

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **NETHERFIELD INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL**

Meden Vale, Mansfield

LEA area: Nottinghamshire

Unique reference number: 122498

Headteacher: Mrs J M Clark

Reporting inspector: Mr David A Hill  
3692

Dates of inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> May 2002

Inspection number: 195894

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

© Crown copyright 2002

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Netherfield Lane Meden Vale Mansfield Nottinghamshire
Postcode:	NG20 9PA
Telephone number:	01623 842683
Fax number:	01623 842683
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Zillwood
Date of previous inspection:	June 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
03692	Mr D A Hill	Registered inspector	English Science Geography History Music Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
14214	Ms G Smith	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
21858	Revd J Pryor	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Mathematics Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Physical education Religious education Special educational needs	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

The inspection contractor was:

Bench Marque Limited  
National Westminster Bank Chambers  
Victoria Street  
Burnham-on-Sea  
Somerset  
TA8 1AN

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>10</b>
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>25</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school is located in the Meden Valley, northeast of Mansfield, Nottinghamshire and receives the majority of its pupils from the immediate surrounding area. Pupils live in a mixture of housing; council, rented, housing association and private. Meden Vale was originally a colliery village but with the decline in the coal industry, only a small proportion of parents work at the local colliery. There are at present 104 full-time pupils (45 boys and 59 girls) and 47 part-time nursery children. The roll has shown a small decline since the last inspection. There are two pupils of ethnic minority origin; there are no pupils with English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils eligible to receive free school meals (22 per cent) is above the national average. Twelve pupils have been assessed as having special educational needs. Attainment on entry into the nursery, for the majority of children, is very low. The school aims to promote the ideal of lifelong learning throughout the community and is most successful in helping parents and members of the community acquire new skills and knowledge. Most parents increasingly recognise the importance of home and school working closely together for the benefit of the child. This is a community school in the truest sense.

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

This is a very good school where pupils make good progress. Children in the nursery and reception are given a very good start to school. Standards are rising and pupils achieve good standards in reading and in mathematics. At least satisfactory standards are achieved in all other subjects. The quality of teaching overall is very good. Pupils are keen learners, have positive attitudes, enjoy coming to school and their behaviour is of a very good standard. The management of pupils throughout the school is excellent. Pupils with special educational needs have very good provision made for them and they make good progress. Leadership and management are of a high order; the headteacher is well supported by the governors who are very aware of the strengths of the school and the areas for development. The school lives up to its claim of being a true community school by providing parents with excellent support. This is a fully inclusive school with a very strong family atmosphere.

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

- Gives pupils an excellent start through the high quality of provision in the Foundation Stage.
- Raises levels of pupils' achievements in all areas.
- Teaching is very good with teachers being well supported by well-trained learning support assistants.
- Special educational needs pupils make good progress through the provision made for them.
- Leadership and management by the headteacher are excellent, well supported by governors and staff.
- Personal development, relationships and behaviour of pupils are excellent.

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

- Standards in writing across the curriculum.
- More opportunities for pupils to further develop their knowledge and skills in the foundation subjects.
- The use of information and communication technology across the curriculum.
- Standards attained by potentially higher attaining pupils.

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

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

There have been substantial improvements since the last inspection in June 1997. Since then, standards in English, mathematics and science for pupils aged seven have risen. The current pupils in Year 2 are attaining good standards in reading, mathematics and science, better than at the time of the last inspection. Standards have improved in art and design, music, religious education and information and communication technology. In the other subjects they are the same as they were in 1997. The overall quality of teaching has substantially improved and, unlike the last inspection, no unsatisfactory teaching now occurs. Provision for pupils with special educational needs has also improved; written plans for

learning support assistants when working with these pupils indicate clear and precise objectives. Progress of these pupils is assessed regularly with individual education plans monitored, reviewed and modified on a termly basis. Curriculum co-ordinators have regular opportunities to observe lessons for their subjects with notes made and staff discussion on areas for development so that teaching and learning are constantly improving. There is an increased provision of computers in classrooms. The outdoor play area in the nursery is an exciting place for children to learn with a wide variety of activities. All the key issues identified in the last inspection report have been responded to in depth and there have been other significant developments, arising from the school development/improvement plan.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
reading	C	A	C	B
writing	D	C	D	C
mathematics	D	A	D	C

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

The results in 2001 were affected by the relatively high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and those born in the summer months who had spent less time in school. The current Year 2 pupils are doing much better in reading. They continue to find writing more difficult, although standards are average. The most able pupils do not always achieve as well as they could do. In mathematics, current indications are that standards have risen and are now higher than those nationally expected. Standards in science are satisfactory with good standards in investigative work. In religious education, art and design and information and communication technology, standards are good. In the work seen in other subjects standards are satisfactory overall. Children in the reception and nursery make very good progress and many are on course to achieve their early learning goals. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, although their attainment at seven years of age continues to be generally below average.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and enjoy school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good at all times.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are excellent. Pupils' personal development is good and they respond well to the demands placed upon them.
Attendance	The attendance rate is at the national average.

The school provides a safe, secure, caring environment where the contribution of pupils is valued. Pupils automatically consider the needs of others, especially during lunchtime and playtime. They listen respectfully to each other's views and opinions. Monitoring of attendance is very thorough. Procedures for monitoring behaviour are very successful

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Teaching of pupils in:</b>	<b>Nursery and Reception</b>	<b>Years 1 – 2</b>
Quality of teaching	Very 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 overall quality of teaching is good in English and mathematics, with some very good teaching in both subjects. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed during the inspection. The vast majority of lessons are well structured. The management of pupils is excellent and teachers' relationships with pupils are first class. Questions are used well to promote learning but, in a few instances in Years 1 and 2, expectations of above average pupils could be higher. Assessments are well carried out and used effectively to help pupils further improve their work. Pupils with special educational needs have well-structured individual education plans, which assist in helping them to make good progress. A feature of the good teaching is the help given by the learning support assistants, who are seen very much as part of the teaching team. Teaching is also assisted by the support of parents, especially in reading with their children.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a rich and varied curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The school has made considerable progress in this aspect.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are no pupils with English as an additional language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall provision is excellent, especially for spiritual, moral and social development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The overall care is very good.

The curriculum is well planned and designed to enable all pupils make progress. The school cares for the wellbeing of all its pupils. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are very good and, in most cases, provide useful guidance when lessons are planned. Partnership with parents is a real strength and aids considerably the learning.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the school by the headteacher is excellent and the school is very well managed. She is ably supported by all staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and areas for development. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities well and give excellent support to the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school carefully evaluates its teaching, learning and pupils' progress and attainment and uses this information to set targets for both individual pupils and year groups.
The strategic use of resources	Financial control is very efficient and good use of funding is being made to help the school improve further.

Staffing and accommodation are very good. Although resources are good, there is a need to improve these in a few subjects. The school is built on different levels but pupils cope well with this. Principles of best value are applied well; the school provides very good value for money.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children enjoy coming to school.</li> <li>• Teaching is very good and children are expected to work hard.</li> <li>• There is no misbehaviour.</li> <li>• The headteacher is held in particularly high regard.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are no particular areas for concern.</li> </ul>

Over 60 per cent of the questionnaires were returned, a very high rate, with all parents being very pleased with every aspect of the school's work. A few parents expressed slight concern at the quality of written work, a view endorsed by the inspection team. The parents are well informed about the life of the school and feel they are fully included in decisions affecting their children.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. When they start in the nursery most children's social skills are average, their physical development is below average and their language development and number skills are well below those normally found. Over the last three years almost all children have been assessed as below average, with one-third well below in language development and three-quarters well below in number. Given this very low baseline, pupils have achieved well to reach the average levels in English and above average in mathematics in the national tests for seven-year-olds. Although the trend over the last four years is somewhat variable, overall improvement is at a greater rate than that found nationally and, in 2001, the school's results compared well with those in similar schools. In 2001, more children with special educational needs and more summer-born children took the tests. Overall standards in English in the current Year 2 are higher in reading and similar in writing to those in 2001. Standards in speaking and listening are similar to those found nationally. They are above average in mathematics. There is scope for the more able pupils to be challenged further in their writing and for all pupils to move from the 2C level to at least the 2B level. This is presently one of the main targets for the school. Standards in mathematics have also fluctuated and, in 2001, were below those for schools nationally having been well above in 2000. In 2001, standards in mathematics were in line with similar schools.
2. Pupils in Year 2 attain above average teacher assessments in science. In the work seen in Year 2, standards in English, mathematics and science have improved since the time of the last inspection when they were average. In the past there have been significant differences between the attainment of girls and boys, with boys outperforming girls. The gap has narrowed and there is little difference in attainment and achievement. Apart from the nursery, each class has more girls than boys, the ratio being three boys to four girls. Whilst this does not explain the gender differences in attainment, the school has become very aware of this and analyses carefully test data associated with class gender balance, age of pupils, mobility, ethnicity and special educational needs provision.
3. Children in the nursery make rapid progress and this continues in the reception class. They achieve especially well in their personal, social and emotional development and make good progress in the other areas of learning, especially in their creative development and in communication skills and mathematical development. Most children attain the early learning goals in physical development by the time they enter Year 1. In language and mathematical development, home/school liaison plays a crucial role in raising parental levels of expectation of their role in reading together with their children.
4. The teaching in English in Years 1 and 2 is consistently good. Pupils in Year 2 participate well in class discussions and listen attentively to the views of others. They have a good knowledge of letter sounds and word-building skills, but have difficulty in listening carefully to the whole word. However, although this hampers their spelling, progress in reading is very good, aided by the emphasis the school places on involving parents with reading with their children at home. Progress in writing is slower and, although the school places emphasis on teaching different forms of writing, pupils find difficulty in writing independently, especially when they do not have writing models before them. Punctuation is used well but handwriting, presentation and spelling require attention. Information and communication technology (ICT) is underused, with few suitable programmes available nationally.

5. Progress in mathematics is very good in Years 1 and 2. Teaching pupils in ability sets is making a major contribution to the progress pupils are making. Pupils are developing a good knowledge and understanding of number, shape and measures. The use of ICT to support learning is not as advanced as it could be.
6. The overall amount of science work seen in Years 1 and 2 was at the level for pupils of this age. Pupils are making good progress overall, especially in investigative work.
7. In general, standards in most other subjects are in line with expectations for pupils' ages and have been maintained or improved since the last inspection. There have been significant improvements in religious education, where the range of topics studied is broader and more attention is being paid to the religious significance of events and stories. Improvements have also taken place in ICT, largely brought about by the increased confidence of staff. Standards in physical education are at least satisfactory, with pupils gaining increasing confidence in swimming.
8. In art and design, observational painting and drawing is of a good standard and, in music, the quality of singing is good. Progress in geography and history, whilst satisfactory, is hindered by a lack of curriculum time for further development.
9. Pupils are achieving well because of effective teaching, careful monitoring of standards, targets set which are demanding, work with parents and the good use of learning support assistants. The school has understandably concentrated on raising the levels of attainment of the average and below average pupils and has been successful in this. However, lesson plans need to refer to learning opportunities for higher attaining pupils in order to increase numbers obtaining higher levels.
10. Pupils with special educational needs have very good provision and make good progress, especially when working in a very small group with either their class teacher or a learning support assistant. There are careful tracking systems in which the level of need is ascertained, with progress being monitored closely. As a result, pupils move to a lower level of need, indicating success in the teaching and learning. The very few pupils from ethnic minorities make good progress.

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

11. The last inspection found that pupils had good attitudes to their work and were polite and well behaved. Over the intervening five years, this already positive picture has improved further. Children in the nursery and older pupils now have very good attitudes to school and to their work. Pupils' personal development is excellent and they relish taking part in the wide range of opportunities that is available. Relationships between the pupils and with adults are excellent. Overall attendance is very similar to the national average and there are few unauthorised absences.
12. A high proportion of parents returned the pre-inspection questionnaire and almost all agree that their children enjoy coming to school. Parents also feel that their children work hard and that they are well behaved. Their confidence is very well placed. Teachers are very clear in their expectations of behaviour and work and address the pupils with the respect and consideration they deserve. Pupils respond warmly and their very positive approach to learning helps to create a lively and vibrant atmosphere. The standard of teaching is very good and, by presenting lively and interesting lessons, teachers create a purposeful atmosphere that is very conducive to learning. During lessons, pupils of all ages settle down quickly and work very hard. They listen carefully to their teacher and persevere with work they find difficult. A particular feature of this school is the infectious enthusiasm of its teachers and the way in which they inspire a genuine zest for learning. For example, during a geography lesson, pupils in Years 1 and 2 were asked to compare life in Meden Vale with a town in Mexico. By making the

lesson really exciting, the pupils were totally engrossed in thinking of things that both settlements had in common, as well as possible differences.

13. Pupils behave very well during the school day. They are confident, outgoing and very friendly. Relationships between pupils and with adults are excellent. Pupils sense that their teachers genuinely want them to do well and each is comfortable in the other's company. For example, one pupil eagerly pointed out to his teacher that she had omitted a question mark at the end of a sentence. This was long before she had even had the chance to ask her class about her deliberate 'mistake'! Pupils of all ages mix freely and they are well mannered and polite. The pupils' behaviour during lunchtime and playtime is very good and pupils automatically consider each other's needs. The very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds benefit from the school's very successful policy of social and educational inclusion. All pupils get along well together and play a full part in the day-to-day life of the school. There are very few incidents of bullying or any other anti-social behaviour. There have been no exclusions for many years.
14. Pupils respond exceptionally well to the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their personal development is excellent. As they move through the school, nursery children and older pupils become increasingly mature and perceptive. For example, during a lesson when Year 1 and 2 pupils were talking about their feelings, they respected the rules of the group and allowed everyone to make an equal contribution. As part of the Meden Vale 2000 project, pupils have helped to design a mosaic that now forms part of the new community garden. They also contributed to designs for the school playground. Participation in the many extra-curricular activities is very good. Pupils visit nearby places of interest. They undertake outdoor activities, such as river walks and these experiences encourage pupils to use their initiative and to become increasingly independent. Pupils of all ages willingly undertake a wide range of responsibilities, such as helping to distribute the class registers and tidying away equipment at the end of lessons.
15. Overall attendance is similar to the national average and the level of unauthorised absence is less than half the national average. Pupils usually arrive in good time for the start of the school day and lessons get off to a prompt start. When pupils are absent, it is usually because they have been ill or have had a medical appointment. Some of the unauthorised absences, however, are the result of pupils being taken on family holidays during the school term. Although these absences do not usually exceed the annual ten-day maximum, they inevitably mean that the pupils concerned miss out on the work that is undertaken by the rest of their class. This could place them at a disadvantage in the future.

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

16. The quality of teaching during the inspection was very good overall and much improved since the last inspection. It was very good or better in half of the lessons and no unsatisfactory lessons were seen.
17. Of the six teachers in the school, three have less than four years' experience, one a newly qualified teacher. All have been trained to teach primary or nursery age groups and two have gained further teaching qualifications. Staff absence is rare. This is a highly professional staff who constantly strive to improve their own teaching through in-service training, classroom observations and discussion during staff meetings. The take-up of in-service opportunities is impressive.
18. Teaching in the nursery and reception classes is of consistent very good quality. Pupils are managed very well and have access to a full range of rich learning opportunities. Teaching is a little more formal in the reception class as the children develop their skills

of reading, writing and counting. This shows the thought given to the progression of learning in the early years and is entirely appropriate. Because of the very good teaching, most children are on course to have advanced towards achieving the goals for learning expected when they enter Year 1. Given their skills on entry into the school, the children make very good progress, especially in their personal, social and emotional development.

19. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are implemented effectively in Years 1 and 2. Almost all the teaching seen was either good or better. Pupils' reading skills are particularly well taught and they are given a thorough grounding in phonics. The attention given to introducing pupils to a wide range of texts, both fiction and non-fiction, the use of 'big books' during literacy lessons, guided reading sessions and the very good quality of dialogue between teachers and parents over a pupil's reading competence, results in standards which are higher than those normally found. Pupils' writing skills are developing more slowly. They are given good opportunities to write in different forms but not enough attention is given to spelling, punctuation and presentation. Evaluation of the setting arrangements for extended writing should indicate how successful this is in raising standards in writing. Inspection evidence suggests that the separation of extended writing from the class literacy lessons is not making a significant contribution to raising standards. There are also not enough opportunities for writing across the curriculum and for pupils to write from direct experience. Effective questioning at the beginning of lessons is a feature of all of the teaching, thus ensuring a good pace to the lesson and sustaining pupils' interest. Many opportunities are provided for discussion and the very good grounding in listening skills in the Foundation Stage means that the majority of pupils listen carefully to what is being said. For the minority who find listening difficult, the school is addressing this through a variety of strategies, such as 'Talking Partners' during which pupils are taught how to listen with care. The National Numeracy Strategy has also been implemented well. Work is planned in detail and, as in the other areas in the curriculum, shared with the support staff who are expected to comment on the success or otherwise of the lesson and to make assessments of the progress of their designated pupils. This is an invaluable strategy used in both literacy and numeracy lessons by all teachers and which gives added status to the support staff. Teachers have a very good grasp of the structure of the numeracy session and teach mathematics with enthusiasm and enjoyment. ICT is underused to support pupils' learning in mathematics.
20. Teaching is consistently never less than good in science, ICT and religious education. Well-planned opportunities for pupils to investigate scientific processes, increasing confidence in the use of ICT, and the use of drama in religious education, contribute to the standards being attained. A range of teaching methods is used to ensure all pupils are included in the activities and that pupils are interested in what they are doing. There is no evidence of misbehaviour in class due to boredom, as pupils make a considerable effort to improve their knowledge and skills. At times, more could be expected from potentially higher attaining pupils, especially in the amount of work covered in the foundation subjects. Assessment generally is used well to help pupils further improve their work and there are many examples of good practice, such as the instant recording of progress made in skills and knowledge.
21. A major contributing factor to improving the quality of teaching and learning is the quality of the school's monitoring systems. Lessons have been observed in all classes and written appraisals made on the success of the lesson. These observations are carried out by the headteacher, subject co-ordinators and external agencies and reports are made available to all teachers who are observed with 'points to consider' in order to further improve the teaching. The positive attitudes of staff to advice given was very evident during the inspection. Staff were eager to know how they might further improve their teaching.

22. The quality of teaching of special educational needs pupils is evident in the good progress they make. This is seen as a result of the appropriate personal targets for pupils which are focused on what they need to learn next. Most lesson plans indicate how these needs are to be met, although there are times when some of them are not specific enough. Good quality learning support is provided in class and in appropriate withdrawal settings. There is some evidence of ICT being used to support pupils with special educational needs but this strategy is underused.

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

23. The school provides a rich and varied curriculum for all its pupils. The wide range of stimulating activities provided in the nursery for the youngest children is very well-chosen giving them an experience of all the nationally recommended areas of learning, and enabling them to make good progress towards the expected early learning goals. This breadth of experience and progress is maintained, and the levels of work extended, during the reception year so that many are ready to begin the National Curriculum by the time they move into Year 1. Some pupils, who have made very good progress, are taught aspects of the National Curriculum before they leave the reception class. The pupils aged from five to seven undertake all the subjects required by the National Curriculum. Additional recommended subjects such as swimming, which is not a requirement until they are older, and personal, social and health education with citizenship enrich this. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities covering ICT and sport provided either by members of staff or bought in by the school from external providers. This demonstrates the importance placed by the staff and governing body upon providing a broad curriculum which extends the pupils' experience of life.
24. The school has been energetic in adopting, and making very good use of, the nationally recommended strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy. This has had a beneficial effect on the teaching, the pupils' enjoyment and achievements and the standards they have attained, in these subjects. The same is happening with ICT which is being energetically developed. The extensive and successful efforts made in these national initiatives has had a somewhat negative impact on the emphasis put on certain other subjects, such as geography and history. This has resulted in the already satisfactory standards achieved by the pupils in these subjects not improving at the same rate as those in mathematics or English. There is too little time made available for studies in many of these subjects resulting in insufficient opportunities to practise language and mathematical skills across the curriculum.
25. The school makes an early identification of pupils with special educational needs, and the good quality provision for their support is well managed. The parents are fully involved in decisions about how best their children can be supported. The teachers, who are sensitive to their needs, provide well-constructed individual education plans, and the well-trained and motivated support staff help the pupils to achieve well. The school makes good use of helpful outside agencies when it is appropriate and they are available.
26. The curriculum is broadened and enriched by the very good provision for extra-curricular activities. These include football training, a computer club, an environmental/conservation club and the Community Garden Project; educational visits are made to Nottingham Museum and castle, Southwell Minster, and to Perlethorpe Environmental Centre. Visitors to the school include the Quantum Science Theatre and a storyteller. Foundation Stage pupils have a writing pack provided to help them to develop writing skills at home. The reception pupils have a mathematics pack as well so that both subjects are supported. Years 1 and 2 pupils have a writing box to help develop their writing skills. The school very clearly lives up to its belief that everyone is

special by ensuring that every child in the school profits from what is provided, and that no child is disadvantaged or prevented from benefiting from what is on offer.

27. The school's provision for the pupils' personal, social and health education is very good indeed. The Healthy School programme provides a formal focus for this. The pupils' social development is very well provided for in the Foundation Stage and continues throughout the school as a major element in its life and work. This results in the excellent relationships which are a prominent feature of the school's life.
28. The school is a very good example of a community school that is true to its name. There is a very strong involvement in adult education and training programmes provided for the local community, these are steadily developing in co-operation with a number of outside bodies. The community supports the school in many ways including the local charity shop, the local chapel and the partnership centre, which are all involved. The school has good relationships with the playgroup, and a group of similar schools. They combine to develop teachers' skills, and in the provision of extra learning opportunities. Senior students from the local comprehensive school help run the computer club. Relationships with the adjoining junior school are being developed.
29. Overall the provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. This is a central element in the school's view of itself as a very caring institution where everybody is valued. The staff share the headteacher's strong commitment to developing the pupils' sense of self-worth through the development of excellent personal relationships within the school. Collective worship and sharing assemblies provide clear occasions for spiritual development of a religious character. Within subjects and through the modes of teaching employed, the pupils' sense of worth and spiritual development is enhanced by, for example, thinking and talking about what is important to them in 'circle time' which are periods of well-managed open discussion. In subjects such as art and design and design and technology, in singing songs and listening to stories the pupils are given opportunities for self-expression and occasions for thinking about things that puzzle or delight them.
30. The provision for the pupils' moral and social development is also excellent. It begins in the nursery and is continued throughout the school in the very good management of the pupils' behaviour. The explanations they are offered as to why some actions are acceptable and others are not, together with the challenge for them to understand the reasons behind people's behaviour adds to this. The need for compassion and understanding of one another is clearly shown in the way in which everyone in the school community relates to one another. The pupils are helped to understand fairness in human relationships, and to go beyond fairness to understand why in some cases people need different treatment because of their varying needs.
31. The provision for the pupils' cultural development is very good. They are given insights into their own culture, for example from the regular singing of nursery rhymes and traditional songs. Pupils look at pictures by great European painters and copy their colours or style. They hear and read stories from a number of British and European traditions as well as from the wider world. Religious education and geography provide some insights into the lives and values of people from cultures different from the pupils' own. Their experience of these is not as extensive as the provision for the other aspects of this part of their education but they are aware of the richness brought by other cultures to Britain.

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

32. All members of staff share a wholehearted and sincere commitment to pupils' welfare. They work very closely as a team in order to ensure that the pupils are very well looked after during the school day. The standard of personal support and guidance provided is

outstanding and the time pupils spend at school is happy and enjoyable. Lunchtime supervisors play an important part in promoting good behaviour. Children joining the nursery receive a very warm welcome and this helps them to settle in quickly. All members of staff are familiar with child protection procedures and arrangements are very good. Routine health and safety procedures are in place and they comply fully with current legislation and with local authority guidelines.

33. The school is keen to recognise and celebrate pupils' academic success. Teachers consistently praise pupils' improvements and achievements. Pupils value the stars and stickers they receive and are proud to have their efforts acknowledged during the weekly achievement assembly.
34. Assessments are regularly made of pupils' progress and are used to modify and guide both the long and medium-term planning. For example, analysis of writing has led to pupils being set by ability for extended writing lessons. Assessments also guide the setting of targets for both the school as a whole and for individual pupils. Good records are kept of all assessments. Those for pupils with special educational needs are detailed and kept scrupulously up-to-date. All staff are fully aware of the academic and personal needs of these pupils, the individual education plans being used as working documents.
35. Although the monitoring of pupils' personal development is largely informal, procedures are very good. Relationships between pupils and members of staff are excellent and teachers are very sensitive to pupils' 'ups and downs'. This helps to ensure that any emerging personal or academic problems are identified and addressed at an early stage. During lessons, classroom assistants regularly monitor the way in which pupils respond during lessons and teachers use this information to see how each individual is developing. In this way, teachers are able to keep a close eye on pupils' personal development and on the standard of their work.
36. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting behaviour are straightforward, but very effective. They vary from verbal praise to the award of smiley faces or stickers to those who do particularly well. Procedures for eliminating bullying and other oppressive behaviour are outstanding. Such incidents are very rare and, if they occur, they are dealt with in a constructive manner that ensures that they do not recur. Racial harmony is very good and related incidents are very rare. This is a testament to the school's very successful policy for educational and social inclusion.
37. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good. Teachers complete the class registers carefully and accurately and the information is then transferred onto computer. This helps the school to track the attendance of individual pupils and to follow up any unexplained absences. Pupils with particularly good attendance are awarded stickers or certificates and the education welfare officer visits twice a year in order to check the registers. The school regularly reminds parents of the importance of regular attendance and discourages them from booking holidays during the term. A significant number of parents, however, continue to do so and this inevitably means that their children miss out on the work that the rest of the class undertakes.

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

38. This school places great emphasis on working closely with parents and views a close partnership between home and school as being absolutely fundamental to its work. The last inspection found the partnership between home and school was very good and that parents' help and support was instrumental in raising the standard of their children's work. This very positive picture has not only been maintained over the intervening five years, it has improved further. The partnership between home and school is now excellent and links with parents are used most constructively. Parents offer generous



practical and financial help and their wholehearted support helps to ensure that most children attend regularly, work hard and do their utmost to achieve their very best.

39. Views expressed by those who attended the pre-inspection parents' meeting and by those who returned the questionnaire are exceptionally positive. There are no particular areas of concern and parents are very pleased with every aspect of the school's work. They see the school as being at the heart of their community and are delighted that their children get off to such a good start. Over 60 per cent of the questionnaires were returned and this very high rate of return reflects the tremendous interest that parents take in their children's education. Every single parent who returned the questionnaire indicated that they think that the standard of teaching is high and that they would feel comfortable approaching the school with a suggestion or concern. The headteacher in particular is very well liked and she inspires tremendous loyalty and support among both the parents and the local community.
40. The school provides a convenient venue for a wide range of adult education courses and many parents appreciate being able to gain qualifications that help them in their working lives. Parents feel very much at home in the school and their involvement in their children's learning brings many benefits. They ensure that their children attend regularly and complete their homework on time. Consultation meetings and open evenings are very well attended. The school makes it as easy as possible for parents to come along to such meetings and often provides crèche facilities so that younger siblings can be looked after. Parents regularly read with their children at home and keep their children's records fully up to date. They often write useful comments about how their child is getting on and this joint approach ensures that pupils make good progress with their reading. Although there is no official parents' organisation, parents are always ready and willing to provide practical and moral support when it is needed. Despite the best efforts of the school, however, some parents book holidays during the school term and this means that their children miss out on the work that the rest of the class is undertaking. Such absences disrupt their children's education and disadvantage them.
41. The school keeps parents very well informed about the progress that their child is making. Pupils' annual reports are very clearly written and provide a comprehensive picture of how each individual is getting on, subject by subject. They also detail individual strengths and provide specific guidance on how each child can improve particular areas of their work in the future.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

42. The leadership and management of the school by the headteacher are of a very high order. She is most ably assisted by the senior management team and other teaching staff and by the strong governing body. The efforts of all have led to significant improvements which have been made since the last inspection. Of particular note is the work which has been undertaken with parents and the community to achieve the aim of being a true community school in its broadest sense. The care and attention given to each pupil to do their best at all times and to consider others, stems directly from the lead given by the headteacher throughout the school, particularly so during assemblies.
43. The skills of the headteacher are well complemented by those of the senior management team. They have a clear commitment to the school and a shared vision for its future. Formal meetings with all staff are held weekly when progress with the school development plan is discussed and the progress of individual pupils is monitored. Although not all learning support assistants attend these meetings, because of other commitments, they are made to feel very much part of the team and their contribution to debate and discussion is valued. In this way, a coherent approach and a joint understanding of developments is in place, with all staff feeling their views are taken into account and that they have ownership of the developments taking place.
44. The governing body gives excellent support to the headteacher and staff. It is fully committed to the aims of the school, is knowledgeable about its strengths and also about areas for development. There is a full governing body in place, many governors also being parents. Their statutory duties are fully accounted for and they play an active role in the life of the school and help in shaping the direction of the school by careful questioning and probing reasons for certain initiatives. The full governing body meets regularly to receive reports by the headteacher, hear presentations by members of staff, especially in relation to the curriculum, and consider reports from the two sub-committees. This keeps them very well informed about all matters concerning standards and quality.
45. Very careful watch is kept of the financial situation, especially at present as the roll is falling. Appropriate financial contingency arrangements have been made and, whilst the present carry forward of 15 per cent is large, it is appropriately earmarked for use next year to maintain staffing levels and the number of teaching support staff as numbers will fall for one year. In addition, new equipment is on order to enhance the use of ICT. Governors have also been allotted to curriculum areas to which they take an especial interest, participating in monitoring activities with the curriculum co-ordinators. The governors commented, in discussion with inspectors, that they feel very much part of the team being fully involved in the life of the school.
46. The school is also well supported by the local authority with regular visits made by the link inspector, literacy consultant and community services within the district. The school has found the school improvement reports particularly helpful. It is noted within them that the school has been in the vanguard locally in the use of assessment data and the setting of targets for individual pupils.
47. Performance management is well established and all teachers have targets. Lessons are observed regularly in the core subjects and time is set aside for future monitoring of foundation subjects. The school development plan is a working document, being constantly reviewed and updated, as observed by the notes made against each section. The school improvement plan for 2002-2003 recognises the latest research into learning and developments are planned for science, writing, ICT, numeracy and the Foundation Stage curriculum. Planned developments, although ambitious, are achievable and cover all aspects of the life of the school. The plan stresses the need to

improve the quality of writing with a very thorough analysis of results of the strategy tests and an appraisal of the effect of setting arrangements for writing. This is a well-considered focus, given the current standards in writing.

48. The school is on target to implement the changes in the new Special Educational Needs Code of Practice. Already pupils are placed in the appropriate categories of School Action and School Action Plus. The special educational needs co-ordinator has her own budget, is a member of the senior management team and has a time allocation to support her work. However, as this is a small school with staff having wide responsibilities, the special educational needs co-ordinator has other responsibilities. She is very well supported by the governor with specific responsibility for special needs. Liaison with outside agencies is excellent, the school psychologist submitting a paper to the inspection team to show the very beneficial relationship which exists between the school and the school psychology service.
49. The school is well staffed with a mixture of experienced and recently qualified staff, all of whom have been specifically trained for the age group within the school. Induction arrangements for new staff are clear and are contributing well to ensuring all staff feel included in the wellbeing of the pupils and share in the commitment to succeed. A major strength is the quality of the learning support assistants, who have been well trained and encouraged to develop further their knowledge and understanding by attending courses leading to formal qualifications. Administration support is excellent, giving the headteacher and teachers more time to spend in teaching and the minimum time on administration duties. The Investor in People Award report comments on the high standard of inclusion of all staff and the training they receive.
50. Accommodation is very good, especially the nursery where recent developments have included the establishment of a stimulating outdoor play area. All classrooms are of a good size and are light and airy. The hall is very large but the judicious use of working areas and the placement of large mats means its size is not overwhelming to the youngest children. A major problem, however, is that the school is built on different levels and this is posing a challenge to the aim of the school to be fully inclusive. Resources are satisfactory overall, but those for ICT and music are limited. However, grants have been made to considerably improve computer-assisted learning.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

51. The governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) Raise pupils' attainment in writing by:
  - making sure the quality of writing in all subjects reflects the improvements in reading;
  - paying closer attention to spelling, handwriting, and presentation in all subjects; \*
  - providing more opportunities for writing from direct experience and across the curriculum; and
  - closely monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of the setting arrangements for writing.

(Paras: 1, 4, 19, 47, 67, 68, 99)

Other issues which should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- a) Re-examine the curriculum:
    - to provide more opportunities for pupils to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding in the foundation subjects; and
    - so that work in the foundation subjects more readily reflects the progress being made in English and mathematics.

(Paras: 24, 97, 100)
  - b) Continue to develop the use of ICT in supporting work in other subjects and with pupils with special educational needs; \*

(Paras: 5, 69, 78, 85, 93, 101, 107)
  - c) Further improve the progress of the more able pupils by setting them more challenging tasks and higher targets for their learning, and by making sure lesson plans consistently refer to learning opportunities for these pupils.
- (Paras: 1, 9, 93, 102)

\* included in the school improvement plan.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed

34

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

15

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	17	13	4	0	0	0
Percentage	0	50	38	12	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	23	104
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	20

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	5	12

#### 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	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.0
National comparative data	5.6

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	17	17	34

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	17	17
	Girls	15	15	16
	Total	31	32	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (95)	94 (90)	97 (100)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	17	16
	Girls	15	15	15
	Total	32	32	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (95)	94 (98)	91 (98)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

### Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	73
Any other minority ethnic group	1

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

### Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

## Teachers and classes

### Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y2

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.8
Average class size	25.8

### Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	105

### Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	37.5
Number of pupils per FTE adult	13

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Recruitment of teachers

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

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	310,729
Total expenditure	299,420
Expenditure per pupil	2,024
Balance brought forward from previous year	45,860
Balance carried forward to next year	57,169

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

122

Number of questionnaires returned

75

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	72	25	0	0	3
My child is making good progress in school.	71	28	0	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	67	31	0	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	57	33	7	0	3
The teaching is good.	81	19	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	68	27	5	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	87	13	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	24	0	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	71	25	1	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	88	9	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	75	24	0	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	59	23	4	1	13

### Other issues raised by parents

Parents are very positive about the work of the school.



## **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**

52. The very well managed, and very effective, Foundation Stage is arranged in three classes. There is a morning nursery class and an afternoon nursery class for the children aged three and four, and the children transfer to the reception class at the beginning of the term in which they are five. The children enter the school with levels of experience and attainment which are well below average, particularly in language and mathematical understanding. They achieve well, and make good progress towards the nationally expected early learning goals by the time they are five years of age.
53. The children, and their parents, are very well prepared for what awaits them in the nursery, most are visited by both the nursery teacher and the nursery nurse before they start in the nursery class, all are visited by at least one of them. The pupils and parents together create a profile of each child to help in settling them down and in planning their work.
54. The well-trained, full-time specialist staff consists of a nursery teacher who co-ordinates the work of the Foundation Stage. With the nursery nurse she is responsible for the teaching in the nursery classes. In addition there are a number of childcare and education diploma students on placement and as volunteers who, under the direction of the full-time staff, usefully supervise small group activities. There is also support from the able teaching assistants provided for the pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs. The high quality full-time staffing is completed by the reception teacher who is responsible for her class, and has the support of a childcare and education diploma student for part of the week and help from one of the teaching assistants for part of each day. There is also some specialist support for children identified as having special needs. All the staff in the Foundation Stage work well as a team, and welcome the support of parents.
55. All the teaching in the Foundation Stage in each of the areas of learning is either very good or better. There are particular strengths in the management of pupils and the use of support staff which are excellent. This enables the pupils to make very good progress in social development so that feeling secure they can benefit from the opportunities provided. The very good planning of learning experiences in both the nursery and reception classes provides a rich mixture of opportunities for the children to develop their language and number skills. At the same time the interest and enthusiasm of the adults around them are fostering their physical and creative development. The full-time staff have a very good knowledge and understanding of how young children learn. This is communicated to support staff and helpers through the good use of information posters distributed where the pupils will be working, and small booklets provided for parents and helpers about the methods employed in the Foundation Stage. The school provides training for support staff and interested parents to improve the quality of what they have to offer as well as providing for their professional development and self-esteem. It is a feature of the supportive management of the school that staff and pupil wellbeing, as well as personal development, are seen as important. This has a very positive impact on the quality of teaching and classroom support that is offered especially in the early years. The teaching that supports the pupils' physical development is particularly good and indicates a high degree of understanding of that area of learning. The good development of skills in information and communication technology (ICT) among the children under five is noteworthy. The very high quality of relationships between the staff and children fosters the development of similar standards between the children and this has a positive effect on the children's learning and other development.

56. The leadership of the Foundation Stage is impressive; there is a common view of the importance of play for effective learning. The reception class is used as a very good bridge between the nursery style of teaching and learning and the necessarily more formal methods used within the National Curriculum. The staff work very effectively as a co-operative team, and they are regularly looking for ways to improve further what they are doing. Recent ventures have been the provision of a writing pack for parents and children and a mathematics games pack, devised as a joint venture with the cluster of schools with Foundation Stage children. The staff are anxious also to develop further their successful teaching of English and mathematics to promote higher standards throughout the school. They recognise how crucial is the grounding in these subjects laid down in the foundation years.
57. The nursery and reception classrooms are very stimulating places with plenty of well displayed material for the pupils to look at, as well as examples of their own work. The school is very successful in building up good relationships with parents and carers, helping them to realise their importance in the education of their children. This provides a secure framework of home and school co-operation as a result of which the children can develop and learn more effectively. The Foundation Stage classrooms are happy places for the children, and staff, to work in. The children respond very well to what is provided for them, and staff and children like and respect each other as people and individuals.

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

58. There are wide variations of personal, social and emotional development among the children when they join the school. A significant proportion of them are at levels below what is expected, the rest are broadly average. The school provides a regular informal pre-nursery meeting for parents and their toddlers called the Thursday Thing. A concerned and trained teaching assistant runs it and it helps the children to learn some useful social skills. They meet children they will be in the nursery with and this gives both children and parents a sense of security about the school. In addition, booklets are provided to help parents understand what is important about play and other aspects of Foundation Stage work. These background pre-school activities increase the effectiveness of the many well-planned opportunities provided for the children to learn how to relate to one another, to make and hold conversations, to play together and to share equipment. The songs the children learn and sing together, for example when waiting for the bell, contribute to this aspect of learning, as does their play with small toys and pretending games all of which are successfully encouraged and developed in the activities provided by the staff. One example is in outdoor play in the caterpillar tunnel. One child helped the teacher put the mats down inside it to keep the children's knees dry as they crawled through. Another is the co-operative investigating play the children enjoy in the sandpit
59. Good use is made of milk time to develop social skills as well as number and language skills. Children are also encouraged to make kind comments about one another's work at the end of lessons. In the reception class the stories and songs at the end of the day are important and well-managed features in the provision for the children's social, emotional and personal development. By the time they are five, most have successfully reached the nationally expected early learning goals in this area of learning.

## **Communication, language and literacy**

60. The general standards in language and the understanding of words are well below average for most children when they enter the nursery. While a number can express opinions about the books they hear read, such as 'I like that story', in many cases they express themselves in single words or very short phrases. The staff, through the examples they give in the regular conversations they have with all the children, extend the pupils' vocabularies and modes of expression. The children develop from not being able to name the colours they use in painting when they join the nursery, to discussing the colours used by famous painters in the reception class. They make good progress in speaking and listening, and in the activities that precede the development of reading. They are familiar with books borrowed from the well-stocked under-fives library. They enjoy following the story being told to them, picking out familiar details, such as a list of fruit from 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar.' They put the events in stories they have heard into the correct order, recognise familiar words such as their own names, and through playing at writing in various role plays, and through other pre-reading exercises they make a good start at reading in the nursery. This is developed successfully, and the children make further progress in the reception class. This good grounding has laid the foundations for improvements in writing throughout the school. The children make good use of their developing literacy skills to support other areas of learning, such as the writing of the 'Diary of a Bean' with its links with science. Most children are on course to reach the early learning goals by the end of the Foundation Stage.

## **Mathematical development**

61. Many children entering the nursery have an understanding of numbers and shapes, which is well below average. The school provides a wide range of activities in the nursery successfully developing the children's awareness of numbers around them and increasing their number skills. These include matching written and spoken numbers to objects such as plastic fruit, jigsaw games, and some programmes on the computer. These successfully promote learning. The children make good progress in the reception class which provides a very good link between the work of the Foundation Stage and that of the National Curriculum. The number work in reception uses the National Numeracy Strategy pattern of lessons with good results. The children in reception handle money sums with increasing confidence, counting on in 2p or 5p units. They successfully deal with numbers to 20 and beyond, adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing them. They talk about and recognise regular two-dimensional shapes such as triangles and squares, rectangles and pentagons. The staff make good use of opportunities that arise, such as in registration time, to practice making use of mathematics in everyday life. By the end of the Foundation Stage, most will have achieved the early learning goals in mathematics.

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

62. Their low levels of speaking and listening when they join the nursery hamper the children's initial levels of attainment in this area of learning, so that their ability to explain what they know about the world about them is well below average. They soon learn how to put the events of a story into a proper time sequence, they learn how to understand and speak about the past and the future and they develop an awareness of 'long ago'. They explore the world about them by experimenting with the different qualities of wet and dry sand, or discovering what sorts of things a magnet will pick up. The wide range of activities which the teachers plan for them develop their curiosity further and entice them into exploring material for themselves. They discover the environment of the school and its immediate surroundings, especially as they work on their garden project or visit the community garden. The school provides more extensive visits to extend their experience. Children learn about different places and creatures through the stories they are read, and this lays a good foundation for finding out more

for themselves in the reception class and beyond. The foundations of religious education are laid by the stories they hear and, for example, in the sensitive handling of a child's news about a toy he had been given at a baptism service. The children are on course to reach the early learning goals by the end of this stage.

### **Physical development**

63. From being below average in terms of physical skills and abilities on entry into the nursery the children make good progress in physical development. They learn to jump and balance, roll balls accurately, to throw and catch small balls and to hit them with bats. They throw beanbags accurately at a target and also develop the smaller physical skills well, such as cutting with scissors, sticking things together with glue or sellotape. They use the large-wheeled equipment outdoors without banging into one another. All of these skills are refined further during the reception year so that most attain the early learning goals in physical development by the time they are five. Almost all are on course to achieve well the early learning goals in physical development.

### **Creative development**

64. The children's creative development improves more rapidly when they have developed physical skills to use tools such as brushes and crayons effectively. This they achieve through practice in the activities provided to stimulate their imagination, such as painting pictures and finger painting with cornflour mixed with colours. They match paint colours to those in pictures and they draw with crayons and chalks. By the time they reach the reception class the children are skilful in painting and drawing imaginatively as well as copying objects. They make imaginative constructions out of construction kits as well as found materials such as cardboard boxes and tubes. The children sing nursery rhymes and other traditional songs tunefully, with enjoyment and a sense of rhythm. It is a feature of the teaching that no child is left feeling that they cannot sing, construct or paint successfully. All children are on course to achieve the early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1.

## **SUBJECTS STUDIED BY PUPILS IN YEARS 1 AND 2**

### **ENGLISH**

65. Standard test results in reading and writing indicate a variable picture. In 2000, the results were well above the national average in reading and above in writing. In 2001, reading results were at the national level while those on writing had fallen to just below. The school attributes this variation to the increased number of pupils with special educational needs in 2001 and to the larger number of summer born children who had only spent seven terms in school. When compared with similar schools, the 2001 results show pupils achieving higher levels in reading and writing, well above the average for this group of schools. Fewer pupils attain the higher Level 3, although in reading one-fifth of pupils attain this level. In writing, no pupils attained this level. At Level 2 in writing, the majority of pupils (62 per cent) attained the lower grade 2C. In the past, boys have performed better than girls in both reading and writing, but the difference narrowed in 2001. Teacher assessments of pupils' speaking and listening skills show that these are at the national average level. Teacher assessments in reading and writing are higher than test results, the school finding that pupils do less well in formal test situations. Inspection findings show that, currently, pupils' reading is well above average with over half expected to attain the higher Level 3, but writing continues to be below average. Speaking and listening skills are at an average level.
66. The very good progress made by pupils in the Foundation Stage is effectively built on in Years 1 and 2 in both reading and in speaking and listening, but progress is slower in

writing. By the age of seven, the majority of pupils are competent readers with only a few pupils who continue to find reading difficult and who are only making slow progress. Basic reading skills are taught well with pupils able to read words using a variety of methods including phonics. They are able to split a word into syllables when confronted with unfamiliar words and use inference from the text and picture clues to give further help. A feature is the use of intonation to add meaning. A number of potentially higher attaining pupils have very good word knowledge, for example pronouncing 'aghast' correctly and translating its meaning as 'shocked'. The few pupils with reading difficulties, also show an enthusiasm for reading. These pupils are given considerable help by the learning support assistants enabling them to make good progress for their ability. Along with the very good teaching of reading, especially in guided reading activities, the key to success in this area is the very strong home/school partnership. Home/school reading records are used very well to create a dialogue on a pupil's reading between home and school. Most parents contribute well to this. The school has a very good stock of reading books but there is no local library for pupils to extend their knowledge of books out of school. The school library is well stocked but is used largely as a teacher resource. There is a large variety of 'big book' reading texts for use in the literacy lessons and these are used well, not only for reading purposes but also to explore grammar, punctuation and sentence structures.

67. Pupils do not achieve as well with their writing. In order to improve writing standards, pupils are set by ability for one hour per week of extended writing. The school is monitoring this closely to see if writing does improve as a result. During the other literacy lessons, written work is largely in the form of analysis of words, sentence and text. In a very good lesson after reading the text from the book, 'Not Now Bernard', pupils went on to analyse words used with the initial letter 'b' and the use of punctuation. This then led to pupils forming a question to ask a character from the book. In this exercise, the learning support assistants made a valuable contribution, especially to pupils with special educational needs. Most pupils find difficulty in writing an adequate amount in the time available. There are too few opportunities for writing from direct experience. Although handwriting is taught this is not consistent across the three classes. Presentation of work is also variable. Pupils find difficulty in spelling, although the weekly homework spelling list is helping to improve this. There is insufficient use of word banks, pupils' spelling books and dictionaries when pupils are writing. There is a difference between the quality of work in class literacy lessons and in the extended writing lessons; that in the class literacy is better. In the writing lessons, when pupils are set according to ability, there is not the same opportunity for pupils to complete work.
68. The difficulties the pupils have in spelling words stems from their listening and speaking skills. The school makes strenuous efforts for pupils to develop these skills during class lessons and assemblies. They are given opportunities to explain their work in the weekly 'good work' assembly and to express themselves in class. Often they find difficulty in expressing feelings, for example when a Year 2 pupil was asked how he would feel if his mother ignored him he could not answer. There is a tendency for pupils to hear the first and final consonants of a word but vowels are not heard within a word. In order to further help pupils with speaking, listening and spelling, the school is using an 'Early Literacy Support' strategy which encourages home and school to work together to improve word levels and a scheme 'Talking Partners' which helps give pupils conventions when they listen and speak. Both strategies are being enthusiastically taught by learning support assistants who have been well trained in the strategies. Pupils enjoy these sessions and are benefiting from them.
69. The quality of teaching is good. All teachers use the literacy strategies well, especially with the development of reading. Lessons are conducted at a good pace but sometimes pupils sit for too long a period in class discussion before going on to their individual work. Lesson preparation is good and pupils are managed well. Lesson

objectives are shared with the class and the plenary session is used well to ascertain if objectives have been attained. A significant contribution to the teaching is the very good briefing of the learning support assistants and their contribution to assessing pupils' progress. Marking of work is carried out diligently, often containing helpful comments on how to further improve. Ambitious targets have been set for the pupils in reading and writing and the school is on line to meet them. Each classroom has a library area in which reading and writing skills can be practised and where books are presented attractively. When selecting a book, pupils are encouraged to make careful choices both from a text level, and also by carefully looking through the pictures in the book to gain an early understanding of what the context might be. ICT is increasing in use to support work, for example in word processing.

70. Pupils with special educational needs are given very good quality support by the teachers and learning support assistants who know their needs well. Individual education plans are well constructed, closely followed and reviewed regularly. Through the care, attention and the specific teaching they receive, these pupils make good progress.
71. The literacy co-ordinator has been in post since the last inspection when attainment of pupils in Year 2 was in line with national expectations. At that time the school did not take the national tests, which was the local authority policy. Since 1998, when tests have been taken, standards have risen at a greater rate than nationally, this being overseen by the present co-ordinator who has been instrumental in ensuring literacy strategies are taught well through her monitoring role. In this she has been supported well by the headteacher and literacy governor.

## **MATHEMATICS**

72. The school's enthusiastic adoption of the National Numeracy Strategy, the careful analysis of test results to help in planning the teaching, and the reorganisation of pupils into groups with similar abilities for learning mathematics, have all contributed to the significant improvements in pupils' achievements and standards in the subject since the previous inspection.
73. Children arrive in the nursery with much lower than average levels of mathematical skill and understanding. They make very good progress through the Foundation Stage of education so that by the time they leave the reception class most of them are ready to make a start on the mathematics set in the National Curriculum. This rate of progress is maintained across all the aspects of work in mathematics throughout Years 1 and 2. By the time the pupils are ready to leave the school at the age of seven most are achieving well. They reach standards at least in line with what is expected and a significant proportion of them do better than this. The current inspection findings indicate that when compared with schools nationally the school's standards of attainment have risen significantly to meet the challenging targets the school has set itself.
74. The pupils make very good progress in understanding and solving mathematical problems. They are taught to look carefully at what they are asked and to break the problem down into a series of questions. An example was of a middle ability group excitedly trying to discover the identity of a number between one and 30. They asked questions such as 'Can you divide it by two?', 'Is there a nine in the answer?' until by eliminating the numbers from a hundred board they arrived at the correct answer. A higher ability group knew, without having to work it out, that £2.99 is the same as 299p and they used this level of knowledge to handle money problems, providing change from purchases from sums up to £5.00p. Younger lower ability groups worked towards this by practising making sums of money in different ways from a variety of coins, and counting on in 2s, 5s, 10s and 20s, linked to coins of various denominations. The pupils

learned well because the work set for them was closely related to what they could already do, so that though challenged by it with an extra effort they could succeed. Additionally the work was made enjoyable and exciting by the infectious enthusiasm of the teachers.

75. The pupils describe the number of sides and angles in regular two-dimensional shapes accurately. The work begins with simple recognition in the nursery classes, and then this is built on as the pupils move through the school, so that when they are in Year 2 they recognise shapes from a description, and organise shapes according to particular criteria. They understand how certain shapes can tessellate, using this knowledge practically when the school was engaged in making the mosaic for the nearby community garden. Early practical experiences in filling and emptying containers of different sizes in play in the Foundation Stage builds into the older pupils' ability to relate the capacity of cups or jugs to millilitres. They handle telling the time in hours and minutes well, and the older higher attaining pupils can add and take away in hours and minutes accurately.
76. The teachers encourage the pupils to develop and use the proper mathematical terms, and they build up a good vocabulary of numerical words which they use outside mathematics lessons as well as within them. In number work they use figures to 100 and beyond, adding and subtracting, multiplying and dividing numbers with several digits correctly. They estimate answers and round numbers up and down with increasing ease as a result of the well-managed and well-paced mental mathematics sessions in the numeracy hours.
77. Overall the teaching of mathematics is good with the strongest being very good. None is less than satisfactory. The work is planned in good detail and individual lesson plans are shared with the support staff. This enables them to contribute significantly to the quality of the teaching. Generally the details of what the pupils are expected to learn in each session is shared with them, and teachers and pupils review how successful the lesson has been in the closing activity. This is an occasion when pupils can share their successes with each other, and it is an important feature of the life of the school that the pupils do this generously and with genuine pleasure in one another's accomplishments. When two younger Year 1 pupils had a very successful morning, solving a large number of money questions, they shared their unaffected joy with the teacher, the assistant staff, their fellow pupils and the inspector, certain that everyone would share in their delight.
78. The teachers and support staff have a good grasp of the principles and the practice of the numeracy hour. This adds to the success of the lessons and the quality of the comments the support staff make on what they have observed the pupils doing which they share with the teachers at the end of the lessons. Occasionally links between the work done in one part of the lesson are not made as effectively as they might be with subsequent group activity, so that opportunities for further re-enforcing learning are missed. The use of ICT to support the pupils' learning in mathematics is not as advanced as the quality of the other work in the subject would warrant. The teachers and support staff provide a good quality of help for those pupils identified with special educational needs. As a result they make good progress. All the pupils receive the mathematical education that is appropriate to their needs. This approach to the management of the subject is an important aspect of the ethos of the school, which goes beyond the idea of equality of treatment to the meeting of pupils' varying needs, to ensure real equality of opportunity and inclusion.
79. The subject is well led and managed very effectively. The planning of numeracy follows the national strategy, but with variations to meet particular needs. The planning is a corporate activity shared between teachers. The quality of teaching is well monitored both within the school and by occasional external assessors from the local education

authority. The standards of work, the pupils' achievements and progress are also carefully monitored and the planning, both long-term and day to day, adjusted to improve the quality of the pupils' learning. The school sets itself targets to achieve, based on an analysis of the pupils' previous performance. The marking of mathematics sometimes includes targets for the pupils to achieve. This is one of the strategies that might be adopted more frequently to increase the challenge offered to the higher attaining pupils to achieve even more. The resources provided for mathematics are good, and good use is made of them.

## SCIENCE

80. At the time of the last inspection, standards were at the nationally expected level. Teacher assessments in 2001 indicated standards continued to be close to the national average. However, performance at the higher Level 3 was well below the national average. Pupils score highly on the programme of study relating to life and living processes and below the national average on that relating to electricity, forces and motion and light and sound. When compared with schools in similar contexts, results at Level 2B and above are higher than the average for this group. Inspection evidence indicates that the overall standards of attainment of pupils in Year 2 matches national expectations with an increasing number of pupils working at higher levels as a result of the very good teaching.
81. A considerable strength is the importance placed on scientific knowledge and investigation, and the attention paid to physical processes, such as forces, motion and electricity. This emphasis is a result of thorough analysis of tests from previous years. Through work sampling, it is clear that there is good coverage of each of the programmes of study with particularly good work relating to the importance of healthy living. Higher attaining pupils have experimented with the growth requirements of plants and have made correct assumptions based on direct observations. Pupils present their findings in an orderly way with clear sequential recording. In some instances, pupils with special educational needs make good progress, especially when they receive extra support, for example support given when drawing a simple circuit diagram.
82. Evidence of work in lessons was confined to two classes. The teaching in both classes was very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The lessons had been very carefully planned and the adult helpers well briefed. Both lessons were based on the effect of friction from different surfaces on wheeled vehicles propelled down a ramp. Year 2 pupils were quick to recognise the importance of the control of variables in order for the test to be fair. They made decisions on how to measure accurately the distance travelled and the importance of starting the vehicle off at the same point. They were very much on task, being involved and interested in the activity. Year 1 pupils made slower progress but even so understood why certain surfaces offer greater resistance. A particularly good feature was the way in which findings were related to the control of vehicles on different road surfaces. These were carefully tabulated and conclusions drawn.
83. Teachers have a sound knowledge of the subject, are careful to allow pupils to find out and draw conclusions for themselves and, on completion of the work, make useful comments as to how the work may be further improved and extended. Pupils are well managed and, as a result, practical investigation work is carried out efficiently and effectively.
84. The science co-ordinator prepares a very useful pack of materials and notes for the term's science programme. Objectives are set out separately for Year 1 and Year 2 pupils, materials provided and advice on recording given. During this term the whole of the programme of study focuses on forces and on light. Other elements of the science curriculum are taught during the two-year rolling programme. Assessments are made



on weekly lesson plans, which are carefully noted by the co-ordinator, adjustments made when necessary and progress of pupils recorded. Work is sampled and analysed regularly. In these ways the co-ordinator is able to gauge the success of science teaching, know the subject strengths and has a clear idea of areas for development. Current developments are to encourage pupils to formulate their own questions and help them to think within a scientific framework of observation, hypothesis and conclusion.

85. Resources are satisfactory, although the use of ICT is very limited at present. Pupils do not use this to tabulate their findings nor to find out more about the areas they are studying. Extra-curricular activities are good and include a conservation club and visits into school each term by a science theatre group. There is also a useful link with the local comprehensive school with pupils spending a whole-day science workshop there, but links with the nearby junior school are only at an early stage of development.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

86. Standards in art and design, design and technology, physical education and music are satisfactory with good standards in observational drawing and in singing.
87. In art and design, there are high levels of achievement in observational drawing and painting due to the careful emphasis placed on these aspects of work. The pupils are introduced to the work of important artists to give inspiration and quality to their paintings, as in the case of Van Gogh, or their pattern making and printing with William Morris. The pupils are also engaged in practical work such as the planning and execution, with professional and adult help, of the mosaic for the community garden.
88. In design and technology the pupils design and make masks from card with plaster-of-paris based 'modroc' to give a good finish. They use skills developed in mathematics to measure them accurately so that they fit their faces. By the time they are seven they work to a design brief, planning what they will need to do to accomplish the objective, such as making a vehicle to help a teddy bear who has broken down. Many of them successfully refer to their design plans as they make their product, but some of the younger and lower attaining pupils treat designing and making as separate activities. This reduces their achievements in designing and in making judgements about their work. While the older and higher attaining pupils handle tools with confidence and competence, some of the younger and lower attaining ones lack confidence and independence. The quality of finished products such as the purses made by Year 1 and Year 2 pupils is generally good.
89. The pupils' achievements in physical education are good and records indicate that almost all achieve the expected Level 2 by the time they leave Year 2. This applies to their work in gymnastics, in dance and in games. They also accomplish appropriate levels in swimming. In gymnastics they learn successfully to move around the hall in different ways, balance and run around a hall avoiding one another. They dance well, creating interesting shapes with their bodies, for example imitating the floppy stance of a rag doll. Ball skills such as throwing and catching, throwing quoits or beanbags at a target, and accurate kicking are developed effectively among the pupils.
90. By the time pupils leave the school at age seven years, their attainment in music is at least satisfactory, with good standards attained in singing. This is an improvement since the last inspection when pupils' singing was reported as 'lacking in volume'. Singing is a strength. Pupils sing in lessons to consolidate skills in other subjects, for example through singing counting songs they increase their knowledge of number functions. They know a wide variety of songs, especially those with actions, singing tunefully at a good pitch and they are not afraid to sing out aloud but they do not shout. They understand the discipline of singing together, keeping with the beat, all starting

and finishing at the same time. Their melodic singing makes a significant contribution to the special atmosphere achieved in the daily acts of worship.

91. Pupils listen attentively to recorded music. When listening to the 'Royal March of the Lions' from Saint Saëns Carnival of the Animals, they listened carefully to the beat of the tune which they could then replicate using percussion instruments. Their response was well disciplined with pupils listening carefully to the compositions of other groups and on which they commented. A number of pupils used the word 'ostinato' and knew its meaning.
92. Overall the teaching observed in the creative areas of the curriculum was good, some was very good and none was less than satisfactory. There is a particular strength in the management of pupils and in the relationships between pupils and with the staff. These two factors contribute to the good achievement that the pupils make and their very good attitude towards the work planned for them, and to their willingness to try hard to overcome initial difficulties when they arise, they are not afraid to make a mistake and then to try again. The work is planned for Years 1 and 2 co-operatively, with the lesson planning also shared. This leads in some instances to variations between classes in how the lesson is taught depending on the different talents of the teachers, however, the good use made of assessment opportunities on planning sheets enables co-ordinators to make suggestions for improvements readily. Good use is made of further training opportunities for teachers in these subjects, for example the teaching of dance has been improved as a result of training courses which increased the teachers' confidence as well as introducing them to different, and successful, methods of teaching the subject, as well as a deeper understanding of the nature of the work in the subject.
93. The teachers' enthusiasm for the work in art and design and design and technology which are both treated in a similar fashion, provides the pupils with a stimulus to do well. An example was the careful way in which a Year1/Year2 class studied the shape of their heads, observing exactly where eyes and ears were located before drawing an outline that was translated into a wire sculpture. In some cases the provision of alternative media methods and tools is lacking and more able pupils lack the independence and stimulus provided by having to choose the way to achieve an objective. This is true in both art and design and design and technology. The enthusing comments of teachers in physical education lessons encourage the pupils to devise better ways of moving, or more accurate ways of throwing or kicking, and thus improving the standards of their performance. The development of very good personal relationships within classes makes it easy for pupils to make useful, and generous, comments about each others' performances with an eye to improving them. The use of ICT in teaching these subjects is being extended as more opportunities for it are found; it is satisfactory at present.
94. The teachers encourage the pupils to look beyond the school by becoming involved for example in art competitions run by a local gallery, or in helping with the community garden mosaic. This is an important aspect of the way in which the school encourages the pupils to think of themselves as capable of tackling most things, and contributes very effectively to the inclusive nature of the educational provision of the school. The support for pupils with special educational needs in these subjects is good, and they make good progress and achieve well. Good use is made of the support staff and volunteer helpers, who are briefed well and provide useful comments, about how the pupils have performed, to the class teacher at the end of the lesson.
95. The leadership of the creative subjects is good overall. Teaching and learning are monitored either directly through occasional observation in the case of physical education, or through the assessments of lessons made on the planning sheets. The resources for these subjects enable the curriculum for each to be taught successfully,

and the plans for future developments are well devised. Resources in music are limited and pupils often have to share instruments when performing and composing. The hall is well used for physical education, as well as for many other activities. The school recognises the importance of these subjects in the excellent provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

96. A significant feature of the stimulating and engaging atmosphere of the school is the attractive display of pupils' work, particularly in art and design and design and technology, to be found in classrooms and public areas of the school. The quality of the work on show is good and in many cases better than that normally expected of pupils of infant age. There is a broad range of activities undertaken in a variety of media and forms, and the results are such that the pupils have every right to be proud of what they have achieved. This is evident when they point out which individual pieces they are responsible for. In the same way the school makes good use of opportunities for the pupils to demonstrate their skills in physical activities such as music, dance and drama in the productions that are put on to entertain parents and friends. It is a clear policy of the school to provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to find success. This supports what the school regards as a basis for raising the achievements of the pupils. That is to develop the pupils' sense of self-worth and of their value to the community, whether it is painting an exciting picture, overcoming a technical problem in making a mask, or enjoying singing an extensive repertoire of various songs.

## **GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY**

97. History is taught alternatively with geography through a series of topics. Evidence was limited to observing lessons in geography, sampling pupils' past work, talking to pupils and discussions with the history co-ordinator. From the evidence, standards are judged to be satisfactory, this being the finding at the time of the last inspection. The school is planning to further develop work in history and to monitor the work in geography in the present term as part of school improvement, but finds difficulty in making sufficient curriculum time available for the subjects due to other priorities for development.
98. In each of the three classes Year 1 pupils are taught alongside Year 2 pupils and care is taken to set work which is appropriate to the full ability range. All three classes follow the same topic with each class teacher making adjustments to take account of the pace of learning of each group. Topics are on a two-year rolling programme. At present, in geography, the work centres on comparing and contrasting the pupils' lives in Meden Vale with the lives of the Horta family in Mexico. Maps have been drawn, more able pupils correctly labelling these and with some pupils beginning to visualise a map as a birds-eye view of the landscape. Younger pupils are given extra help and advice to make reasonable representations and to note the similarities and differences. Good use is made of photographic evidence to find clues to the lifestyle of the Horta family and, by describing the life of the six-year-old daughter the pupils are readily able to relate to her. The topic is giving pupils a good understanding of the similarities as well as the differences between village life in Mexico and Meden Vale. Other work indicates that pupils ask questions of a geographical nature and are gaining a sound understanding of features of their own immediate locality. Year 2 pupils readily locate the approximate position of Meden Vale on a map of the British Isles and name the constituent countries. Globes are available in all classrooms with pupils able to locate Mexico on them.
99. In history, the school has evolved its own scheme of work which is based on knowledge, skills and understanding of key historic events and persons through a variety of activities. No history lessons were observed. Pupils have studied the lives of Florence Nightingale, Alexander Graham Bell, James Logie Baird, Scott of the Antarctic and Neil Armstrong. They know why these characters are famous and have written short passages about them to accompany their drawings. Pupils have also studied

events, such as the Fire of London and Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot. Whilst they have written only a little about these, they are able to recount orally a great deal about the events. They know where to go to find out about the past and have made lists which include books, photographs, places, monuments and 'what people tell us', thereby beginning to appreciate the importance of oral history.

100. Teaching overall is of good quality enabling pupils to achieve to their capabilities. Core planning is carried out by the appropriate co-ordinator with each class teacher invited to review the success of each lesson. In a review of the lesson on Neil Armstrong, the teacher had written 'may have been easier with a sheet with a picture on, so that children only had to think about what to write, not draw a picture as well'. This and other comments are considered and adjustments made. A feature of the lessons is the very good questioning techniques used, particularly in helping pupils to think for themselves about similarities between now and the past and between their own locality and more distant localities. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum but, overall, insufficient time is available to cover topics in depth and recording is limited.
101. The school plans to redistribute the co-ordination of history and geography from September next. At present there are detailed files for each subject, both being well planned with good methods of assessment against objectives, these being continuously updated. However, the full historical and geographical potential of the local area is not being realised. Visits are made to a local environment centre and to Nottingham Castle as well as local walks around the village, but pupils have little knowledge of historical and geographical features of the wider area. Little use is made of ICT to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding in both history and geography to help raise attainment. Otherwise, resources are satisfactory.
102. Pupils with special educational needs are given good support and they make good progress as a result. Care is taken to make sure that they are included in all geographical and historical topic work. More could be expected of the most able pupils.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

103. There has been a good level of improvement in information and communication technology (ICT) since the previous inspection. By the time the pupils leave the school almost all of them have achieved the standards expected of pupils aged seven. The improvements are largely the result of increased confidence on the part of the staff who have received a good level of extra training in the subject. There have also been improvements in the number of computers available for the pupils to work on. Currently there are three in each classroom. The quality of computers has been improved by new purchases. The machines operate in the same way and are loaded with the same programmes. This makes for ease of use. A third important factor in the improvements in the subject has been the decision to teach ICT skills in specific lessons for an hour a week.
104. The development of a computer club for Year 2 pupils has improved their levels of achievement. This is planned by the subject co-ordinator and run by a teaching assistant, together with volunteer sixth-form students from the local comprehensive school. Most of the Year 2 pupils have taken part in one of the series of six-week programmes offered by the club.
105. The children in the Foundation Stage make a good start with the subject. They can operate simple programmes using the mouse and cursor keys with confidence. The younger children also use other electronic communication equipment, such as tape decks and listening stations with ease. The older pupils in Years 1 and 2 develop skills in wordprocessing, which are used to support work in English. They start programs, find files, write direct to the computer, edit their writing directly to the screen, save and recall their work, amend what has been written and print it off successfully. They improve the look of their work by changing fonts and font sizes. The pupils in the Year 1 and Year 2 classes make graphs of information gathered from the class, they use CD-ROMs to find information about topics they are studying. An e-mail link has been established with a neighbouring school so that the pupils in both schools can successfully send and receive messages. As well as the computers the pupils progressively develop skills in programming the floor turtles (Roamers). In Year 2 they can successfully program one to circle a chair starting and ending on the same spot.
106. The observation of the pupils at work in lessons, as well as a scrutiny of their work, indicate a clear progression from the Foundation Stage to the end of Year 2. The different work provided for the different ability groups, especially in the Year 1/Year 2 classes, ensures that all make good progress. The school is at pains to make sure that pupils without access to computers at home are not disadvantaged. Pupils identified as having special educational needs are well supported and make good progress. Because the improvements in ICT are recent, the impact on standards is clearer among the younger children and those in Year 1 than among the pupils in Year 2 who have not long had the benefit of the improvements.
107. The teaching of ICT is good and never less than satisfactory. The teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject and of how it can be taught is improving as a result of the training they have received. Most have a good grasp of the skills required of their pupils in order to reach a satisfactory standard for their age. They understand how pupils learn and consolidate these skills effectively. There is a strong common commitment to improve, and where teachers had an initial insecurity about teaching the subject, training and support from colleagues, especially the co-ordinator, has removed that anxiety. Teachers and pupils co-operate well. The teachers enthuse the pupils with the sense that they can succeed, so that they do well. The teachers manage both the pupils and the resources very well in the ICT lessons. However, there are considerable periods of time when the computers are not being used, even when they could be used to support the subject that is currently being taught. Teaching is supportive so that

pupils do not fear to make mistakes and the timid are not overawed by the confident. The staff make good use of the digital camera to support the pupils' work and to record what they do in other areas of school life. Increasingly the staff use ICT for day-to-day duties such as planning and report writing.

108. The leadership of the subject is very good; it is marked by enthusiasm and a high degree of competence. The governing body is kept well informed of progress in ICT. The in-service training available for the staff is plentiful and well distributed. The pupils' standards are monitored, as is the teaching, and good records are kept. All these combine to make ICT a strongly developing subject in the curriculum. Future plans for improvement both short and long term, are sound. A list of equipment priorities has been compiled which includes replacement computers, a digital camera and a projector for ICT class work thus using a considerable amount of the previous year's budget underspend. Another significant feature is the good development of classes for adults sponsored by the school and run by the local college.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

109. There have been significant improvements in religious education since the previous inspection. The range of studies in the subject is broader. More attention is paid to the religious significance of the events and stories studied and the planning has been improved. Overall most of the pupils achieve standards in religious education that are in line with what is expected.
110. The headteacher, who is the co-ordinator, plans the work for the whole school. This is based on the Nottinghamshire Agreed Syllabus of religious education. The policy for religious education and the scheme of work were devised in consultation with the whole staff following a training day on new developments in religious education. The subject is taught through themes, such as 'choices' and 'freedom and responsibility' and 'holy days and holidays' looking at celebrations such as the Christian celebration of Christmas, and the Buddhist celebration of Wesak. The planning of religious education is closely linked to the topics that are used for collective worship, so that the two activities support each other even though they are different.
111. The main focus of the subject is the study of Christianity, which is accompanied, by studies of other religions drawn from those most likely to be found in contemporary Britain. The children are familiar with a number of the Biblical stories that are important for understanding about Christianity, such as 'The Pearl of Great Price' or the events leading up to the first Easter, or the Christmas story. As they study the life of Guru Gobind Singh as an introduction to Sikhism they learn about the five symbols Sikhs carry about them. This leads to an appreciation of the similarities and the differences between believers in different faiths.
112. The teaching of religious education is good. The teachers have a sound grasp of the topics they are dealing with. They develop the common plans in ways that are appropriate to each class. As a result of this the pupils achieve well in the subject and reach expected standards of information about the religions. The methods used for religious education involve drama and discussion when exploring feelings and thoughts prompted by the stories such as the 'The Good Samaritan' during which the pupils explored what the characters must have felt. The biblical story was developed into one concerning a situation familiar to the pupils, that of a child coming new to a school, and of how other pupils might, or should, behave. They also discuss with considerable insight why the characters in the original parable of Jesus behaved in the way that they did. This aspect of religious education is similar to the developing lessons in personal, social and health education in which the pupils think deeply about matters that are important to them. The teachers successfully use the techniques of 'circle time' to enable pupils to talk about things that affect them closely, in an open and trusting way.

They are taught to follow the rules that make it safe for them to discuss matters close to their hearts. This technique is used for both religious education and personal, social and health education; both of which are important for the personal development of the pupils. The teachers handle this aspect of the work with delicacy and skill.

113. This part of the curriculum is also very important in providing for the pupils' excellent spiritual, moral and social development. Some topics in religious education that deal with events in the pupils' lives such as 'Building Bridges' or 'Moving On' provide them with good opportunities to air their worries. These are undertaken towards the end of the summer term when the Year 2 pupils are preparing to move onto the junior school. The school provides a safe environment for them to explore their anxieties and hopes. Good use is made of local resources, with visits to places of worship such as Southwell Minster, and the local chapel. A religious drama group comes to the school to give performances of short plays based on biblical stories. The school is seeking ways to extend the range of visitors to include those from other faiths to broaden the pupils' experience further.
114. The subject is very well led; the teaching and the pupils' learning are both effectively monitored. The resources provided meet the subject's current needs, and suitable new ones are added from time to time. A new system of assessment has been developed so that the pupils' achievements can be monitored from year to year. Religious education and its linked collective worship are important factors in promoting, developing and maintaining the community aims of the school.