value' to the school's performance. The school must sharpen its approach to improvement planning and ensure that all policies and procedures are fully implemented and rigorously monitored. **These are key issues for action.**
39. Science has been an area for improvement on the school development plan for the last two years, but there are neither clear targets nor an expressed expectation that standards will rise as a result. Reports by the headteacher have kept the governors up-to-date on various development activities, but there are no procedures to check that funds are being used effectively to bring about improvements and raise standards. The governors set performance targets for the previous headteacher, but none have been consistently established for the other teachers. In the past, the monitoring, evaluation and development of the teaching has lacked rigour; the only comprehensive exercises were undertaken by the local authority adviser with the headteacher. There has been little internal review of performance in the classroom. For example, plans for monitoring the teaching of numeracy were started, but never completed. In the spring term 2000, a monitoring exercise led by the local authority adviser focussed on the teaching of literacy. A subsequent document presented to the governing body set out arrangements for the fortnightly monitoring of the teachers' planning and the pupils' work as part of the school's self evaluation process. This was never implemented. However, the new headteacher has already begun to check the teachers' planning every week.
40. The subject co-ordinators have worked very hard to manage and improve the curriculum, but without the structure necessary for them to monitor either their colleagues' planning or the standards of the pupils' work. Consequently, they have not been sufficiently effective and the teachers have developed their own methods and approaches. Consequently, the momentum of some initiatives has dissipated, notably in regard to planning, assessment and record keeping. In some areas, the co-ordinators have been successful in raising standards, notably in design technology, where standards were not high enough at the time of the last inspection, but are now above average.
41. The new headteacher has brought an incisive approach to analysing the school's performance, which builds very well on the detailed analysis carried out by the acting headteacher last term. These developments must be extended, based on regular and rigorous monitoring of the teachers' planning, classroom performance, the pupils' work and the standards they attain. The results of all monitoring activities must be fully reported to the governing body for thorough evaluation. **This is a key issue for action.**
42. The governing body meets its statutory responsibilities, but has not been rigorous enough in ensuring that all the health and safety requirements have been fully implemented. The governors have recently begun to receive more detailed analysis, for example, of the school's performance in 2001 tests, which provides them with a much clearer picture of the strengths and weaknesses in standards. Some governors are regular visitors and are able to find out for themselves what is happening in the school. Others have special interest responsibilities; they visit the school to find out about a subject and report back to the full governing body. The governing body has recently extended its committee structure to include a curriculum committee. This places it in a much stronger position to guide the work of the school.
43. The recommendations of a recent audit have largely been implemented but an inventory of equipment is still to be completed. The school uses its funds appropriately and recent extensions to the building have created for the pupils a pleasant learning environment with good resources. For example, the school has now has very good information technology facilities, although at present they are not used to the full. Investment in learning resources, for example in science, provides the teachers with the equipment they need to create interesting and challenging lessons for the pupils. Currently, the

school has sufficient teachers for the number of pupils on roll. The governors carry forward a reserve fund to guard against fluctuations in the school population and to protect the staffing situation. The substantial reserve carried forward in 2000 has been halved in order to maintain the number of teachers.

44. The teaching accommodation is satisfactory. The classrooms are of adequate size, bright and airy and have storage for resources. The nursery is small, but adequate for the number of children who are presently on roll. There is a small library area and a well-equipped computer suite. However, the small hall is barely adequate for whole-school gatherings and limits teaching of physical education, particularly for the older children. The school is kept spotlessly clean and is well maintained.
45. Although there are many inherited management weaknesses still to be tackled, the strong leadership of the headteacher, the enthusiasm of key staff and the support of the governing body place the school in very good position to improve rapidly.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

46. The governors, headteacher and teachers must maintain the recent momentum of change and improvement. They must sharpen the school's approach to improvement planning so that it is very clear what effect all improvement activities are expected to have on the provision made for the pupils and the standards they attain. They should pay particular attention to:

1. Ensuring that high standards are attained in mathematics and science by
 - covering all aspects of the curriculum, in these subjects, in sufficient depth
 - developing, using and applying the pupils' knowledge and skills to solve problems in mathematics and carry out investigations in science
 - making more effective use of assessment and keeping better records.

Paragraphs 5, 22, 23

2. Increasing the pupils' knowledge and skills in information and communication technology and ensuring that the school's good facilities are used frequently and effectively to support learning right across the curriculum.

Paragraphs 8 23

3. Rigorously monitoring all aspects of the school's performance. The headteacher must ensure that all activities are fully documented and presented to the governing body to facilitate a thorough evaluation. These evaluations must be used in the planning of future improvement activities.

Paragraphs 38 41

4. Ensuring that all of the school's policies and procedures, particularly those relating to the health, safety and welfare of the pupils, are fully implemented and rigorously monitored.

Paragraph 31

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	32
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	28

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	5	14	9			
Percentage	12	16	44	28			

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100, use only the first sentence.]

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	4	116
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		31

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	7	6	13

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	6	6	6
	Girls	4	4	5
	Total	10	10	11
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	77 (92)	77 (92)	85 (92)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	6	6	6
	Girls	4	5	4
	Total	10	11	10
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	77 (92)	85 (92)	77 (92)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	7	9	16

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	5	7	7
	Girls	8	8	8
	Total	13	15	15
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81 (50)	94 (50)	94 (58)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	7	7
	Girls	8	8	8
	Total	14	15	15
Percentage of pupils	School	88 (50)	94 (58)	94 (67)

at NC level 4 or above	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)
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Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	116
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20
Average class size	24.4

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	40

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	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	12.5
Number of pupils per FTE adult	4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1
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.

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.

Financial information

Financial year	2000
	£
Total income	225 873
Total expenditure	213 347
Expenditure per pupil	1 749
Balance brought forward from previous year	28 943
Balance carried forward to next year	41 469

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	116
Number of questionnaires returned	45

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	58	40	0	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	42	49	9	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	78	20	2	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	47	33	20	0	0
The teaching is good.	51	42	2	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	53	36	7	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	87	11	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	27	0	2	0
The school works closely with parents.	73	22	2	2	0
The school is well led and managed.	48	45	0	1	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	71	27	0	2	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	44	31	16	7	2

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

47. The children in the Foundation Stage are taught in a nursery and a reception class. There are currently eight part time pupils in the nursery and twenty one who attend full time in the reception class. The nursery children are largely taught by a qualified nursery nurse, but there are times, for example, during self-selected activities when they may chose to work in the main classroom with some of the reception children, in the care of the Foundation Stage co-ordinator. Attainment on entry fluctuates from year to year, but is usually at least average and sometimes above. A significant number of the children have well developed speaking and listening skills.

Personal, Social and Emotional development

48. The school ethos is conducive to the children developing social skills such as awareness of others and the ability to co-operate. The teacher and his assistant are effective in helping the children in the nursery to settle quickly into the daily routines. By the time they join the reception class, the children are able to collaborate productively in a range of activities, such as role play and construction activities. The children are kind and thoughtful towards each other. Several instances of children encouraging each other during an activity or helping each other to put on aprons were observed during the inspection. The reception children are often aware of what their neighbours are doing and help them, for example, to spell words or to form letters correctly. The teacher and his assistant are very consistent in their insistence that the children listen to each other.

Communication, language and literacy

49. By the time they reach the end of the reception year, most children achieve the early learning goals in this aspect of the curriculum. A few exceed the goals in speaking and listening and in writing. The children are very willing speakers when they sit together as a class to discuss a 'Big Book' text with the teachers. The nursery children talk less among themselves as they work, but are developing a satisfactory level of confidence when they respond to questions about a story to which the whole class is listening. The teacher and the nursery assistant have a lively presentational style that interests and absorbs the children in stories. However, the role-play area is not stimulating enough and their opportunities for talk in this context are inadequate. Moreover, where role-play takes place during self-selected activities, the adults do not interact sufficiently with the children to develop their communication skills.
50. The children in the reception class are making good progress in forming a range of letter shapes. A few still reverse certain letters, such 'b' and 'd', but regular practice and good support ensure that most can orientate letters correctly by the time they join year 1. Many of them already recognise lower case and capital letters. Most of the nursery children recognise a few letters, such as those that either appear in their names or are linked to well known characters, such as Elma the Elephant. The older reception children are now adept at identifying the initial letters of basic nouns such as fish, train and pencil. Although a few can write very simple sentences, the older reception children need greater opportunity to experiment with writing in a variety of situations, such as role-play. The children have a variety of opportunities for reading. At times they join in reading familiar words in the "Big Book", and at others they take turns during group reading activities that are led by the teacher. They are being taught a range of techniques for reading, such the use of illustrations for contextual clues. As they become more confident in the basic mechanics of reading, they need more time individually to develop their expression and ability to read for meaning.

51. More precise targets for reading are now needed in order to develop their skills at a quicker pace.

Mathematical development

52. The teaching of mathematics at this stage is good. The teacher ensures that the children become aware of the mathematical elements which feature in many of their activities. As a result, the children meet the goals identified for them by the time they begin year 1. A group of older reception boys were heard using the language of position and number quite fluently discussing the quantity and positioning of the Lego aeroplanes for the water plane airport they were planning. Another boy, holding aloft some small Lego wheels, declared 'I have got four now and if you give me two I will have six!' Many can count in tens to seventy because they have rehearsed this frequently. The nursery children can generally talk about how old they are and point to a given number of objects up to five. A group engaged in water play were fully aware of the concept of full and empty. The children very much enjoy singing a range of number rhymes, such as 'One potato, two potato', and become very animated when Mr Monkey is brought out to enliven their activities. By the time they complete the Foundation Stage, most children can describe a range of shapes such a cylinder, prism and cone. Some children can relate these to objects that have the same attributes as some of the shapes. They have made good progress in this aspect of their mathematical development because the teaching is lively and the concepts well developed through the use of everyday objects.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

53. Many of the children begin school having had positive experiences of the world around them. They make satisfactory progress and achieve the early learning goals by the time they begin year 1. This is because an appropriate range of activities helps them to develop their experience and awareness of many aspects of their world. Although some of the activities are stimulating, the range is not as broad as it could be. Some of the self-selected activities are not challenging enough and little use is made of the outdoor area to extend the range of activities on offer. For instance, the children have insufficient opportunity to carry out investigations and observations unless they attend an after-school Eco club. The nursery children are now using a programmable toy and taped stories are a regular component of their reading. However, the use of computers is not yet well established. During a science investigation to discover if objects would float or sink the children were very quick to identify and classify the various items into two groups. They respond well to work in religious education and respond to stories with a high level of interest and wonder, such as that about Jesus walking on the water. The nursery children have regular opportunities to cut, arrange and stick various materials to make collage pictures. Their control of tools, such as scissors and spatulas, is mostly good and they have a good range of construction skills with large and small equipment.

Physical development

54. The children have satisfactory opportunities to develop their physical control in vigorous activity at break times and through a range of activities requiring fine manipulative skills. They run around energetically, wriggle through canvas tunnels and play with a range of small equipment such as hoops and balls. The adults supervise these sessions diligently and comment on how the children are doing. However, their opportunities for more structured, challenging physical activities, both indoors and out, are insufficient. This is partly because in the planning insufficient reference is made to the early learning goals. The situation has improved a little since the last inspection and some good resources have been purchased, but the teacher is very aware of what still needs to be done to provide a richer curriculum.
55. The nursery children have access to a small outside play area, but it is not yet equipped to allow them to climb or slide. Wheeled vehicles are now available for break-time use, and the children enjoy pedalling and steering them in the playground. The children in the reception class now need very specific opportunities to develop their physical skills, for example, ball control and throwing and catching.
56. The adults encourage the children to use a range of small equipment, such as pencils and brushes, scissors, threading material and puzzles that develop their manipulative skills.
57. Most of the children are quite fit and agile and meet the goals identified for this stage. However, many have the capacity to exceed them if they are given appropriate opportunities.

Creative development

58. The self-selective activities are currently organised in a manner that does not provide a sufficient range of stimulating experiences at an appropriate level. The choices are too loose so the children often do not persist with their activity. The adults select certain children each day as a focus for assessment, notes of which are kept on a regular basis. In consequence, however, the adults' interaction with some groups is too little to fully extend the children's learning. Moreover, the assessments notes tend to be descriptive and are not used well identify the next stage of learning. There is a greater focus on 'one-off' activities than on the systematic planning of a series of activities that increase in challenge week by week.
59. Although the children make adequate progress towards achieving the early learning goals, those who have the capacity to exceed them are not sufficiently challenged.

ENGLISH

60. Standards in English are securely in line with the average by the end of Year 2 and above average by the end of Year 6 where most of the pupils are confident speakers, write well and can understand quite demanding texts. The pupils with special educational needs are making good progress because of the good extra support they receive.
61. The pupils' speaking and listening skills develop well. The children in Key Stage 1 talk logically about the books they read and engage the listener with their evaluative comments. For instance, a lower-attaining pupil in Year 2 gave a very confident and convincing reason why she enjoyed certain books by saying, 'It's got lots of characters,' and then she went on to provide examples. The older pupils are good listeners and their responses to questions are generally appropriate and interesting. They speak confidently because the relationships are very good and their contributions are valued. They also have a good range of vocabulary that they use well, for example, when they are explaining the meaning of text.
62. The development of reading is generally good. The school has reviewed its approach to the teaching of reading and has now established periods for silent reading, group reading, whole class shared reading and time when older pupils hear the pupils in year 1 read. However, the pupils said that they felt the need to be heard to read aloud more regularly on an individual basis. The pupils in Year 2 read with expression and fluency, but some in Year 6 displayed hesitation when reading fiction. They showed greater confidence in reading for information. The regular phonic work during Key Stage 1 establishes the pupils' ability to link sounds to letters at an early stage. It encourages them to sound out parts of unfamiliar words that they encounter. This continues into Years 3 and 4 because the teachers recognise that it is an important feature of reading and spelling. A key feature of the younger pupils' success with reading is the fact that they are very well supported at home. Their reading journals provide convincing evidence of regular and thoughtful involvement at home. A feature of the work in other subjects in Key Stage 2 is the frequency with which the pupils seek out information from books.
63. An analysis of the writing in Key Stage 1 shows strong signs of improvement. This is in part the result of more consistent planning across each class to ensure that a range of writing skills are taught and that the pupils' experiences become progressively more challenging. The children are developing fluency and control in their handwriting and many are showing increasing confidence in joining letters. Their improving skills are also the result of more systematic attention to sentence structure to make their writing more interesting. A very good example was seen in Year 2 where excellent teaching raised the pupils' awareness of how to elaborate their basic sentences through the use of adjectives and adverbs.
64. The pupils are being introduced to an appropriate range of writing when they move into Key Stage 2. For example, the letter writing skills developed in Year 3 and 4 are further extended when older pupils write letters of complaint and show that they can construct a clearly expressed, persuasive case. The pupils in Year 6 use their reading experiences well to acquire a range of lively vocabulary. They have

the confidence to experiment with a variety of sentence structures and use punctuation well to support their needs. For example, one pupil wrote, 'Sam was gazing out of the window, oblivious to what was going on!' Spelling levels are improving and overall are above average by the end of Year 6.

65. The teaching of literacy is good in most lessons and most of the teachers have high expectations of the pupils. The range of tasks is interesting and varied and the pupils are managed well as they engage in them. The planning is improving, but needs to take greater account of the assessment of the pupils' work to determine the next stage of learning and ensure a more accurate match between task and individual needs. This is particularly the case in the large Year 5 and 6 class where the range of pupils' needs is very diverse and the work is sometimes too difficult for some of the lower attaining pupils.
66. The pupils are enthusiastic about their work in literacy. The way the oldest pupils plan and refine their work provides evidence of their careful approach and awareness of the quality of their work. The teachers and support staff have a good level of knowledge about the various elements of the literacy strategy and have conscientiously sought to provide good resources to support the teaching and learning. A member of the senior management team has effectively led a review of the planning for literacy, and this has ensured a greater consistency in the teaching. Some of the good fiction resources could now be used more regularly as models to encourage the further development of the pupils' writing.

MATHEMATICS

67. Standards in mathematics are average overall and similar to those reported at the previous inspection. The National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented and standards have improved in the pupils' rapid recall of number facts and in their calculations. However, the pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to use and apply their knowledge and skills in problem solving situations. Consequently, not all of the pupils are attaining the levels they should. A small number of higher attaining pupils, however, are being supported by a mathematics teacher from the local secondary school to work at very high levels.
68. The strong emphasis on developing the pupils' recall of number facts, accurate calculation and appropriate use of mathematical vocabulary is proving effective. By the end of Year 2, the pupils have developed a bank of mathematical vocabulary that they use well. They work hard using different techniques, for example, when adding three two-digit numbers together and checking their calculations. The focus on number and calculations is maintained through Key Stage 2 and as a result standards are above average in this aspect of mathematics. However, the pupils have far fewer opportunities to handle data and solve problems. Consequently, their overall achievements in mathematics are not as good as they should be. These weaknesses are now being addressed. In the most recent work of the oldest pupils, there are good examples of challenging tasks that require the representation, extraction and interpretation of data. This type of investigative activity should now form an integral part of the mathematics curriculum in order to provide the pupils with frequent opportunities to use and apply their knowledge and skills.
69. The school provides a reasonable range of opportunities for the pupils to use their numeracy skills in other subjects of the curriculum, for example, measuring in design and technology, and drawing and using graphs in science. However, the use of information and communication technology in mathematics is unsatisfactory. The school's good facilities are not being used effectively to extend and enhance the pupils' mathematical learning.
70. The quality of the teaching and learning in the lessons observed was consistently good. The teachers now plan lessons that move at a brisk pace and contain tasks that are carefully modified for different groups. However, scrutiny of the pupils' work shows that this is not a consistent feature of lessons throughout the school. Some of the pupils' work shows there has not been sufficient modification of tasks to match their different needs. Similarly, general targets are set for pupils but they are not specifically tailored to meet their individual needs and to help them to improve. As a result, some pupils are not making good progress whilst others are. The pupils with special educational needs

make secure progress because the teaching assistants support them effectively. Relationships between pupils and adults are very good and this provides a very good platform for learning.

71. At the end of lessons, the teachers do not make the most of the opportunities offered by the whole-class sessions to assess the extent of the pupils' learning and to ascertain the next stage of learning. This highlights a weakness in the assessment strategy and explains why, in the pupils' completed work, some activities are not well matched to the pupils' needs.
72. The pupils behave well. They listen carefully to their teachers' instructions and concentrate on their work. They are very enthusiastic to improve their knowledge and in some classes pupils are disappointed when lessons end.
73. The school has good resources to support the teaching of mathematics and generally they are used well, particularly with pupils with special educational needs. Overall, the teachers have secure subject knowledge and show an enthusiasm for mathematics during lessons. However, the structures to support the teachers and manage the subject have until recently been weak. The co-ordinator has not been given the guidance and support to monitor the planning, the teaching and the quality of the pupils' work. Although she has reported to the governors, this has not been a regular feature of her role. The absence of effective monitoring and evaluation has had a negative impact on standards. The new headteacher is already monitoring the teachers' planning and through her practical and problem solving approach to teaching mathematics is bringing about improvements by example.

SCIENCE

74. Standards in science are average and are not as high as they should be. Attempts to improve provision for investigative science have not had an impact because of weaknesses in the monitoring and evaluation of the improvement activities. In addition, changes of staff, including the subject co-ordinator, have led to discontinuity both in the pupils' learning and in improvement activities. Some aspects of the science curriculum are not covered in sufficient depth to provide the pupils with the opportunity to attain higher standards. Although standards in science have been maintained since the previous inspection the rate of improvement has not been good enough.
75. Weaknesses in investigative science are being urgently addressed. In Years 5 and 6, most pupils now understand the requirements for setting up a fair test following a recent intensive focus on this important aspect of science. However, the lower attaining pupils remain unsure how the changing of a variable can allow them to conduct a fair test. A more open and rigorous approach to teaching this aspect of the curriculum is replacing the existing framework requiring structured writing. This is having a beneficial effect on all ability groups and is particularly effective with pupils with special educational needs. For example, in a Year 3 and 4 lesson about how muscles work in pairs by relaxing and contracting to move bones, the teaching assistant supported a group of special needs pupils to measure parts of their bodies when their limbs were extended and when they were bent. As a result, the pupils were able to see and understand this important aspect of human movement.
76. In the lessons seen during the inspection, the teaching ranged from very good to excellent. The teachers start their lessons by reviewing earlier work and setting out clearly what it is they want the pupils to learn. At the end of lessons, the teachers are now assessing the extent of the pupils' new learning, although this information is not routinely being used in the planning of the next stage of learning. However, the teachers plan their lessons thoroughly and encourage the pupils to work briskly, often within set time limits, so that learning moves along at a good pace. In an excellent Year 2 and 3 lesson, the pupils examined the parts of plants and recorded similarities and differences. This promoted effective learning as the pupils used their initiative and demonstrated a good deal independence in organising their work. The teacher matched the methods of recording to the pupils capabilities. One group rounded measurements up to the nearest centimetre whilst another group measured in centimetres and millimetres. Through these tasks, very good links with mathematics were reinforced. The subject knowledge of teachers is very good and allows them to provide interesting and challenging activities for the pupils.

77. The amount of recorded work in the pupils' exercise books is less than could be reasonably expected, but shows recent and rapid improvement. The pupils are already closing the gaps in their learning. Through measuring, drawing graphs and recording their data, the pupils have good opportunities to use their mathematical skills. However, there is insufficient use of information and communication technology in science.
78. Currently, there is no subject leader. The deputy headteacher has taken on interim responsibility and made a significant contribution to recent improvements, but is unable to give the time to the subject that is required. The weaknesses in science are a direct result of the absence of rigorous planning, monitoring and evaluation and improvement activities that have specific targets. The resources have improved since the last inspection and are now very good. The teaching is now very good, but the underlying structures remain flimsy. Consequently, improvements are needed in the monitoring and evaluation of the planning, teaching and standards the pupils attain.

ART AND DESIGN

79. The pupils' work on display around the school is of good quality and reflects the teachers' efforts in developing their aesthetic awareness. A portfolio of photographs of work in art provides evidence that above average standards in this subject have been maintained since the last inspection. The school enhances its provision by calling upon working artists and craftspeople so that the pupils gain a very good appreciation of the whole artistic design process. This was evident in the clay pots that the pupils had made, and also in the bamboo and tissue environmental sculptures.
80. In year 1, the quality of the pupils' work is above average. This is especially the case in relation to drawing because the pupils have been trained to observe very carefully and have used frames to develop interesting views of every day objects. In Year 2 the pupils have designed and made interesting batiks.
81. The art curriculum in Key Stage 2 is broad. The work on display encompasses work in different media and demonstrates that the pupils acquire a broad range of techniques and skills. They have opportunities to encounter art from different countries and from different periods. A good example was seen in the years 3 / 4 class where the pupils were looking at aboriginal art to extend their understanding of abstract art and symbolism. Although this provided many pupils with a considerable challenge, they developed some interesting symbols of their own to depict journeys. In Years 5 and 6 the pupils have produced observational drawings of architectural features of the local church. They have undertaken evaluations of their own drawings which will help them to improve their subsequent work. One child wrote, 'I could have used different hard and soft pencils, which would have shown the contrast in colours better'.
82. In the two art lessons observed, the teaching was good. In year 1, the teacher questioned the pupils particularly well at the end of the lesson to consolidate their learning and to ascertain what they had discovered about the use of colour. In Years 3 and 4 the teacher used her good subject knowledge to set interesting and challenging tasks for the pupils. Her discussion with them indicated that they are used to talking about art and artists and were referring to paintings and styles they have seen in previous lessons, such as Picasso and cubism.
83. The co-ordinator manages the subject effectively and ensures that art and design maintain an appropriate profile within the curriculum.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

84. Standards in design and technology have risen since the last inspection as a result of improved resources, in-service training and good subject management by the co-ordinator.
85. By the end of Year 2, the standards attained by the pupils are above average. Through focussed practical tasks they have disassembled packaging, analysed the information on its cover and used this to design their own packaging for Easter biscuits. The finished products show good making skills and

good use of information technology to produce the covers, for example, NESSY'S NUTTY NESTS. In Key Stage 2, the pupils further develop their skills, and by the end of Year 6 standards are also above average. Their preparation for their designs and their evaluations of the products they make are comprehensive and often good. For example, before making sandwiches they carried out comprehensive analysis of different types of bread and spreads before setting out a work plan of the ingredients and equipment they needed. Photographic evidence indicates that the products of their designs, such the sandwiches, slippers and structures, are also of good quality.

86. Only one design and technology lesson was seen, in Years 2 and 3, during the inspection. In this lesson, the teacher set out clear objectives for the different groups in the class. The pupils had access to a good range of resources to allow them to assemble a simple pneumatic system. The task set by the teacher motivated and interested the pupils and as a result they successfully controlled movement with the pneumatic systems they created from the components they had available.

GEOGRAPHY

87. Standards in geography are in line with the national expectations by the end of Year 2, but this sound start is not built on effectively and by the end of Year 6 standards are not as high as they should be. This is largely because some aspects of the geography curriculum are not covered in sufficient depth.
88. By the age of seven, the pupils show an increasing awareness of their own locality and are beginning to use some geographical vocabulary. They know their own addresses and illustrate where they live on simple maps. They plot their route to school and describe features that they see on their journey. The higher-achieving pupils make simple comparisons of the different environments, and they know, for example, the difference between natural and man-made features and materials. The pupils use pictures to record information, but have little opportunity to write about geographical topics.
89. By the age of eleven, the pupils extend their knowledge of maps through their work on mountains, but taken overall their mapping skills are underdeveloped and some are unable to extract sufficient information. Discussion with Year 6 pupils highlights that some have insecure knowledge of the physical features of their local environment and of a contrasting locality in the British Isles. They are also unsure of the main types of communication in their own area. Nevertheless, the pupils enjoy finding out about different parts of Britain and the world. They are curious and keen to develop new skills that will enable them to better understand the world they live in. For instance, the higher-achieving pupils can talk about the fauna and flora found in nearby Whixall Moss.
90. In the one lesson observed the quality of the teaching was satisfactory. The teacher reviewed the work covered in the previous lesson. Good use was made of reference books and atlases to help pupils locate different continents and to increase knowledge of maps. However, the task of finding mountain ranges and highest peaks within the ranges lacked challenge, particularly for higher achieving pupils. Consequently, this slowed down the pace of learning. Later in the lesson the teacher modified the tasks to meet the needs of pupils more closely and as a result the pace of learning improved.
91. Geography and history are taught in blocks of lessons. The gaps in time between these blocks also contribute to a lack of continuity in learning. Often some the pupils do not remember what they have learned in previous blocks of work and consequently these have to be reviewed, thereby slowing progress.
92. The resources for geography have improved and are now good. There is a good supply of atlases and other reference books and a range of globes to support learning. Every year, the pupils are involved in field trips and various interesting activities are planned for each visit.

HISTORY

93. Standards in history are not as high as they could be because some aspects of the curriculum are not covered in sufficient depth to allow the pupils to expand their knowledge and develop their skills to the level that is expected. Appropriate units of work are identified for both key stages and national

guidance has been increasingly referred to in order to provide support for the teachers' planning. The school recognises that this is an area for continuing development because the pupils are interested in the topics and have enjoyed some of their experiences, especially those enhanced by the presence of visitors.

94. The pupils in Key Stage 1 have compared aspects of domestic life in Victorian times with those of the present day. They recognise some of the external features of houses in the past, and know that kitchens have changed quite dramatically over the years. However, the potential of this unit of work to encourage the children to pose key historical questions has not been fully realised and the work recorded is consequently somewhat superficial. Similarly, the work on Roman Britain has not focused sufficiently on the underlying concept of "invaders" and "settlers", and in the pupils' recorded work, the differences between the Romans and the Celts were not highlighted. Work on the Egyptians reflected a better use of historical skills as the pupils made good use of resources such as the illustrations on cartouches and in tomb paintings to develop an appreciation of some aspects of the civilisation of ancient Egypt and its legacy. This topic was developed further by the oldest pupils and some of the skills they learned were applied to a study of the ancient Greeks. These pupils know how to research information about the lifestyle of ancient peoples but the range of resources and the scope of the activities are sometimes narrower than they could be. Many pupils had researched a considerable amount of material about the Olympic Games but had retained little knowledge or insight into other important aspects of ancient Greek civilisation.
95. At the present time, the pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of important historical processes and to systematically develop their historical skills as they move through the school. Some of the resources such as artefacts, specialist 'animateurs' and visits to places of interest, are used well, but as the pupils get older, there is too heavy a reliance upon the use of written material.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

96. Standards in information and communication technology are not as high as they should be by the time the pupils leave the school. In Key Stage 1 the pupils have a reasonable range of opportunities to use information technology and to develop their skills, but in Key Stage 2 they do not. In Year 5 and 6 the pupils are only just being introduced to spreadsheets and then in a very directed manner. At the present time, the pupils are not getting sufficient opportunities to experiment and try things out for themselves and to use information technology right across the curriculum. This is because some of the teachers do not have a broad enough knowledge of the subject. Many pupils are confident users of computers because they have access at home, but their skills and knowledge are not being built on effectively at school, particularly in Years 5 and 6.
97. There have been significant improvements in the school's facilities for information and communication technology since the last inspection. There is now a purpose built suite of computers which was opened earlier this year, but the teachers have not yet undertaken their New Opportunities Fund Training. Consequently, these very good facilities are not being used to the full.
98. In key stage, 1 the pupils are learning to use a range of applications and their skills are developing well. For example, they work with both text and images to produce simple illustrated stories and use graphing programs as part of their work in mathematics. In Year 2 they build on this and develop their use of image processing so that they create 'paintings', for example, in the style of Mondrian. In one lesson, the pupils were learning the importance of giving precise instructions when using LOGO, and were able to REPEAT instructions to draw simple shapes.
99. In Years 3 and 4, the pupils have used clip art to produce 'Victorian' patterns linked to their work in history. In Years 5 and 6 the pupils have used information they have found on the Internet to supplement their work on mountains in geography. At present, the 'timetabled' approach to teaching information technology skills is resulting in the pupils making slow progress because they are not having other opportunities to use and apply the skills they are taught in a range of contexts and in all subjects.

100. The co-ordinator is working to encourage greater use of information technology across the curriculum, but recognises that until the teachers develop a deeper knowledge and greater confidence progress will be slow. The new headteacher is now taking a weekly computer club and has started to work with pupils to create a school website.

MUSIC

101. The provision for music has improved because the planning of work ensures that all aspects of the curriculum are taught and that the pupils are more actively involved, for example, in performance and composition. The time allocation for music now permits more sustained work to take place.
102. The attainment at both key stages is now broadly in line with the national expectations. The youngest pupils can recognise and reproduce with their vocal sounds that are loud or quiet, high or low. Their sense of rhythm is improving as they beat on percussion instruments and use body percussion. They recognise that sounds in combination can reflect different moods to reflect, for example, changes in the weather. They are able to modify the mood of the rhyme 'Rain, Rain' to reflect happiness or sadness. At times, however, the singing of the youngest pupils in Key Stage 1 could be developed further by introducing contrasting songs to enable them to understand better how sounds can be changed. By the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils' articulation improves. During one lesson in Year 2, the pupils sang 'Bobby Bingo' and the chorus of 'Woman in a Churchyard' very tunefully and with clear diction because the teacher had focused on developing the predominant mouth shapes required. The early teaching of music is more confident because the teachers have been supported in the planning of their lessons.
103. Standards in Key Stage 2 meet expectations. A number of pupils play recorders well and perform on a variety of instruments that they learn during instrumental lessons. The lessons in Key Stage 2 are now satisfactorily organised to include an appropriate breadth and balance of activities. The oldest pupils learn to play chords as they perform traditional songs such as 'Daisy Bell' on a range of instruments. They show great enthusiasm and enjoy playing together because the teacher encourages them all to participate. They listen well in order to help each other through challenging moments. The good range of instruments available ensures that the pupils at all levels of ability in Years 5 and 6 are included in the practice and performance.
104. The teachers' knowledge and confidence in teaching music are growing. Improved planning and professional support are having a positive effect and helping to raise attainment. Some of the oldest pupils are already above-average performers and have creative ideas for composition work. They now need extension work that permits their skills to develop further. There is a good potential for music to become a more prominent feature of the life of the school. The singing during school worship is lively and tuneful and pupils speak with enthusiasm of the occasions when they sing with pupils from other schools.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

105. During the inspection, only one games lesson was observed. Consequently, judgements cannot be made about attainment in physical education.
106. In the lesson observed in Years 2 and 3, the pupils were very quickly ready to begin work and were fully aware of the need to warm up before beginning vigorous exercise. They worked hard on refining their throwing skills, and the teacher reminded them of the most effective ways of catching a ball. She stressed the importance of spreading fingers and clutching the ball to the chest when it is received. Through a range of activities, the pupils improved the accuracy of their throwing and their confidence in catching. The lesson was well planned and the quality of teaching was good.
107. The physical education curriculum is restricted by the accommodation. The hall is very small and hampers gymnastic activities, particularly for the older pupils. The school relies heavily on good weather for the pupils to be taught physical education outdoors. In discussion, the pupils report that they do not have PE when the weather is poor, but the teachers make up the time when the weather improves. Some parents expressed concerns about the school's provision for physical education

claiming that on too many occasions the activity has been cancelled. Discussion with older pupils indicates that the school does what it can to provide a safe range of activities for them.

108. The school provides the pupils in upper Key Stage 2 with weekly swimming instruction and tries to ensure that they all achieve their 25 metres qualification. The pupils speak enthusiastically about these sessions and many exceed the target of 25 metres. The teaching assistants with swimming expertise provide support for the higher-achieving pupils to refine their skills and for the less adventurous to become more confident in water. Parents, too, take turns to support the pupils and this has a positive effect upon the quality of the pupils' learning and progress.
109. After-school clubs provide very good extension of physical education activities. Staff and parents combine well to provide the pupils with a varied range of activities tailored to meet their interests and skill levels. Attendance at these activities is very high and reflects the obvious enjoyment of all participants.
110. Currently, there is no coordinator for physical education.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

111. The standard of the pupils' work is in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus, and similar to that seen at the last inspection. However, the teachers' knowledge of various aspects of the syllabus is growing and enabling them to adapt the material more skilfully to meet the needs of different groups of pupils.
112. The pupils in year 1 have a satisfactory knowledge of and enjoy hearing stories from the Bible. Their recorded work reflects sound knowledge of the story of Joseph and an understanding of some of the key ideas in the story of Noah. For instance, when asked why Noah was so confident in building and boarding the ark the children in year 1 promptly responded, 'He believed in God,' and 'He trusted God!' This emerged from a well-structured discussion in which the teacher encouraged the pupils to share their ideas frankly. The pupils in Key Stage 1 are becoming quite familiar with aspects of world faiths, such as celebrations, special clothing and holy objects, such as the saffron robes of Buddhist monks, the symbolic clothing worn by Sikhs and Muslim prayer beads.
113. The teachers are very aware of how religious education contributes to the pupils' spiritual and moral development. This was evident when the pupils in Year 6 recorded their observations of the balance between rights and responsibilities and the moral significance of keeping promises. This work is often complemented by discussions during lessons in personal, social and health education. For example, work on the special requirements for handling the Qu'ran was enhanced by discussion of the importance of respecting the differences between people. The older pupils have a secure knowledge of some of the principal features of Islam and Sikhism and a more detailed understanding of the practices associated with Christianity.
114. The teachers conscientiously prepare their lessons so that the pupils' knowledge and understanding develops from one stage to the next. A good range of resources has been acquired. For example, boxes of artefacts enable the pupils to see at first hand a range of materials used for celebrations in different faiths. Although the teaching is satisfactory overall, some of the activities used to follow discussions rely too often on writing or drawing and are not sufficiently imaginative. Too little use is made of, for example, role-play activities to enliven the pupils' learning. The pupils' progress is assessed informally, but the assessment is neither rigorous enough nor used to influence the planning of subsequent activities.