

## INSPECTION REPORT

**ST JOHN THE BAPTIST CATHOLIC PRIMARY  
SCHOOL**

Brighton

LEA area: Brighton and Hove

Unique reference number: 114540

Headteacher: Wendy King

Reporting inspector: John Lilly  
12487

Dates of inspection: 22 – 25 April 2002

Inspection number: 196070

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Whitehawk Hill Road Brighton
Postcode:	BN2 2AH
Telephone number:	01273 607924
Fax number:	01273 603450
E-mail:	office@sjteb.co.uk
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Fr. D Foley
Date of previous inspection:	23 June 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
12487	John Lilly	Registered inspector	History	Attainment and progress Teaching Leadership and management
			The Foundation Stage	
			Special educational needs	
			English as an additional language	
			Equal opportunities	
9115	Terry Clarke	Lay inspector		Attitudes Care, welfare and guidance Partnership with parents
8002	Lionel Farraway	Team inspector	English	Curriculum
			Art and design	
			Geography	
			Physical education	
10053	Janet Simms	Team inspector	Mathematics	
			Science	
			Information and communication technology	
			Design and technology	
			Music	

The inspection contractor was:

Open Book Inspections  
6 East Point  
High Street  
Seal  
Sevenoaks  
TN15 0EG

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Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St John the Baptist is a voluntary aided Catholic Primary school of average size with 206 girls and boys on roll. Most pupils come from the immediate locality. This locality is very socially and economically deprived and, at 33 per cent, the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is very high. A minority of pupils come from further afield and from more favoured localities. Children join the school in the year before their fifth birthday and most have lower than the average attainment expected at that age. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is average, and two of these pupils have statements of their needs. There is a greater than average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and the majority of these pupils have English as an additional language. The predominant group among these pupils is from the Sudan and they are of the Coptic faith; other pupils tend to come from a range of European countries and a few are Asian. There are eight pupils at an early stage in the acquisition of English. The school is a part of an Education Action Zone. Although only half the pupils are Catholic, the school has a strong Catholic mission and close links with the local parish. The headteacher has been in post since November 2001, although she was acting headteacher prior to this date.

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

St John the Baptist is a good and rapidly improving school. It provides a warm, caring and 'family' community with a clear and shared sense of direction and purpose. Pupils have very good attitudes to their work, see the relevance and importance of their learning, and behave very well because the school has high expectations of their behaviour and attitudes towards other people. Pupils work hard and with pride in their achievements. Most children join the school with low attainment, make good progress and leave aged eleven with attainment that matches expectations of pupils of that age. All pupils are valued, and, consequently, they develop very well as balanced young people, certain of their own worth and keen to succeed. The headteacher provides very strong and determined leadership for a close knit and committed staff, and teaching is good. The school has many of the strengths and qualities needed to become a very good school but recognises there is still work to be done. The school offers good value for money.

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

Attainment is good compared with similar schools, and pupils make good progress and behave very well because:

- The school is well led and managed with very strong leadership from the headteacher and deputy headteacher and, consequently, everyone challenges themselves to achieve high standards;
- The school develops excellent relationships within the school and with partners outside;
- Teaching and learning are good and they are very good in the reception class;
- The school provides an excellent range of activities outside lessons;
- Provision for the personal development of pupils is very good and, for spiritual development, excellent;
- Teaching assistants make a major contribution to the pupils' learning;
- Support for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who are learning English as an additional language, is very good and, consequently, pupils feel cared for, safe and secure.

## What could be improved

To continue to improve standards of attainment, the school needs to address the following areas of the school's work:

- The balance and coherence of the curriculum;
- The uses of assessment to focus what teachers aim to achieve and to help pupils understand better what they need to learn.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in June 1997. From that time, standards rose only slowly and in some cases declined, for example, in mathematics. Standards, however, are now rising rapidly, including standards in mathematics. Overall there has been a marked and recent improvement in pupils' progress throughout the school as a result of very determined leadership that has led to improved teaching and better planning. Staff now meet the needs of pupils of all abilities and make much better provision for their cultural awareness and development. The strengths of the school noted at the time of the last inspection have, in the main, been maintained and improvement is now on a secure and upward trend. Improvement has been good, and the school has ensured there are secure foundations for future rapid improvement.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	C	D	D	A
Mathematics	C	E	E	E
Science	D	D	E	D

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

Standards of attainment by the end of Year 2 are rising at broadly the national rate and the school's rate of improvement is increasing. In National Curriculum tests and assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2001, results when compared with all schools nationally were well below average in reading, writing and science, and broadly average in mathematics. When compared, however, with results in schools serving similar communities, the results were well above average in reading and writing, above average in science, and average in mathematics.

Until 2001, standards of attainment by the end of Year 6 had risen at slightly less than the national rate. There has been a considerable recent improvement, however, that promises to bring significant improvement in National Curriculum tests for 2002, especially in mathematics. In National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 in 2001, results were below the national average in English, and well below average in mathematics and science. Compared with similar schools, results were well above average for English, below average for science and well below average for mathematics. In results for previous years there was



some evidence that girls had not achieved as well as boys. The school has taken action to rectify this and these moves are proving successful. Most pupils join the reception class with much lower than average attainment but very quickly make very good progress, especially in speaking and listening. They make a smooth transition to National Curriculum learning in Year 1, and continue to make good progress between Years 1 and 6. Progress is best in English, and more recently in mathematics and information and communication technology. Progress in other subjects tends to be satisfactory rather than good, and it is unsatisfactory in music. Pupils of different abilities and backgrounds make equivalent progress; most pupils with special educational needs and those who are learning English as a new language make very good progress. The school's targets for improvement are challenging but tend to be predictions rather than goals to be achieved.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils come to school enthusiastically and are very keen to succeed. They are extremely eager to take part in all the school has to offer.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave very well and go out of their way to care for others. There is a marked lack of bullying or racial intolerance.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are excellent and this grows from the fine example set by staff.
Attendance	Despite the school's best efforts, attendance is still below the national average. It is currently improving.

Pupils' very good attitudes towards their work and other people, and their very good personal development make a major contribution to their progress and the quality of their learning. Children join the school with low social and personal skills and leave aged eleven as balanced and caring young people, ambitious to succeed. A marked aspect of these good attitudes is the way pupils respect and value others whatever their background or conditions. The school's code of conduct asks pupils to 'forgive others' and they do.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Good	Good

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

Teaching is a strength of school; it is very good in the reception class and at least good in Years 1 to 6. It is improving because teachers plan lessons more effectively, and they receive good training and support. There is very close teamwork between the class teachers and the teaching assistants, and with other specialist teachers, for example, the teacher for pupils learning English as an additional language. Pupils work hard and with pride, and are keen to succeed. They are eager to meet their targets but are not always clear how to do this. The pupils' very good attitudes reflect the high expectations of their teachers and the way teachers and teaching assistants make the work interesting and relevant to the pupils'

lives. Literacy and numeracy are well taught throughout the school with particular improvement in the teaching of mathematics. The specialist teaching of information and communication technology is especially good. Staff ensure that pupils of different levels of ability and different backgrounds feel equally valued and support them very well through suitable class work, small group work with teaching assistants or individual teaching by specialist teachers. Teachers' planning addresses the needs of pupils with special educational needs, those learning English as a new language and those pupils of high and very high ability, without forgetting the needs of pupils of average ability. This support helps the pupils to see learning as exciting, important and full of purpose.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and gives pupils a broad range of experiences. Provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent. The balance of the curriculum, however, is threatened by the excessively high emphasis on the teaching of literacy and numeracy.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is very good because it is very well managed, bringing together the work of class teachers, teaching assistants and specialised help from outside the school.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Class teachers and teaching assistants have been trained and use this training effectively. A specialist teacher provides excellent guidance and very effective support for individual pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for personal development is very good and makes a major contribution to the pupils' learning. Provision for spiritual development is excellent and builds upon the strong religious life of the school. Strong values support very good provision for moral and social development and good provision for cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school is very good at ensuring the safety and welfare of the pupils.

The parents value the school very highly and there are very good relationships between home and school based upon trust, mutual respect and openness. This partnership supports the pupils' learning very positively. Even so, there is room for further improvement, for example, through homework and possibly a home-school book concerning pupils' targets and work towards their achievement. The school needs to check that when there are so many inputs through small group and individual work outside the classroom, certain pupils do not miss out on National Curriculum learning. The school has made a good start at target setting with pupils, but this has yet to become a powerful way of improving learning because targets are not sufficiently linked to the expectations contained within the National Curriculum.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and acting deputy headteacher provide very strong and clear leadership for staff and pupils alike. The school is well managed. The school's work and life fulfil the values and aims of the school extremely well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body has a good range of expertise and meets its responsibilities well. Governors have made a good start at planning for the longer-term direction of the school and are becoming more involved with the day-to-day work of the school as 'critical friends'.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school puts very high and successful priority on self-evaluation as a way to improve.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses its resources very well and is especially good at attracting resources from outside partners and agencies.

There are enough qualified staff to meet the requirements of the curriculum. Good recruitment and training have built a very good and close-knit team of teachers and teaching assistants. The school's accommodation provides an attractive and stimulating place to learn and the school makes good use of what a well-designed building and grounds have to offer. The library, however, is small and there is not a discrete room for small group support for pupils with special educational needs or those learning English as an additional language. Resources for learning are good.

Strong leadership and competent management are at the heart of the school's success in helping pupils to learn effectively. Management takes good advice from outside experts and compares the school's performance and practices with very effective schools elsewhere. Governors and staff rarely defend current practice if they can find a better way. This helps them provide 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>• The school is well led and managed;</li> <li>• Their children are well taught and make good progress;</li> <li>• Behaviour, relationships and attitudes are good;</li> <li>• Teaching is good and their children are expected to work hard and do their best;</li> <li>• They find it easy to approach the school with problems or questions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework;</li> <li>• Music;</li> <li>• Physical activity for younger pupils.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the positive views of parents. Homework, while satisfactory, is an area for improvement. The provision for music is unsatisfactory and requires improvement. Children in the reception need more continuous access to outside play.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Most pupils join the reception class with attainment that is lower than the national average, and with very low development in speaking and listening. They have very low social and personal skills, and are unused to concentrating and working with others. They quickly learn to work hard, sensibly and with others and make at least good progress in all areas of their learning, especially in speaking and listening. They make a smooth transition to National Curriculum learning in Year 1, and continue to make good progress between Years 1 and 6. Progress is best in English, and more recently in mathematics and information and communication technology.
2. Girls and boys of different abilities and backgrounds make equivalent progress and most pupils with special educational needs and those who are learning English as a new language make very good progress. The reason for this good picture for all pupils is because teachers use assessment and their good knowledge of their pupils to understand the needs and potential of each pupil, and teach accordingly in ways that give help when needed and set sensible targets to be achieved. Even so, these procedures need to be simplified, and related better to National Curriculum levels of attainment. The school is very good at ensuring that teaching assistants, specialised teachers and other adults give well-focused support, and it uses a range of national initiatives, for example, booster classes and ways of improving reading, effectively. Particularly good is the way the school has taken advice from and worked with colleagues from the Education Action Zone on improving the pupils' use of spoken English to think through problems. The school has made a good start at giving effective support for very able pupils, and for girls who have low aspirations. Very good and effective provision for personal development underpins all the above, as do the school's values that are founded upon seeking high achievement, and nurturing high and realistic aspirations. Pupils and staff share the belief that anything is possible.
3. Standards of attainment by the end of Year 2 are rising at broadly the national rate and the school's rate of improvement is increasing. In National Curriculum tests and assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2001, results when compared with all schools nationally, were well below average in reading, writing and science, and broadly average in mathematics. When compared, however, with results in schools serving similar communities, the results were well above average in reading and writing, above average in science, and average in mathematics.
4. Until 2001, standards of attainment by the end of Year 6 had risen at slightly less than the national rate. There has been a considerable recent improvement, however, that promises to bring improvement in National Curriculum tests for 2002, especially in mathematics. In National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 in 2001, results were below the national average in English, and well below average in mathematics and science. Compared with similar schools, results were well above average for English, below average for science and well below average for mathematics. In results for previous years there was some evidence that girls had not achieved as well as boys. The school has taken action to rectify this and these moves are proving successful.
5. Results showed the school that there were particular weaknesses in the teaching and, therefore, learning of mathematics. From governors through senior management to all

staff, the school has made a concerted effort to rectify these weaknesses and they are proving successful all the way from the reception class to Year 6. The high emphasis upon the teaching of literacy and numeracy has brought significant dividends in both progress and attainment, and also in enriching learning across the curriculum. Even so, this has come at a cost of learning in other subjects, and the school now needs to find ways of supporting progress in literacy and numeracy in all subjects, both helping work in these subjects to extend these essential skills, and also helping teachers make better use of the pupils' increasing skills.

6. Current pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress in English, mathematics and science; their attainment overall by the end of Year 2 is still below national expectations, though broadly in line with these expectations in science. Because this good progress continues in all years between 3 and 6, attainment in all three subjects matches national expectations by the end of Year 6, both as to the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 4, and also those exceeding this standard.
7. In Years 1 and 2, all pupils make very good progress in information and communication technology and attain above the expected standard by the end of Year 2, and this very good picture continues in Years 3 to 6 with attainment by the end of Year 6 broadly matching expectations. Pupils make good progress in design and technology, history and physical education, and attain the expected standards by the end of Year 2. This position continues between Years 3 and 6, and pupils attain the expected standards. In art and design and geography, pupils make satisfactory and steady progress between Years 1 and 6 and attain the expected standards by the end of Years 2 and 6. In music, pupils make unsatisfactory progress as they move through the school, and attainment by the end of Years 2 and 6 is below expectations. Because children join the school with low attainment, they need to make very good progress in all subjects if they are to match securely national expectations by the end of Year 6 and then exceed them. The school accepts this challenge, and this inspection report highlights ways in which it can meet this challenge.

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

8. Pupils' attitudes to the school and their behaviour and personal development are all very good. Relationships across the school are excellent. Attendance is below the national average but improving.
9. Pupils' attitudes are very good. They enjoy coming to school, a fact supported by 99 per cent of parents in their answers to the questionnaires and by observation during the inspection. On arrival at school, pupils quickly settle down for registration and then eagerly get down to the work in hand. They talk to visitors about their school with pride and they are extremely interested and involved in all the activities the school offers. Apart from the normal school curriculum they have a wide choice of extra-curricular activities, in which the great majority of pupils, from reception up to Year 6, want to take part. Above all, pupils show their pride and satisfaction in achievement. A mother told the inspectors that her daughter who had just joined the school said, 'I'm glad I changed schools because this one is much nicer – and do you know what – I can read now!'
10. Behaviour is very good. Pupils are polite and courteous to adults and each other. They use words like 'please' and 'thank you', hold doors open and are just 'nice' children. A small number of pupils at the school have behaviour problems, but these are managed well and do not affect the learning of other pupils. However, the pupils are not naturally well behaved and sometimes less good behaviour was observed when they are working with people they do not know, for instance adults from a local company who come in to

help with readers. Their generally good behaviour is a measure of the teachers' skills at managing behaviour. The school has accepted pupils excluded from other schools; staff manage these pupils very well and their behaviour improves. There have been no exclusions since the previous inspection. Pupils say that bullying is rare but, if it should occur, the teachers and other members of staff soon deal with it. There were no signs of bullying or racial intolerance during the inspection and the school is strongly inclusive. The school's code of conduct asks pupils to care for and 'forgive others', and they do.

11. Pupils fully understand the impact of their actions on others and show respect for other people's feelings, values and beliefs. For example, at the end of a Year 3 science lesson, and just prior to lunch, pupils settled down quickly to say 'Grace' and to reflect quietly. They did this clearly with feeling, and the whole class joined in. Pupils are very caring toward others, for example:
  - In a lesson a teacher looked a little stressed and a pupil asked: 'Are you all right, miss?';
  - A teacher put down a cup of tea and a pupil asked if he should move it because he was worried that another pupil sitting nearby might knock it over;
  - Interviewing a group of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils, the inspector asked if there were anything at the school they would like to see improved and one Year 5 pupil replied that she would like to see better facilities for disabled pupils.

These examples were not the only ones and there is a thread of caring running through all that pupils do and say.

12. The degree of initiative and personal responsibility taken by pupils is good and this increases as they grow up through the school. All classes from reception up to Year 6 send two representatives to the school council, which meets every fortnight. At the council meeting observed during the inspection week, pupils showed a good degree of maturity in bringing up and discussing issues. A Year 6 girl chaired the meeting and handled the agenda competently. The agenda included action taken on matters arising from the previous meeting and the chair summarised decisions agreed at the meeting at the end. All pupils take turns to return the registers to the office and all help to tidy up at the end of lessons. A number of prefects in Year 6 help to supervise pupils in the playground and oversee them as they return from play. Year 6 pupils take responsibility for manipulating the overhead projector during assembly and controlling the music-player. Most pupils are anxious to help and are always ready to do so. When reception pupils arrive at the school, the older pupils support them and help them to settle in to their new school.
13. Relationships across the school are excellent and are a major strength of the school. Pupils like and respect adults, who are excellent role models in their own relationships. All the pupils interviewed said that one of the things they like most about the school was the way that the teachers and classroom assistants help them and are always ready to listen. The result is that pupils are kind to each other and there is an atmosphere of mutual respect in the school.
14. Pupils develop very well as balanced, thinking and perceptive young people, gaining in maturity and aspirations. This makes a very significant contribution to the quality of their learning. Their spiritual development is excellent and their moral and social development very good. Their cultural development is good, although hindered significantly by weaknesses in music, and to a lesser extent by the way awareness of other cultures is not enriched by visual displays and clearer links with the cycle of religious festivals of faiths other than Christianity.

15. Attendance during the last reporting year was well below the national average, with unauthorised absence above average. Attendance has declined since the last inspection. During the spring term, with support from the Education Action Zone's home school liaison officer, attendance improved although it is still, overall, below the previous year's national average. The unauthorised absence rate is now below average and has improved. The attendance figures are adversely affected by a number of regular absentees, whose achievement will be affected by their low attendance rate. During the inspection most pupils arrived at school on time and there is no evidence that lateness is a problem, although the school takes firm action to ensure that this position is maintained.

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

16. Good teaching lies at the heart of the school's success and has improved significantly since the last inspection. This improvement is likely to continue, because senior management places considerable priority upon performance management and systematic and well-focused staff development. Similarly, staff are keen to learn ways of improving the learning of all pupils and are increasingly testing their own achievements against their assessment of pupils' progress.
17. Teaching throughout the school is never unsatisfactory and the majority is at least good. In the reception class most teaching is very good or excellent, and in Years 1 and 2 it is usually good and often very good. In Years 3 to 6, teaching is usually at least good and very good in more than a third of all lessons. Although there are differences, this consistent good quality enables pupils to make good and steady progress as they move up the school.
18. In the best lessons, teachers plan very carefully so that the learning is interesting, has clear objectives and progresses one step at a time. In these lessons teachers challenge the pupils to achieve very well, whatever their ability or background. These teachers manage the lessons with pace and excitement, and pupils pay close attention because they know they need to concentrate and listen if they are not to fall behind. Pupils do not find this threatening because they trust that their teachers, and the teaching assistants, know each pupil's potential and will help when necessary, but not before. This dynamic teaching is underpinned by very good management of pupils' behaviour and by building excellent relationships based upon mutual respect. Pupils match this challenging teaching by expecting much of themselves; they become ambitious and independent learners with high but realistic aspirations.
19. This teaching shows the teachers' skills at using their own clear language to develop the pupils' speaking and listening skills, asking questions in ways that help pupils tease out solutions for themselves. This produces learning that is independent and seeks the best, rather than just completing tasks. In turn, it also helps pupils expect a lot of their teachers and themselves because they are very keen to learn and succeed. They take great care with their work and show pride in their achievements. They are not afraid to risk getting something wrong because they see this as a way to find how to get something right. Similarly, teachers emphasise the use of writing and reading as essential tools for learning, and, consequently, pupils treat reading and writing as essential skills to improve. Teachers stress the importance and relevance of the learning, as in a numeracy lesson in which getting a well-paid job was dependent on good mental arithmetic; pupils then voted on which of them deserved to get the job!

20. Teaching, and, consequently, learning is always good in English lessons in Years 1 and 2, and in Years 3 to 6 both are almost always good or very good in more than half of lessons. Teachers give literacy very high priority, and they are especially effective in developing the pupils' skills at using spoken and heard language to think through problems, express clear solutions and ask further probing questions.
21. The school is working very hard to improve the teaching of numeracy, but this is a more recent initiative. Even so, teaching is improving rapidly and has already brought significant benefits to the pupils' learning. Pupils enjoy mathematics, recognise its importance and collaborate with each other to find solutions.
22. The teaching of information and communication technology benefits from very good specialised teaching using the well-equipped computer suite. Pupils are very excited by these lessons, listen intently and work very hard together and on their own. In other lessons, however, teachers do not make enough use of information and communication technology, and this hinders the ability of pupils to consolidate skills and use these skills to enrich all learning.
23. A strength in all classes is the close partnership between class teachers and teaching assistants. They plan lessons together and work closely as a team. Teaching assistants are good teachers, supporting individuals or groups chosen for special support. This is supported by systematic assessment that allows teaching to focus on the needs of pupils with particular learning needs.
24. Teaching is concerned with the learning needs of all pupils. Consequently, pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language are very well supported either in class or through very skilled specialist teachers brought into school from outside. Teachers are looking more closely at the needs of very able pupils, and have identified almost a quarter of all pupils as potentially in this category. Booster classes are already benefiting these pupils, alongside other pupils in danger of underachieving, as are other groups such as the 'novel reading' group in Year 6. These are very positive initiatives and could be further developed.
25. Even though the contribution of specialised groups has and is bringing great benefits to pupils' learning, the school needs to take care that this does not come at the cost of other important learning. If pupils benefit from too many small groups, or join these groups while other pupils are in, for instance, assembly, this takes away their right to other mainstream and essential learning opportunities.
26. In the main, the teaching of subjects other than English, mathematics and information and communication technology, while always at least satisfactory, is not as good. This is usually either because teachers do not have the support of a subject leader, for instance, music, or because the teacher lacks subject confidence and expertise, for instance, art and design, or because the lessons lack the tight discipline of skills to be learned rather than content to be covered. This is in part because of the high focus the school places on literacy and numeracy. This focus has led teachers to allow other subjects to lose proper importance, and, more significantly, to miss understanding that literacy and numeracy can be taught even more effectively through other subjects because pupils see the immediate relevance of these skills. Even so, the teachers' commitment and core skills, alongside the very good attitudes of the pupils, help pupils make reasonable progress in all subjects except music. The school recognises that the pupils' progress could be even better.



27. Teachers are making much more use of assessment and target setting, and, as Year 5 pupils explained to an inspector, this is bringing much more point and purpose to the pupils' work. The school has a very good policy on responding to pupils' work. This policy explains why it is essential to feed back to pupils where and why they succeed, why they meet problems and what they need to learn next. This has yet, however, to become a central part of most teachers' skills, and this is particularly the case with written marking. One reason for this is that the overall planning for teaching of the curriculum is insufficiently linked to National Curriculum attainment levels, and consequently, lessons sometimes lack clear objectives for skills to be learned, and, therefore, assessment lacks precision and strong links to the teaching and learning.
28. Teachers set homework systematically and tasks to be done at home are usually appropriate. Homework has yet, however, to make a strong contribution to helping pupils to extend, enrich and consolidate their learning. Several parents rightly felt this was an area for improvement.

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

29. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and for religious education. The school provides a broad curriculum but not a sufficiently well-balanced one. Reasons for this include the extra time the school provides for literacy and the organisation of the school timetable, which restricts time for other subjects, and places all the foundation subjects in the afternoons. The school misses opportunities to manage the curriculum in ways in which one subject can complement and support another, for example, by focusing on the way work in, for instance, design and technology can develop the use of spoken language as a tool for analysing and solving problems, a particular problem for many pupils. The situation overall is made worse by the fact that some individuals and groups miss some afternoon lessons for extra literacy and numeracy teaching. This potentially creates inequality of opportunity and needs more careful management. There is currently insufficient time devoted to music and design and technology.
30. The information and communication technology curriculum is good. It is well taught, but mainly as a discrete subject and is not yet sufficiently well integrated into teaching across subjects. This highlights the need to plan the whole curriculum more coherently and cohesively. A more coherent approach would find ways in which teaching and learning of basic skills could thread their way through every subject in a planned way, for example, using history to build empathetic writing, and writing in science to build inference and deduction.
31. Staff plan so that all required areas are covered, but emphasis on literacy and numeracy has allowed the quality in some other subjects to drop, for example, in music. This threatens the balance of the curriculum. Similarly, while the English and mathematics curricula are set out well for the steady building of skills expected at each age, this is not the case for other subjects. This unbalances the curriculum because too much emphasis is placed upon acquiring facts, without the essential foundation of skills and understanding. The current imbalance tends to lead to the presentation of the curriculum for subjects other than English and mathematics to be the same for all, rather than being adapted to the needs of the whole range of abilities and cultural backgrounds.
32. The school is developing a new curriculum for education in personal relationships, and the new syllabus will build upon present good but less coherent provision. The school

makes good provision for sex education in Years 5 and 6, and drugs education is dealt with well. Pupils are introduced to the responsibilities of citizenship well and in many ways, and a good range of competitive sport allows pupils to learn the need to balance competing with playing in a sporting way.

33. Good support allows full access to the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language. The school goes out of its way to make the curriculum equally relevant to girls and boys of all levels of ability, and recognises the unique needs and contribution that pupils from other cultures have and can make.
34. The curriculum has many strengths. These include very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. These activities provide opportunities for pupils to see that learning is boundless and creates a good foundation for life-long learning. The support sponsored through the Education Action Zone (EAZ) and that provided through the Standards Fund and New Opportunities funds are helping to raise standards. For example, the Education Action Zone provides additional support for groups in literacy and numeracy whilst the Standards Fund provides the Saturday morning activities such as Egyptian dancing, cookery and CD making.
35. Children join the reception from many pre-school groups, and, therefore, co-ordination is difficult. To overcome this, the school runs a 'siblings' session that helps children make a smooth transition into formal schooling. The curriculum in the reception provides a very good foundation for future learning. The school has positive links with the Catholic secondary school to which many of the pupils progress, although these offer room for further development. There are established links with local primary schools to share some group teaching. The curriculum provides a secure foundation for learning within the secondary phase of the pupils' schooling.

### **Contribution of the community to pupils' learning**

36. The local and wider community makes a very good contribution to pupils' learning. A large number of the community links take place through the Education Action Zone (EAZ) and a number of individuals and organisations involved were seen either working in school or during a community tea organised by the school. A group of employees from American Express come into school to listen to pupils reading each week, and this brings another perspective to pupils' learning. The home-school liaison officer has been running a successful project with the headteacher to improve and promote good attendance. The EAZ also finances mathematics, literacy, and Foundation Stage consultants, and an information technology technician. A reporter from a local newspaper comes into the school to mentor a group of Year 6 pupils, and particularly girls, who are showing signs of becoming disaffected with school or who have low aspirations. This is a development the school could usefully extend. Overall the EAZ makes a very positive contribution to pupils' learning. Other members of the local community were also seen during the inspection listening to pupils read. Outside agencies make a major contribution to pupils' learning, for example, the school nursing service and the speech and language service, both from the local health service. There are close and helpful links with the diocese through the diocesan adviser.

### **Provision for personal development**

37. Provision for pupils' personal development is very good and a core strength of the school. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection. It not only

supports the growth of pupils into young people certain of their own value and identity, and keen and able to succeed, but also provides a strong foundation for academic learning. It is so successful because the school has strong values and a clear vision of what the quality of life should be; these are values and a vision that staff act out and nurture at every opportunity. They provide fine role models for the pupils. The school has a co-ordinator for education in personal relationships and cultural development, and she has clear plans for improvement, some of which are already successfully implemented.

38. Provision for spiritual development is excellent. This is rooted in the religious life of the school. Assemblies are deeply reflective and events of strong corporate and collective worship. Pupils use quiet times for reflection devoutly and reverently, and make prayer a part of their lives. This importance of prayer is enriched by the opportunities for prayer at the end of each day. Pupils see these times as ways of celebrating and giving thanks for the day, and bringing their needs before God. Other pupils value and respect the way their fellow pupils share their needs. This is underpinned by religious education that increases pupils' understanding and ability to question while developing their own unique faith and belief. Pupils learn the importance of faith in human lives and are unafraid to deal with issues that may not have the certainty of proof.
39. Provision for moral development is very good. Pupils are taught what is right and wrong, and why this is so. Staff have high and clear expectations, and lead by their personal good example. The school has a clear code of conduct that includes the need to forgive others. Classes draw up and agree their own special codes, and pupils accept these rules as just and sensible. Many lessons address moral issues, for example, child labour in Victorian times, and the developing programme for education in personal relationships is bringing greater depth to the pupils' understanding. The school is sensibly considering the use of 'circle time'. These are times when pupils can talk through problems where doing right is difficult to decide and difficult to do. Moral achievement is recognised and celebrated.
40. Provision for social development is very good. The pupils learn, in the main, by playing a full and conscious part in a caring, orderly, purposeful and ambitious community. They gain further understanding through the school council that grapples with real problems and finds realistic solutions. The importance of caring about and for others is recognised and rewarded, for example, by being allowed to sit on the 'special table' at lunch, and pupils learn by raising money for a range of charities. Older pupils benefit from a demanding day away from school and home, a weekend residential and then a full week; this encourages independence. Rewards for meeting targets help pupils to learn that such benefits need to be earned, and lessons often show how the pupils' learning is relevant to future responsibilities at work and when pupils will themselves be parents. Staff encourage pupils to take responsibility and show initiative, for instance, acting as prefects. The school has many visitors to school and many visits out, and this brings awareness of the social skills needed in the wider world, and the responsibilities of being a full citizen.
41. Provision for cultural development is good, and has significantly improved since the last inspection. The school community has pupils from many cultural backgrounds and several faiths. By learning to value and respect these differences, the pupils are well prepared for life in a society of many faiths. The religious education programme enables pupils to study other faiths, and the school is planning a 'world faith week'. Work in this subject has led to profitable visits to synagogues and an Islamic centre, and interesting visits from Hindu dancers and a rabbi. As yet, however, the school does not have ways of celebrating the annual cycle of festivals of other faiths, for example,

the Coptic Christianity, Muslim, Hindu and Jewish faiths alongside those of Catholic Christianity. History and geography allow pupils to learn widely about the part that culture played in human lives in the past and plays in other societies today, and pen-pal links are being forged with African children. In art and design, pupils study a range of major artists and seek to understand their achievements. Weaknesses in music restrict the pupils' understanding and experience of this area of creativity. To balance this, pupils have good opportunities to enjoy the satisfaction and understanding that comes from performance in dance and drama. A marked feature of the provision is the way the school recognises and celebrates the culture and achievements within pupils' own home communities, for example, the photo displays in the main foyer. The school has come a long way since the last inspection and now needs to audit how far they have come and how far they still need to go, for example, by making celebration of other cultures more explicit through assemblies, events and displays around the school, and using such subjects as science and design and technology to highlight human achievement, especially of women and within other cultures.

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

42. The school's procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good. The procedures for providing educational and personal support and guidance for pupils are good, and the procedures for monitoring academic performance and personal development are satisfactory. The pupils receive their education in a very caring, supportive and secure environment.
43. The school has the correct child protection procedures in place, with the headteacher as the designated adult. One other member of staff has also received the relevant training. The school's child protection policy is based on the local education authority's own procedures. All staff, including classroom assistants and dinner supervisors, receive regular training on child protection. The subject appears on the agenda for staff meetings every half term. The school has a positive relationship with the social services department and the headteacher is on first name terms with the relevant social worker. The school's procedures are secure.
44. The procedures for health and safety and for first aid are very good. The headteacher carries out regular health and safety inspections with the caretaker, and the headteacher reacts quickly to any matters that arise. For example, at the initial school visit the registered inspector expressed concern that there was no soft material under the new play equipment, provided through the EAZ, in the central courtyard. By the time of the inspection the local education authority's health and safety department had carried out a full risk assessment on the equipment. A member of the governing body has overall responsibility for health and safety and is closely involved with checking that things are as they need to be. Procedures for dealing with and reporting accidents and injuries are very good, with a number of members of staff having first-aid qualifications. Accident books are properly completed and parents are given a letter if a pupil receives a bump on the head. The school's experienced receptionist is responsible for administering medication if and when required.
45. The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. The school has recently made a major effort to improve pupils' attendance. A number of innovative schemes have been initiated in conjunction with the home school liaison officer (HLSO) and funded through the EAZ. These involve a number of games and competitions between classes and with a neighbouring school. Attendance was monitored on a weekly basis during the spring term and the rate improved. During some weeks the overall rate was well above last year's national average. The fact that the whole term

rate was still below that figure was partly due to a high level of sickness among Year 6 pupils in the seventh week of term. The level of unauthorised absence has been reduced as a result of the school's efforts. Pupils receive awards for good attendance and there are incentives for those with a poor attendance record, who improve. The most recent initiative aims to encourage prompt arrival and the headteacher and HSL0 stand at the gate on random days giving out 'air mile' stickers to pupils who arrive on time. The headteacher has taken personal responsibility for monitoring the registers and attendance overall, to make parents understand its importance. However, support by the education welfare service has not been extensive and, without their support, the very good initiatives being carried out at the moment by the school may not have a permanent long-term effect.

46. The school has a very effective and positive behaviour policy with a well-considered range of rewards and sanctions. The school rules are well displayed around the school, and classroom rules are negotiated with pupils. The principles are based on celebrating achievement and improving motivation. Parents are informed about good work and good behaviour. Pupils interviewed knew the procedures and what happens if they misbehave. Golden time (time when pupils can choose activities as a reward for meeting their targets) plays an important part in the policy, and pupils can lose 'golden time' for inappropriate behaviour. Adults in the school act as very good role models for pupils. The effect of the school's positive behaviour policy is seen in the very good behaviour and lack of bullying seen around the school, the lack of exclusions and the ability of the school to accept pupils excluded from elsewhere. The school does not tolerate oppressive behaviour and pupils are aware of this.
47. The school's pastoral care of pupils, as at the time of the last inspection, is very good. Personal development is monitored very well and pupils are given very good support. The school keeps records of concern and these are followed up closely, as is the record of attendance of those pupils who are causing concern. The headteacher and staff know all the pupils well and this makes it easy to detect any problems early, should they arise. Each classroom has an achievement board, which celebrates effort as well as achievement. This helps staff to keep track of pupils' progress both personally and academically, and to note any concerns. The school has a close relationship with parents and the school soon becomes aware of any problems arising from home and involves parents in concerns arising from school. The excellent relationships across the school encourage pupils to discuss problems with members of staff if and when they arise.

### **Support and guidance for pupils with especial and individual needs**

48. Support and guidance for pupils with special educational needs are very well managed and very effectively implemented. The school is well prepared for the new Code of Practice that will apply from September 2002. Staff identify needs quickly and early, decide and provide well-chosen support, and continuously monitor and evaluate progress. Parents are properly involved in reviewing progress and finding solutions. The school provides support in the main through highly skilled teaching assistants working very closely with the class teachers. Colleagues from the Local Education Authority, health services and Education Action Zone, and on occasion from the mental health services, considerably enhance this provision. There is a positive relationship with the educational psychology service when specific diagnosis and assessment are required. The provision is so effective because the co-ordinator ensures that each input is carefully linked to the others, and because outside colleagues have provided training for staff.

49. This provision is closely linked to support for pupils learning English as an additional language. Again good training for staff provides secure foundations, as does the management oversight by the school's special educational needs co-ordinator working closely with key assistants. A specialised and highly skilled specialist teacher ensures that pupils make rapid progress in the acquisition of English and gain full access to the curriculum, liaising with parents when necessary.
50. The school also places great importance on the needs of very able pupils. They are identified and specialist groups and activities provided. Even so, although good, this provision is not yet as coherent and comprehensive as that for pupils at the other end of the ability scale.
51. The school identified that some girls do not achieve as well as boys, and have recognised that this is connected with their lower aspirations. Inspectors agree with this conclusion and see the provision of mentors from outside the school as a positive initiative, and one that is already showing success.

### **Assessment**

52. The school places high priority on the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress. Staff and senior management recognise the central role that assessment plays in guiding teachers on how and where their teaching must improve and adapt, and whether each class or individual pupil is learning as well as they can. Staff rigorously and systematically analyse assessment records and results in National Curriculum tests to identify areas for priority in the school's improvement plan, for example, underachievement of girls and low attainment in mathematics. A local measure of progress in reading sharpens these procedures. All the above is helping the school understand how different areas of the school's work must be managed as part of an overall plan to raise attainment, for example, that targeted help from classroom assistants and specialist teachers alongside the class teacher raises standards. Most progress has been made in the teaching of literacy and more recently in mathematics. This increased understanding has led to well-selected training for staff, visits to very effective schools to learn from their practice, and effective partnership with colleagues from the Education Action Zone and Local Education Authority support services. Teachers relate this information and increased understanding to challenging targets for individual pupils, each class, and the school as a whole to achieve. This work is guided by carefully thought through policies for assessment and responding to pupils' work, for instance, through the marking of work, but these have yet to be fully implemented by all staff.
53. The positive results of this work are evident in a more focused and ambitious school improvement plan, lessons with clearer objectives, and pupils having a clearer, but not yet sufficient, understanding of what they must do to achieve their potential. Older pupils, without being asked, told inspectors how they had targets to achieve and how teachers helped them to reach these targets. They said how much this helped them and how they were pleased when success was rewarded by choosing activities in 'golden time'. Similarly, honest and open self-evaluation is already helping staff to develop continually their skills and the school as a whole to see better ways of improving its performance. Overall, this is creating a school with increased ambition and a deeper realisation that learning must have purpose and relevance to pupils' present and future lives.
54. Even so, the school is at the beginning stages in these developments and has yet to gain full benefit from its efforts. Although there is a great deal of assessment

information, this is not yet in a form to bring immediate and day-by-day benefits. This is because the school needs to base assessment upon a clearer and simpler structure of National Curriculum skills to be gained. At present:

- Staff do not have a clear enough understanding of the skills pupils must gain at each age and each stage in their National Curriculum learning;
- The planning of the curriculum is insufficiently related to the necessary steps in acquisition of skills required at each age; this leads to learning objectives that are too general and, therefore, evaluation of progress by teachers and pupils alike becomes imprecise;
- The curriculum is not sufficiently planned in ways that help both teachers and pupils to see how each skill builds a foundation for the next;
- The teaching sometimes does not make clear precisely the area of learning the teacher will look for in each pupil's learning;
- Targets for pupils are not sufficiently related to pupils evaluating their own work and planning their own improvement;
- Marking and verbal feedback to pupils are often too general and insufficiently related to the objectives of the lesson and National Curriculum levels.

As a result, staff and pupils run the risk of being overwhelmed by the detail rather than having a clear and simple awareness of 'what we are learning today and why', and 'what are the specific skills we need to learn and will be assessed'.

55. The school has made a very good start but now needs to consider simpler and more immediately relevant ways of:

- Tracking and evaluating individual pupils' progress continuously against National Curriculum levels with clear targets to achieve;
- Adapting teaching to ensure that each pupil builds upon previous learning and that they progress at a suitable rate, for example, learning objectives to make very clear the skill to be learned and at what level in each lesson;
- Bringing the benefits of assessment together to give week-by-week feedback to pupils so that they are clear as to where they are succeeding, where they are meeting problems, and what they have to learn next; this applies especially to marking;
- Linking feedback to pupils more precisely to National Curriculum levels that relate more precisely to pupils' individual targets. Adaptations in teaching and support for pupils' planning for meeting their targets need to relate more coherently to pupils' self-evaluation and recording of their achievements;
- Using this feedback to help pupils to see a stronger link between, for example, empathetic and expressive writing in English, and writing for a purpose in history. Similarly, links need to be clearer between the analysis and presentation of mathematical data and increased understanding and skills in geography.

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

56. The parents have very positive views of the school. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents and the impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school are good.

57. The parents' views of the school, as indicated at the parents' meeting and the high number of questionnaires returned, are very positive. All the questions were answered positively by over 90 per cent of parents. All parents said that they would feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or problems, an indication of the

openness of the school. The parents who attended the social afternoon tea party held during the inspection confirmed these positive views of the school. The headteacher, in particular, is held in high regard. A few points of concern were raised at the parents' meeting, such as a perceived lack of challenge for more able pupils and a lack of physical activities, but overall, parents' views are very positive. These are both areas the school recognises and is seeking to improve further.

58. The school provides a wide range of good quality information for parents. There is a full and detailed prospectus and governors' annual reports to parents, although the latter is a bit dull. Both of these contain the relevant statutory information. The school sends out regular fortnightly newsletters telling parents about events and any other information. The most important items of information within the newsletters are translated into Arabic for the Sudanese parents and these parents have direct access to the translators through whom they can raise concerns. The Sussex English as an Additional Language Service provides this facility. Pupils' annual reports cover the full range of core and other foundation subjects and rate such things as achievement, effort and behaviour. They inform parents of pupils in Years 2 and 6 of the National Curriculum level attained in core subjects, and this practice could usefully be extended to the other years. The school has consultation evenings twice a year for parents and an 'open-day' once a term when parents can come into the school to see their children at work. At the last 50 per cent of parents attended and most find them valuable.
59. The school's links with its parents are effective. Parents support the school well and the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) raises funds for extra resources for the school. In a normal year the PTA raises upwards of £2000 for the school.
60. Parents make a good contribution to pupils' learning at school and at home, and a group from the parish are looking at ways to develop the religious life of the school. A small number of parents come into the school to help and listen to pupils read, and help out in the reception class. The number is relatively small because there is already a significant number of other people from the community helping in this way. Parents readily help by accompanying pupils on school trips and outings, which helps to maintain the required adult-pupil ratio. However, there are no home-school books and homework diaries are not used well, although reading diaries in the reception class and Years 1 and 2 are used well by home and school and provide an effective link. While pupils receive homework on Fridays, the amount is inconsistent and, in Year 6, it is insufficient to prepare pupils well for the experience in secondary schools. Some parents make a very positive contribution towards their children's education. For example, booster classes are held on Saturday mornings for borderline Level 4 pupils. Parents encourage the children to attend and take them to these classes. This partnership activity resulted, last year, in all the pupils who attended these classes achieving Level 4 in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

61. The recently appointed headteacher has brought a new forward direction and shared sense of purpose to the school. She provides very strong professional and personal leadership for both staff and pupils, and is creating a cohesive and determined team. She is very well supported in this task by the acting deputy headteacher who shows strong leadership qualities when taking assemblies as well as when managing her own areas of the curriculum. The senior management is creating a partnership between staff, pupils, parents and colleagues from outside the school that is based upon openness, trust and mutual respect. Staff willingly and ably pick up this shared leadership in their various management roles.



62. The school is well and increasingly expertly managed. Learning from advice from others and by comparing the school's performance and practice with schools elsewhere, management overall is effective and is improving. Self-evaluation against carefully selected targets has become a corner stone of continuous improvement. Even so, the school's energy and determination have led to some loss of the simple message and runs the danger of becoming overly complicated. For example, because the curriculum is not sufficiently planned around National Curriculum levels of attainment, assessment becomes unfocussed and an unwieldy tool for measuring and tracking each pupil's progress. Consequently, management cannot see sufficiently quickly and clearly where things need to change and improve. This leads to management missing the 'big picture' that shows how each part supports the others, for example, how partnership with parents, teaching, styles of learning, behaviour and attitudes, attendance, staff development and resources can and should contribute to the achievement of a chosen objective.
63. Improvement in standards in literacy, provision at the Foundation Stage, and the coherence of support for pupils with special educational needs and pupils learning English as an additional language all provide examples of what is gained by good management, and to balance this, the drop in standards in music is directly attributable to the absence of a subject leader.
64. The school improvement plan provides a useful and practical action plan for improvement, selecting sensible priorities chosen by analysing and interpreting assessment data, and tested against challenging targets. However, as an example of the loss of the 'big picture', the plan loses sight of the need to assure quality in all areas of the curriculum, since each subject will complement the others. Even so, the school does spot what is important and chooses innovative ways of bringing improvement, for instance, mentors to help girls raise their aspirations.
65. The governing body includes a wide range of expertise and is committed to raising standards, while maintaining the core values of the school. Governors have shown themselves to be unafraid of the hard decision, for example, when recruiting and selecting staff. They ensure that they meet their statutory responsibilities and act as a very supportive yet properly critical friend to the headteacher and staff. They recognise that their involvement with the school, for instance, individual governors working with one class in particular, must support more precise monitoring and evaluating of standards week-by-week and not solely through analysis of results in National Curriculum tests. They have a vision for the future of the school that needs to more closely linked to action planning. Governors and managers understand fully the difference between efficiency, which is doing things well, and effectiveness, which is doing the right things. This understanding is helping them hone and simplify the way the school is managed.

## **Staffing**

66. With the exception of music, there are enough qualified and specialised staff to meet the requirements of the curriculum, and the school enhances this resource by working in partnership with colleagues from the Local Education Authority and the Education Action Zone. Performance management procedures support teaching and support staff, and these are linked to well-chosen staff development, for example, training in cultural awareness from the specialist teacher for pupils learning English as an additional language and on how to counter the low level of pupils' speaking and listening skills from a specialist from the Education Action Zone. The school improvement plan,

however, has yet to be supported by a strategic staff development plan, and, therefore, staff development tends to be reactive and places too great reliance on courses out of school, rather than sharing of best practice already in school. This misses opportunities for subject managers to provide leadership for colleagues. Newly qualified staff are well supported and new staff receive good induction. Training for teaching assistants has been especially effective. Staff are sensibly deployed and all have clear job descriptions. Responsibilities are sensibly shared and clearly delegated, although the responsibilities of the acting deputy are too wide and there is no subject leader for music.

### **Accommodation**

67. The school buildings are well designed and effectively used. They are surrounded by good hard play and green sports areas, and a very good 'wild area' that provides pupils with a genuine, though short, walk through real countryside. The Education Action Zone has helped provide additional equipment, for example, in the atrium area. Very good displays make the classrooms and open areas vibrant places in which to learn, and furniture and buildings are kept in a good state of repair. The caretaker ensures the whole school is clean and provides a high quality environment in which to teach and learn. Governors are sensibly considering possible improvements and adaptations because they realise the library is too small. Learning support would be better served if there were a discrete room for small group and individual teaching.

### **Resources for learning**

68. Resources for learning are of good quality, adequate range and quantity, and stored in ways that make them accessible. The computer suite is of high quality and the library provides a good stock of well-arranged books. The school is well supplied with educational technology such as video machines and overhead projectors. It has adequate information technology to support the management and administration of the school, although senior management realise that the school can make greater use of this technology to simplify such essential support for learning as assessment.

### **Efficiency**

69. Governors ensure financial resources are well budgeted and investment is prudent, and they ensure that the school maintains a sensible surplus at the end of each year. Good financial planning supports the school's educational priorities. The priorities are well linked to the school improvement plan and school funds are used effectively. Among the present priorities is the school's successful decision to employ experienced and well-trained classroom assistants to support pupils' learning. The school's accounts were last audited three years ago and the new and experienced chairman of the finance committee has ensured that the school has acted upon the auditors' recommendations. Specific grants are used well and effectively for their designated purpose. The day-to-day management of the accounts is in the hands of the new school bursar, who has a wide experience gained from working in this capacity for a comprehensive school. The new finance governor is looking at new ways to raise extra funds for the school and the potential for even better financial management. The school administrators are skilled and ensure that financial control is secure and the school runs smoothly.

### **Value for money**

70. The governors ensure that they seek best value by taking advice, comparing the school's performance and practice with other schools, challenging the way things were

done in the past and working hard to see they get the highest quality at lowest price. Considering the level of finance the school receives and the good progress and personal development of pupils, the school provides good value for money.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

71. The recently appointed headteacher is leading a period of rapid development and improvement and this has already helped staff to raise standards. Even so, there is still work to be done and governors realise this. To raise standards further, governors and staff should:

(1) Improve the balance and coherence of the curriculum by:

- ensuring that the curriculum is set out in ways that make clear the National Curriculum skills and attainment targets to be achieved at each age, and that these guide teaching and test learning more precisely;
- giving enough priority to all subjects of the curriculum so that each contributes to the others, for example, learning in music supporting an understanding of period in history. This should improve the balance of the curriculum;
- making planning across the curriculum more coherent so that all subjects are seen as playing an essential part in raising standards in literacy and numeracy;
- improving provision for the creative and performing arts, and especially music, so that they enrich all learning and cultural development;
- using such subjects as design and technology more fully as a context for development of pupils' skills in the use of spoken language for thinking and solving problems;
- ensuring that the overall management ensures all pupils have equal access to the curriculum.

(Paragraphs 29 – 36 are best read as a whole, and then related to paragraphs 62 and 64)

(2) Improve the effective use of assessment to improve teaching and learning by:

- tracking and evaluating individual pupils' progress more continuously against National Curriculum levels, relating this to targets that exemplify these levels;
- adapting the planning of teaching so that it is better related to this continuous assessment;
- bringing the benefits of assessment together to give week-by-week feedback to pupils. This applies especially to marking;
- linking feedback to pupils more precisely to National Curriculum levels, and more coherently and immediately to pupils' individual targets and their planning and actions for meeting their targets.

(Paragraphs 52 – 55 are best read as a whole, with particular attention to paragraphs 54 and 55)

**When addressing these key areas (1 and 2), governors and staff should also consider the following areas for improvement:**

(3) Improve provision for music by:

- ensuring that the subject has a subject leader;
- designing and implementing a more helpful scheme of work;
- providing training for staff;
- auditing and improving resources for learning.

(Paragraphs 151 – 156)

(4) Further improve the effective use of homework by:

- reviewing, evaluating and improving present practice in ways that involve parents;
- creating a better link between work in class and independent learning at home;
- ensuring that parents are better informed as to what the homework task is, why it was set and how they can help their children.

(Paragraphs 28 and 60)

(5) Improve attendance by:

- continuing with present strategies.

(Paragraphs 15 and 45)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	65
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	21

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	19	35	9	0	0	0
Percentage	3	29	54	14	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. [When the total number is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100, use only the first sentence.]

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	206
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	68

#### Special educational needs

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	39

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	22

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	16	14

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	14	13
	Girls	12	12	12
	Total	25	26	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	83 (68)	87 (74)	83 (74)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	13	14
	Girls	12	11	12
	Total	24	24	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	80 (74)	80 (77)	87 (77)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	16	14

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	8	12
	Girls	11	4	12
	Total	22	12	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	73 (73)	40 (53)	80 (83)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	10	9	12
	Girls	10	7	10
	Total	20	16	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	67 (77)	53 (80)	73 (87)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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



### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	190
Any other minority ethnic group	13

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

### **Teachers and classes**

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	36
Average class size	22.7

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	214

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6
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.*

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

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

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

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000-2001
	£
Total income	422126
Total expenditure	429816
Expenditure per pupil	2028
Balance brought forward from previous year	33525
Balance carried forward to next year	25835

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	206
Number of questionnaires returned	101

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	69	30	0	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	66	33	0	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	60	39	1	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	52	38	9	1	0
The teaching is good.	73	23	4	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	56	43	0	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	83	17	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	74	25	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	62	37	1	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	61	33	3	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	64	35	1	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	61	34	3	1	1

### Other issues raised by parents

- Some feel that there is too little physical activity for children in the reception class.
- Several feel that teaching needs to be better targeted at the pupils' various levels of ability, for example, more challenge for the more able.
- Some feel that reception children feel insecure when playing with older pupils.

Inspectors agree that, while satisfactory, the above areas need improvement.

## **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**

(Children at the Foundation Stage have six areas of learning and are expected to achieve set goals in each area of learning before they move on to Year 1. They progress through three steps or stages and some should move on beyond step three.)

72. Provision for learning in the reception class is very good. It is planned to meet guidance for this stage and to reflect the spirit and purpose of that national guidance. It gives the children a very good start to their schooling and provides a sound foundation for their later learning within the National Curriculum. They join Year 1 as confident young people, keen and able to learn.
73. The co-ordinator, who, is also the class teacher, provides very good leadership for her team of teaching assistants and helpers, and very skilled management. Joint planning is at the heart of very good teaching, and the adults work as a very effective and close-knit teaching team, that is committed, determined and clear as to the part each member has to play. Effective training plays an important part in the improving quality of provision.
74. The main room is a good setting with easy access to a good range of quality resources and suitable places for play with water or sand or cooking. There is immediate access to a safe outdoor play area, and fairly easy access to a central atrium area, which has good adventure play equipment. Children work confidently in the computer suite that is some distance away. The team make good use of all these spaces, and the staff make sure that activity areas are varied and well organised. Lively, stimulating and appropriate displays enrich the environment and celebrate pupils' achievements.
75. Most children have lower than average attainment when they join the reception class, and their use of expressive language and their personal and social skills are particularly low. Even so, they quickly learn the routines of the classroom and of the wider school, and most make very good progress in all the areas of learning. Most will achieve their early learning goals by the time they move on to the Year 1 class, and some will exceed them. The teaching team ensures that it identifies the abilities of each child and makes the work challenging for girls and boys of all abilities so that each individual reaches his or her potential. Staff use systematic assessment to check the children's progress and act immediately if it slows. The children's very good progress does not happen by chance but through skilled planning and carefully focused teaching. This care and support are equally good for children with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language.
76. Learning is rich and rapid because teaching is consistently very good. At the heart of the teaching are clear routines that the adults explain, teach and continually reinforce. Consequently, children learn to concentrate, relate well with other children and adults, and stick at a task once it is chosen. They become keen to learn, sharing and inspired by the enthusiasm of their teachers. The carefully chosen and managed learning opportunities help the children to see learning as relevant, important, satisfying and fun.
77. Staff work in close co-operation with colleagues from outside the school, especially those from the Education Action Zone. This is particularly beneficial in identifying and addressing the spoken language needs of the children. The children have not all had

pre-school experience and those that have, come from many playgroups. To overcome this, the school runs a 'sibling club' that helps children to gain in confidence before they join the school. There is a good and working partnership with parents, and one mother in particular has become almost a permanent member of the team. Children regularly take home book-bags to share books with their parents.

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

78. Teaching is very good indeed and most children will meet their early learning goals by the time they move on to Year 1. Very few will exceed them because they find it difficult to see the world from others' points of view and to take turns without being told to. The team has high expectations of the children and consistently ensures that children learn the right ways of working and relating to others. In part this comes through a careful balance between activities that are led by an adult and those planned by teachers but chosen by the children. In one lesson and after a very good session on the carpet with the class teacher, the children moved quickly on to do complementary work with adults; this included writing and collage making, while others, once shown how, worked well on their own playing with clay. They then moved on to a range of other activities, for instance, role-playing in the shop, investigating water and constructing models, and one child worked with a parent on the computer. In all these activities the children feel valued and treated as uniquely important by adults, and, consequently, they grow in self-confidence and learn to resolve problems rather than mope or get angry. All this learning is enriched by special sessions when children discuss what they must do, for example, to be trusted, or by quick but very effective sessions sharing news and experiences led by the nursery nurse. These sessions are often part of the religious life of the class, when children reflect quietly and pray for themselves and others. The children play a full and confident part in full school assemblies.

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

79. The teaching is excellent and the children make good progress. They will meet most of their goals in reading and writing, although a significant minority will not reach these goals in the use of speaking and listening to aid their learning and lives in general (this use of language is a particular weakness when they join the school.) This is despite the very good ways staff have of developing language to understand and express problems and think through problems. An example of this skilled teaching was the perceptive part the teaching assistant played in enriching spoken language as a group played at shopping, taking the various roles. Children are confident speakers, but find it more difficult to use this language to think. They listen with good concentration but most find it difficult to understand immediately what they hear. This is in part, but not solely, because many have a very limited vocabulary. Children enjoy and value books. This is because there are a lot of books to enjoy, there are very good one-to-one reading sessions with the nursery nurse and a very good reading partnership between home and school. They quickly learn that books go from front to back, print has meaning and goes from left to right, and stories have structure, sequence and characters, as, for example, in the story of the three pigs and the big bad wolf. Extremely good was the way the teacher helped them to make up independently and evaluate other endings for the story. They enjoy rhymes and tricks with words. Most children can already link sounds to letters, and some can see how these fit together to make words. A few have a fair selection of words they recognise and can read simple texts. Children enjoy writing and can control pencils well to make well-formed letters. Most can write their name, and several can copy and understand simple sentences. A few are beginning to write sentences independently.

## **Mathematical development**

80. Teaching is extremely good and almost all pupils will meet their learning goals and many will exceed them. This very good progress is because the class teacher in particular, but also the other members of the team, bring number work into almost every activity, backed by full class teaching that is pacy, challenging and above all fun. For example, in one lesson on the sequence of numbers between 1 and 20, children helped find the right house for various animals, less skilled children deciding simply the right number, and more advanced children selecting houses two before and two after, and then five before and five after, and then the house right in the middle. Through a wide range of activities with sand and water, children learn the concepts of more and less, big and small, heavier and lighter, long and short, and many can name shapes such as circles and triangles. They learn to form written numbers correctly and a significant proportion of older or more able pupils use these independently to record investigations. Some count confidently up to a hundred to measure how good they are at throwing and catching a ball. Especially good is the way children use their growing mathematical awareness when playing the parts of customer and shopkeeper when buying groceries in the shop.

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

81. Most children join the school with a very restricted knowledge and understanding of the world. This hinders learning, especially their breadth of vocabulary and ideas. The teaching is good and staff work hard to overcome these problems, for example, by arranging trips and visits. Even so, few children will meet their goals securely and in sufficient depth and breadth. In some parts of their learning pupils make good progress, for instance, in constructing things by joining and investigating the qualities of materials. They design and make shakers and guitars that actually make sounds. Most can use construction toys with good understanding of function but less grasp of how to make strong structures, for example, garages for storing the tricycles securely. They investigate scientifically, testing the noises you can make with water and tubes, and examining shells with magnifiers, noting what they see. They learn what growing things need, including themselves. They gain a good sense of difference between locations and why and how they are different, for instance, home and school, although their sense of past and present is less developed. This comparison of different types of life, however, is an area for development, for example, by making visual examples of different cultures and places more visible through display and artefacts. Children make very good progress in information and communication technology and confidently use the mouse to manipulate games, to insert and colour shapes, and to make sets of different objects such as differentiating food from animals, and then between different types of food. Most will exceed the goals in this specific aspect, and they gain great benefit from working in the computer suite with the school's specialist teacher and their own nursery nurse.

## **Physical development**

82. Teaching is good and most children will achieve their goals. Most will exceed them in some aspects, for example, the way they can use their hands and fingers to manipulate simple tools and control pencils and brushes. They learn how to use tools as well as their fingers to make things, paint, model and write with good dexterity, for instance, making collages with feathers and decorating special sentences with glittery shapes.
83. In physical education and dance lessons they have a good awareness of the need to create space between themselves and others, and can jump, hop, run slowly and quickly and turn with skill, often using their bodies to respond to music or express moods or ideas. They understand the need to warm-up and cool-down, and move and use equipment safely. They understand the changes exercise brings to their bodies, for instance, heart rate, and how it is necessary to keep healthy and fit. They play sporting games with simple rules well. Most can throw and catch balls and some can bounce them with good control so that another can catch them.
84. At present there is only a small number of large toys to support physical development, for instance, moving toys such as tricycles and trolleys; this is because equipment has been stolen. Some parents felt that children in reception had too little opportunity for physical activity, and planning does not provide sufficient opportunities for children to choose more energetic activities as part of the activities they choose themselves. For example, children should be able to move to an attractive and stimulating outside space freely and independently, and this is not, as yet, sufficiently the case.

## **Creative development**

85. This is a strength in the provision and teaching is very good. All children will meet their goals and most will exceed them. This is because they are given rich and varied experiences. These range from a good introduction to singing, performance enhanced by percussion instruments, to careful listening to the music of 'Swan Lake' that naturally led to learning of the story and seeing it danced as a ballet. Children naturally responded to the mood of the music and went on to create collages using white feathers. There are many opportunities for children to paint, use colour and model in clay, and other opportunities to use their imagination when dressing up. Children worked very well with a specialist teacher from outside the school using puppets to think through ideas, build and act stories and develop their speaking skills. Children learn creative techniques and balance this with equally important willingness to respond to and evaluate what they see and hear. They are confident when performing and are keen to 'show-off' their creativity to others.

## ENGLISH

86. Provision for learning is good. Strengths include:

- The good progress of pupils;
- The quality of teaching;
- The support for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language;
- Extra-curricular provision;
- The leadership and management of the subject.

Areas for improvement include:

- Raising standards in writing for all pupils;
- Introducing assessment procedures that test skills;
- Improving the management of reading in Years 4 to 6;
- Improving the quality of marking.

87. In National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2 in 2001, the percentage of pupils reaching the expected Level 2, was in line with the national average. The year group as a whole, however, was well below the national average. This is because pupils come into the school with below average literacy skills. Pupils make at least good progress but take longer to reach the higher levels because they have further to go. This good progress means results are better than those of other similar schools. Inspection evidence reflects these results, with attainment below national expectations by the end of Year 2.
88. In the National Curriculum test at the end of Year 6 in 2001, the percentage of pupils attaining expected Level 4, was also in line with the national average. As in Key Stage 1, pupils do well in relation to other similar schools but are below the national average for the year group as a whole. The test results at both key stages suggest that boys do better than girls, but this is not the case with current pupils because the school has taken determined action to raise girls' aspirations.
89. Most pupils make good progress throughout their time in the school, particularly in acquiring speaking and listening skills and with reading. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is a second language make good progress and reach standards commensurate with their capabilities. Over the last three years there has been a rise in attainment by the end of Year 2 and a slight fall by the end of Year 6. In the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2 in 2001, pupils did better in mathematics than English but, by the end of Year 6, pupils' English results were better than both mathematics and science.
90. Speaking and listening skills are in line with national expectations by the time pupils reach the age of seven and eleven. This good progress is a result of the wide range of opportunities provided for pupils through class discussion, practising with 'talk partners', and working together collaboratively in groups. The school provides further opportunities for pupils to develop these skills in school assemblies and in other curriculum subjects such as 'circle time'. In Years 1 and 2, pupils listen well and are keen to respond in class discussion. Most higher and average-attaining pupils make clear, thoughtful responses. The effective class support provided for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language encourages them to participate in class discussion. For most pupils, attainment is limited by a

general lack of breadth of vocabulary and only the higher-attaining pupils reply in extended speech. This reflects the fact that most children join the reception class with well below average ability to express ideas and a very restricted vocabulary. By the age of eleven, most pupils are much more confident and most are articulate and fluent. The higher-attaining pupils argue persuasively and perceptively.

91. By the end of Year 2, attainment in reading is below national expectations, but is in line by the time pupils reach the age of eleven. This good progress is due to the provision of a wide range of effective learning strategies. These include:
- Regular reading practice for all pupils;
  - The additional individual and small group work, which is helping to raise the standards of pupils with special educational needs;
  - The regular programme of testing;
  - The help provided for individuals by parents, governors and other volunteers;
  - The reading recovery programme;
  - A wide range of appropriate reading books.
92. An area for further development is the management of reading in Years 4 to 6, where there is insufficient monitoring of reading to ensure that all pupils read sufficiently widely. There is insufficient time spent reviewing and discussing books amongst pupils. The current library accommodation is insufficient to support reading adequately throughout the school because it is too small. As a result, the presentation of books in the library limits their accessibility and does not encourage their use.
93. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in writing is below the national expectation. The school has focused on improving handwriting, spelling and general presentation of pupils' work; these are now of a good standard. However, there is insufficient writing at length and in a range of forms. Much of the writing is well structured, but lacking in imagination. Time could be saved and more interesting writing generated if writing skills learned in literacy lessons were practised in other subjects across the curriculum. In addition there are too few opportunities for research work. The teaching of basic skills often follows the scheme of work without taking sufficient account of the strengths and weaknesses of individuals and groups. For example, pupils with special educational needs are often supported in completing the same exercise as average-attaining pupils. The same exercise proves to be too easy for higher-attaining pupils who require something different to develop their skills further. However, there are examples of high quality writing: in one class pupils write fluent and persuasive letters to allow football to continue in the school playground, there is some sensitive poetry writing and some Year 6 book reviews are of a very high standard.
94. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Almost all the teaching is of a good quality with some very good teaching. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. The teaching has many strengths, for example, the quality of lesson planning overall. Teachers take trouble to ensure that learning is continuous and progressive, building pupils' knowledge and developing their skills from within their previous learning. An example is a lesson where the teacher is developing an understanding of two similar stories from different cultural perspectives, through word study, character building, character studies and story structures. Most teachers' lessons are inter-active, with pupils taking an active part in their learning; for example, there are whole-class reading sessions and shared writing activities. Teachers use effective question and answer sessions to begin lessons, recalling previous learning, and pupils spend time discussing issues in pairs, groups and as a whole class. For example, one class acts out the experience of going through a tunnel and describes their feelings as a way of understanding the situation of



the characters from their class reader. They role-play with the teacher, using questions the characters might ask.

95. A particular strength is the support provided by the teaching assistants, who work effectively with class teachers to support pupils with special educational needs. Work for groups is planned in advance and records kept of pupils' progress. In most whole-class sessions, teaching assistants work alongside special educational needs pupils, enabling them to take an active part in the lesson; making sure that all pupils participate fully in lessons is a strength of the teaching. Teachers establish positive relationships with pupils and their effective class management provides secure learning environments in which pupils respond freely and confidently.
96. Not all teaching is as successful. Teaching is better in class lessons than is suggested by the written work produced by pupils during the year. This particularly affects the development of writing skills. Marking is inconsistent and does not sufficiently contribute to pupils' learning. For example, although most teachers provide positive comments, these are not always constructive. There is too little extension work provided and very little marking, which is focused on particular types of mistakes. Pupils are not expected to correct their errors. Too often the same writing task is given to pupils of all abilities. In some cases, this proves to be too difficult for lower-attaining pupils and too easy for higher-attaining pupils.
97. Most pupils behave well and work hard. Pupils are keen to learn and respond positively to their teachers. They work well in pairs and groups and most pupils enjoy their lessons. Their positive attitudes contribute significantly to their good progress.
98. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. In the main, it is broad and balanced. A particular feature is the extensive support provided for individuals and groups, particularly to improve reading. There is a wide range of support for pupils of all abilities. For example, there is a reading circle for high-attaining pupils, 'booster' classes for some average-attaining pupils and additional reading support for lower-attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs. Pupils for whom English is an additional language play a full part in lessons, and those who are at an early stage in learning English receive very good teaching from a specialist teacher from outside the school. She ensures that these pupils' learning is closely related to skills addressed in the other lessons. Extra-curricular activities include drama groups and visits to places of interest. For example, a group visited a sea-life centre to write poems. The curriculum provides equal opportunities for all pupils. Areas for further development are: the further integration of information and computer technology into the curriculum, the further development of drama and role-play activities and the provision of regular opportunities for pupils to participate in research work.
99. A strength of the curriculum is the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers take opportunities to discuss issues as they arise naturally in the literature being studied. For example, one class compares the two stories, 'Cinderella' and 'Mufaro's Beautiful Daughter'. In this lesson, the class discussed the cultural differences. In another, pupils discussed playing football in the playground and in another discussed the different attitudes of a brother and sister.
100. The school has made good progress in the development of a whole-school programme of testing. From the resulting data, teachers predict future grades and use them as a benchmark for judging progress. Data analysis, for example, is now used to identify pupils for additional support. The next step is to develop an assessment system that is more clearly based on skills to be gained and identifies the strengths and weaknesses

of individuals and groups. Once identified, teaching can be targeted more effectively and progress reported more securely.

101. Leadership and management are good. English is very well organised and there are effective measures to monitor teaching and pupils' progress. The recent focus on handwriting, spelling and presentation has led to a significant improvement in all year groups. There is a very well established support system and a wide range of effective initiatives. Areas for development are: raising standards of writing; introducing skills-based assessment; improving the management of reading and integrating more drama and information and communication technology into the curriculum. There has been a good improvement since the last inspection.

## **Literacy**

102. Provision for the teaching of literacy is good and pupils' standards improve significantly as they move through the school. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 2 and reading skills by the end of Year 3. Writing remains below national expectations for the majority and this is due in part to a lack of effective assessment procedures and in part to the inadequate amount of practice provided for pupils as a part of their study of other subjects.

## **MATHEMATICS**

103. Provision for learning in mathematics is now good. Over recent years, the school's results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2 have shown an improving trend and were just below the national average in 2001. These results were average when compared with similar schools. National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 in 2001 showed attainment that was well below the national average and well below attainment in similar schools. The trend in attainment by the end of Year 6 had declined significantly since 1999.
104. The school has recognised the weaknesses in pupils' mathematical capabilities and implemented a successful range of different initiatives to improve attainment; they are becoming very effective in raising standards. These included raising the aspirations of girls.
105. Although standards in Year 2 are still below average, there is the whole range of expected attainment, including several higher-attaining pupils. There are more pupils, however, whose attainment is lower than national expectations in this group than above these expectations. Significant elements of pupils' difficulties relate to their weaker ability to use language to describe problems and find solutions. Although many middle and lower attaining pupils can 'do' the purely numerical calculations, many do not understand sufficiently well how language is used to express mathematical problems. These pupils cannot easily transfer words into mathematical ideas, numbers, lengths, shapes and operations such as plus, minus and so on. The linkage of these concepts is much less secure in pupils' earlier years than later on, because they are weak on entry and the majority have not had enough time to consolidate this learning securely by Year 2. Teachers realise this and place very strong emphasis on these connections throughout the school. In a Year 2 lesson, for example, the lesson objective focused on using language to express such mathematical ideas and pupils, consequently, gained good understanding and did well. They made good progress from a low base. In Year 6, a well-directed mental warm-up question and answer session about geometric shapes increased pupils' abilities to understand the meaning of mathematical ideas

expressed in words; they showed the average range of competence and expressed their own responses satisfactorily in words, numbers and symbols.

106. In all years, pupils make good progress in all aspects of mathematics. They build upon a good foundation which they bring from the reception class into Year 1. Good teaching in Years 1 and 2 means that key ideas are well and securely learned. Progress speeds up as pupils get older and become more secure in understanding problems expressed in words. By the time they reach Year 6, attainment meets national expectations and covers the expected range; there is an average balance of higher, middle and lower attaining pupils.
107. Teaching and learning are good. No teaching seen was less than satisfactory and some was very good. This is the prime reason for pupils' good progress in their mathematical skills and understanding. Teachers now have a secure knowledge of the National Numeracy Strategy, combining this with good knowledge of their own pupils that allows them to make learning very relevant to each pupil's particular needs. This is especially so with pupils' language needs. Teachers plan numeracy lessons successfully in accordance with the guidance of the numeracy strategy. All lessons seen included effective, clearly-structured initial full class sessions, where well explained objectives helped pupils to understand what they were to do in the lesson. Teachers provide different levels of work for groups, which stretch understanding in groups and for individuals of discrete levels of ability. This is because teachers have good understanding of the needs of individuals.
108. Teaching assistants are highly effective in targeting their help to individuals' needs, particularly those of lower-attaining pupils. They help pupils with special educational needs very successfully, for instance, through careful, clear explanations of ideas. Lessons move smoothly from phase to phase with no time wasted because teachers and the teaching assistants plan together very well. Pupils treat teaching assistants with the same degree of respect as teachers and make good progress because of these very good relationships, trusting all adults in their classrooms equally. Additional support, such as teaching by 'expert teachers' for booster classes, is a successful part of the school's strategy to raise attainment in mathematics. These teachers also have good relationships with their groups.
109. Teachers' positive approach to mathematics gives pupils confidence that they can be successful. Parents spoke of their children's enjoyment of numeracy lessons and of how teachers make pupils' learning fun. Teachers set targets for pupils, but these are not securely linked to the levels of the National Curriculum and do not provide pupils with sufficiently detailed, specific objectives about how to move their standards up to the next level. Pupils could comprehend these specific objectives better and become more involved in the process of achieving them if supported by more detailed analysis of achievement that would identify for pupils exactly what they cannot do, or what they do not securely understand to achieve a given level. Pupils' own positive attitudes towards mathematics indicate that, as they get older, pupils would be very good partners for teachers in raising their standards further through these more focused types of assessment and action planning to meet relevant and understood targets.
110. The management of mathematics has effectively identified the reasons for, and reversed, the decline in standards. All staff have had a part to play in this achievement. The school recognises that the subject co-ordinator is currently heavily engaged with other whole-school responsibilities, but, even so, subject documentation and planning are in good order. The next key target for the school is to track pupils' individual achievement and progress in mathematics through more precise targeting more closely

related to National Curriculum levels. This would provide better group-level and class-level data for use by the school in measuring success.

## **Numeracy**

111. Alongside the improving provision and progress, pupils are using their increasing numeracy skills and understanding more effectively to support their learning in other subjects such as geography. This does not happen, however, in a sufficiently planned and coherent way, and remains an area for improvement because teachers miss opportunities to extend this learning.

## **SCIENCE**

112. The school's provision for learning in science is good. National Curriculum teacher assessments in science for pupils at the end of Year 2 in 2001 showed pupils' attainment to be good compared with similar schools, but below the national average. In National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 in 2001, attainment was higher than in mathematics but well below that in English and was low in comparison with both the national average and for similar schools. Until that date, improvement had been slower than the national rate, and the improvement since the last inspection was too slow.
113. There has been significant improvement over the last year, however, and the current pupils' range of attainment is in line with the national expectation in all years. This is mainly because of improved and good teaching. Pupils develop a healthy interest in discovering and exploring the world around them and quickly develop their understanding from a low initial base. By Year 2, their attainment meets expectations. In their current project, for example, Year 2 pupils are learning about the properties of materials and work in groups finding out about objects around them in the school that are made of wood, metal, plastic or glass. The class teacher and teaching assistants work very effectively to focus their different groups on the characteristics of these materials and, consequently, pupils understand why articles are made of different materials. Pupils' understanding of this and of technical, scientific vocabulary to explain these properties increases rapidly because of good guidance. Pupils presenting their findings to the class often use this vocabulary well to explain their investigations. All pupils are included in these sessions effectively. Those with special educational needs, for example, and pupils with English as an additional language contribute well to presentations.
114. The pupils' science curriculum as they move up the school covers the required range of aspects of the subject. By the time pupils are in Year 6 their knowledge and understanding of the natural and man-made world match the range expected nationally. They know how to plan and carry out experiments, to log and tabulate results and how to draw conclusions from findings. Evaluations are careful and honest. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 6, for example, can use vocabulary well to explain results. They were investigating the properties of light and explained effectively what happens to a shadow when the light source is moved away from, or closer to, an opaque object. Pupils can hypothesise and predict outcomes sensibly, and are sufficiently confident to explain rationally why they were wrong, if their predictions were proved wrong by experiment. Pupils in Year 4 dragged shoes attached to a force-meter along surfaces to find out about friction. They then investigated and tested ideas in a truly scientific manner, and explained basic physical effects competently for their ages. Pupils write up experiments neatly into worksheets for science books, which become a good source of reference.

115. Teaching is good. Teachers have confidence in their own skills in the subject and follow published guidelines and schemes of work productively as a secure basis for lesson and project planning. They skilfully generate self-confidence amongst pupils about their own abilities, which leads to their willingness to speculate, predict and hypothesise confidently. Teachers mix pupils into useful variations of groups for experiments in science, which gives them good opportunities to learn from each other. They ensure that pupils revise existing knowledge and understanding effectively and that they use their prior learning as a secure starting point for new learning. For example, Year 3 pupils developed ideas about materials they had learned in Year 2, extending these ideas into new learning about how and why materials are used in combination, for example, metal and plastic in making a table.
116. Teachers assess pupils' work through quizzes at the ends of topics and do not yet use the levels of the National Curriculum to assess pupils' attainment. This means that pupils' targets do not match National Curriculum criteria and do not form a useful measure for assessing their real progress.
117. Science is well led and effectively managed, with all teachers involved in the planning. National Curriculum related assessment is the next major step for the subject co-ordinator to tackle. This needs to be considered in a form that will be simple enough to provide a valuable and practical tool to monitor and track pupils' achievement.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

118. Provision for learning is good, and there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Strengths include:
- The quality of teaching;
  - The progress made by pupils of all abilities;
  - Pupils' positive attitudes;
  - The quality and range of artwork,
- and areas for improvement include:
- Development of a programme of three-dimensional art;
  - Regular curriculum time to improve the continuity and progression of learning;
  - The development of a system of assessment;
  - Provision of in-service training for teachers.
119. By the end of Year 2, most pupils make good progress and their attainment is in line with national expectations. In Years 1 and 2, the regular use of sketchbooks enhances pupils' progress. Pupils develop a sense of line and shape, and experiment creatively with pencil and charcoal. They learn to mix watercolours, for example to create a range of green tones, and some have started using clay. In Year 2, pupils are making satisfactory progress experimenting with different materials to create a collage.
120. By the end of Year 6, attainment is in line with national expectations. Between Years 3 and 6, pupils make good progress in the development of observational drawing and they use sketchbooks effectively. There are some very good examples of the use of a wide range of media, for example, watercolour paintings of landscapes, silkscreen printing, pastel designs and collages. A strength is the pupils' artwork that is inspired by the work of major artists. This is generally of a much higher standard, for example, watercolours and pastels in the style of the French Impressionists, Picasso, Mondrian, and Warhol. Particularly good examples are watercolours of irises in the style of Van

Gogh and pastels in the style of Picasso. There are good examples of the use of information and communication technology to create multiple images in various tones.

121. Pupils with special educational needs and pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress and achieve standards commensurate with their capabilities. A reason for this is the effective support provided for them by teaching assistants.
122. The quality of teaching and learning is always satisfactory and mainly good. Teachers make effective use of the skills of teaching assistants. For example, a teaching assistant taught a group how to shape and model in clay while the teacher helped a group to experiment with colour mixing and another to produce a teddy bear collage. Another teaching assistant organises a popular art club. Planning is a strength. For example, Year 6 pupils are studying the 'Sixties' in history and have linked their research about the Beatles and John Lennon to a poster design. Pupils have planned their designs and the materials required, and in the lesson were deciding how best to represent their ideas in collage form. In another class, pupils used digital photographs of themselves, combining mathematics with art in an exercise to discover the proportions of the human face. The least successful lessons are those where teachers lack the skills to demonstrate techniques clearly to pupils.
123. Classes are very well managed and pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy art, work hard and concentrate well. Their positive attitudes contribute to their learning.
124. The curriculum provision is broad and balanced and meets requirements. All pupils have equal access to art although some higher-attaining pupils are missing art for additional numeracy lessons. There is a very good display of a wide range of art forms throughout the school with the exception of three-dimensional work. A visiting artist produced an exciting range of silk-screen prints with the pupils and provided in-service training for teachers in batik technique. There are some effective links with other subjects, for example, 'Pooh Bear' illustrations and charcoal drawings of the Great Fire of London. The art club has produced some high quality collage using textiles. Art makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The quality of art on display lifts the spirits and provides an opportunity for reflection. There is a satisfactory range of art from other cultures. For example, there are silk prints in African designs, a display of pupils' aborigine style art and art in the style of famous artists.
125. The leadership and management of art are satisfactory. Resources are adequate and well organised. As at the time of the last inspection, there is no system for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. The staff are currently producing a scheme of work based on this year's artwork but there is no monitoring of teaching or pupils' work. The best work is collected each year, however, in a school portfolio as a way of setting standards to meet.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

126. The school's provision for learning in design and technology is satisfactory, a balance of strengths and weaknesses.
127. Only one lesson could be observed during the inspection. This was in Year 2 where standards met the expectations for these pupils' ages. Scrutiny of pupils' previous work and discussion with pupils revealed that, whilst attainment is broadly average, pupils have not had enough experience in the school to generate sufficient depth of

understanding about key areas of the design and technology curriculum. They could achieve more if the subject was allocated more time and priority, and learning in the subject was better linked to other subjects in the curriculum.

128. Given the relatively low time allocation, pupils are learning well about the general ideas of design and technology, for example, they begin with designs and move on to the making aspects later. These elements are secure by Year 6. Year 6 pupils' vehicles project, making moving axles and wheels, demonstrates this understanding well. Pupils always design their artefacts, work out what materials and equipment are needed, and then make them. They then evaluate and design improvements, modifying as they go along, as pupils showed when talking about a toy project using cams. Their interim and final evaluations are often good, reflecting individuals' underlying attainment and levels of conceptual awareness. All understand this design-realisation 'loop' relatively securely, with pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs often making objects and machines which are as good as their peers'.
129. Teaching and learning seen in the Year 2 lesson were good. Groups were doing different activities including weaving with threads and using construction kits and a group with the class teacher were learning about deconstructing a toy to see how the mechanism operated moving parts. Teaching helped pupils effectively to understand the principles of this transfer of movement. The lesson also enabled pupils to learn how to use appropriate vocabulary to describe parts of the mechanism and what they do. Pupils' work is not always recorded, for example, in books for later reference; even so, as they move up the school, pupils cover the recommended range of design and technology such as electronics, and the use of batteries is evident from displays such as the Year 4 work on creating electrical circuits to perform a function.
130. The subject is satisfactorily led but the management requires improvement. Improvement is needed because design and technology is not yet assessed against National Curriculum levels or criteria, although quizzes at the ends of projects check basic knowledge and understanding. Assessment needs to be sharper and more focused on the National Curriculum, particularly as pupils enter the last two years. This would better prepare them for the expectations of the secondary school's design and technology curriculum. Subject documents are satisfactory, with plans derived from published schemes of work to ensure the range of curriculum coverage. The subject leader now needs to ensure that the breadth and balance of the whole curriculum includes proper recognition of this subject and that sufficient time is allowed. At present, art and design and design and technology are often 'cycled' together on the timetable but pupils say they do much more art than design and technology. This issue needs to be resolved. Further erosion of time for design and technology results from withdrawal of pupils from lessons for a whole variety of reasons; this also needs to be monitored for its effects on pupils' attainment and progress in the subject. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' personal development. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

131. Provision for learning is satisfactory and standards have been maintained since the last inspection. A particular strength is the study of local geography.
132. By the end of Year 2, pupils make satisfactory progress and their attainment is in line with national expectations. In Years 1, pupils follow the units 'Where in the world is Barnaby Bear?' and this forms a good foundation for future learning. They learn the plan of the school's buildings and draw their own accurately, and so learn the nature and

usefulness of maps. They identify the features of the seaside showing competent observation and recording skills. In Year 2, pupils study the Gambia as a contrasting locality, developing satisfactory knowledge and understanding of places, and learn how to compare societies and locations. They confidently research the Gambia, using the Internet and pool their collective knowledge as a whole-class activity. Year 2 pupils are developing a satisfactory knowledge of the Gambia and its place in Africa.

133. By the end of Year 6, pupils make satisfactory progress and their attainment is in line with national expectations. Pupils develop a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the local area through map work, visits and a linked history study of settlements. In Year 6, pupils discuss environmental issues in some depth through a study of rain forests in South America and compare urban and rural lifestyles in the United Kingdom with mature understanding. This type of learning makes a significant contribution to the pupils' personal development.
134. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. There is some good teaching while most is satisfactory. Analysis of previous work, however, indicates that standards are inconsistent. In some cases, learning consists of isolated exercises with little use of specialist vocabulary, while in others there is a good continuity and progression of learning. The quality of teaching and learning improves where teachers establish links between subjects, for example, linking the study of Egypt and the Great Pyramid of Giza with numeracy or linking local history and geography. There is an effective link established between literacy and local studies, with pupils producing attractive tourist guides. The quality of marking is inconsistent, ranging from minimal marking to thorough marking with constructive comments which extend pupils' thinking.
135. Pupils present their work well and take a pride in their achievements. In Year 2, pupils are enthusiastic about their research and work well in groups compiling their next list of questions. Pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes enhance their learning.
136. The curriculum meets requirements, but the school allocates insufficient time to ensure that learning is continuous and progressive. Similarly, because teaching is organised in blocks of time, the gap between times when pupils study geography hinders their ability to build steadily their skills and understanding. There is an outline of units of work and a sensible scheme of work to support teachers. In these terms, the curriculum is broad and balanced and all pupils have equal access to it. However, there is insufficient time to deliver fully the units of work. There are some well-organised visits, and these complement and enrich the work in the classroom, for example, orienteering at Blacklands Farm and a local visit to Whitehawk forts. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory; pupils work together in the orienteering exercise and, in Year 6, discuss a wide range of environmental issues.
137. The leadership and management of geography are satisfactory. Resources are sufficient and well organised. There is an assessment system for each unit of work and teachers record pupils' progress, but this has not been developed sufficiently to test all levels of ability. Even so, this is an improvement since the last inspection. The subject co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning but there is no current monitoring of the quality of teaching and this misses opportunities to feed back to teachers how to improve.

## **HISTORY**

138. Provision for learning is good and standards have improved since the last inspection. Teaching is good in all years and pupils' attainment by the end of Years 2 and 6 matches national expectations. Pupils make good progress throughout the school.



139. Pupils join Year 1 with an imprecise sense of time, though aware of the difference between past and present. In Year 1, pupils gain a good understanding of why toys in the past are different from toys today. They learn to spot how they can tell the difference and, through clearly thought through discussion, decide that teddy bears that are of different design and that are also worn may well be old, but being broken is not a good indicator. They show a good awareness of time in the recent past and time a long time ago. Good display helps them set artefacts such as toys in an historical period and skilled teaching extends their understanding by introducing a range of more challenging artefacts into the lesson. Pupils in Year 2 build productively on this good start by studying, for example, the 'Fire of London'.
140. In Year 3, pupils trace the changes in schools since 1800, and gain a good understanding as to how changes in society and social priorities bring about changes in the way people live. In Year 4, pupils gain a good sense of period, currently the Tudors, and show skill in bringing facts concerning events, people and social conditions together to create good understanding of what it was like to live in those times. This class had previously carried out a very good study of location, bringing together geographical and historical understanding. In Year 5, pupils learn to look at pictures from Victorian times to extract facts and make suggestions about what the details mean; they learn to use evidence in a disciplined and systematic way to build an historical understanding; they also use work in art to enrich their understanding through a study of William Morris. In Year 6, they learn to compare images from popular culture today with images of 'the Beatles' from the past, and suggest reasons for changes. Overall, pupils make good progress in both historical knowledge and, to a lesser extent, the skills of the historian.
141. This learning makes a significant contribution to the pupils' social, moral and cultural development. In turn, the learning is driven by the good attitudes this allows, encouraging natural curiosity and commitment to doing well. The quality of open discussion enriches most lessons because pupils find new ideas exciting and value the views of others; this type of learning benefits from and extends the pupils' developing speaking skills, and their written work puts their descriptive and empathetic writing skills in context.
142. Teaching is always at least satisfactory, often good, and sometimes very good. The best teaching is well planned to meet clear objectives and shows the sound knowledge and expertise of the teachers. These teachers make good use of resources, illustrating the learning with artefacts and other primary evidence. As in many lessons, teaching assistants support pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language well; the latter pupils, however, find their lack of vocabulary often hinders their learning. In some lessons, the learning becomes slow, because of the teacher's lack of expertise and confidence, and because the work is aimed at the average-ability pupil and is too easy for the more able and too difficult for the less able.
143. The subject is well led and satisfactorily managed. There is a good policy and an adequate scheme of work, and resources are of adequate range, quality and accessibility. Learning is enriched by well run and chosen visits. The subject manager, however, has only limited opportunities to monitor and evaluate standards in lessons, and this restricts her ability to improve teaching and learning.
144. The school has built strong foundations for future development. Areas for improvement include:

- Organising the curriculum in ways that make clearer the need to develop key historical skills progressively, for example, collecting and analysing data as the basis for interpretation and then evaluation of bias;
- Setting work that challenges each level of ability in ways that recognise that some skills are more demanding than others;
- Designing assessment procedures that test skills as well as knowledge;
- Co-ordinating even further the learning in history with learning in other areas, particularly literacy;
- Seeking ways to provide learning for history more continuously rather than in isolated units.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

145. The school's provision for pupils' learning of information and communication technology (ICT) has recently improved considerably and is now very good.
146. Pupils' attainment is generally good, particularly that of younger pupils who have had the benefit of the recently improved provision for a greater proportion of their learning. Reception pupils in the ICT suite learn very effectively how to identify 'sets' of objects and to place them into appropriate groups, for example, fruits or animals. From this very early stage pupils are confident and capable when using the electronic whiteboard. They start to learn that some things could belong to more than one set - an item of fruit could be both round and juicy; an orange, for instance, could belong to both the round set and the juicy set. Higher-attaining pupils clearly begin to wonder how they could show this on the whiteboard presentation. A pupil from Year 1 was very keen to demonstrate the video he had made of his class doing their science experiments and did so effectively using a laptop computer with the help of the teaching assistant. Pupils in Year 2 manipulate the mouse well to access information from a CD-ROM to support their learning in geography about the Gambia. Pupils show themselves capable of a wide variety of different operations using the computers. Many focus well and find out a considerable amount of information. Overall, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2 is above expectations and progress has been good.
147. By Year 6, current pupils' attainment matches the range expected. These pupils have had less access to good quality ICT at school than younger ones, but have learned satisfactorily and display a range of competences using available software. A Year 5 group were using the Internet very effectively to search for information about Victorian Brighton to use in their history projects. Pupils' keyboarding competence is often weak, however, holding them up when typing commands into the computer. A Year 6 group learning about the use of spreadsheets were appropriately competent with the computers but showed less clear understanding about what spreadsheets are, or what they can be used to do. This understanding was developing, however, because the teacher set the learning in a highly relevant and 'real world' context, that is buying the most goods with limited funds. Overall, attainment in lower years is relatively higher than when pupils are older. No significant differences exist between the attainment of boys and girls in this subject. Achievement for all pupils, including those with special educational needs or who have English as an additional language, is similarly good.
148. All pupils use ICT confidently and are keen to work on the computers. In some groups a sense of thrill pervaded the lesson as pupils 'discovered' information from different sources, or about places such as Australia on the world CD map. Pupils are always well behaved and can be trusted to respect the computers. Any over-exuberance comes from pupils' interest and enthusiasm for what they are learning. They are

always considerate to others, taking turns well on the machines when they work together. This makes a significant contribution to their personal development.

149. Most teaching of ICT in the school is of discrete groups, usually half a class at a time when others are doing a different subject. This discrete teaching is very good. The specialist teacher is part-time in the school, combining professional ICT work with teaching. Pupils, therefore, benefit greatly from these dual areas of work that bring the reality of meaningful employment into school. Teaching in lessons is highly effective in raising attainment, but other teachers in the school need to remain alert to the need to use ICT as a tool for pupils' learning across all areas of the curriculum. Inspection evidence shows that this is not always the case. In ICT lessons, however, very good teaching enables pupils to learn skills quickly. They are therefore confident and use hardware and software effectively in any subject with their other teachers.
150. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The subject leader brings considerable expertise to both the teaching side of the subject and the technical side, and is ably supported by external sources such as the Education Action Zone. The school's bids for external funds, for example to initiate innovative projects, have been very successful because of this good management. The subject is at a stage where it is able to move forward while rapidly extending pupils' skills and extending the school's local profile by very effectively using ICT in community projects. The next stage for development is to put assessment in place since this does not yet occur. In common with other subjects, ICT is not assessed against National Curriculum criteria or levels and the provision of simple, useful mechanisms to assess pupils' attainment and achievement is the next challenge, not only for the subject manager but also for all teachers. Pupils' own interest and engagement in their use of ICT places them in a strong position to become usefully involved in their own assessments as a means to demonstrate their achievement and progress in the subject.

## **MUSIC**

151. Provision for learning is unsatisfactory, although there are strengths. The decline in standards since the last inspection is largely due to the loss of a specialist teacher, but the school has not done enough to develop different ways of providing for the pupils' learning. Pupils' attainment by the end of Years 2 and 6 is below national expectations.
152. The school does not have a leader and manager for the subject, and, therefore, staff are largely left to their own devices. They have a policy to work to but the scheme of work gives outlines only, and, consequently, lacks the advice and guidance the non-specialist needs. The school does not use the local education authority's scheme sufficiently. The class teachers build music into their planning but most say they feel their skills and knowledge are inadequate and, therefore, they lack confidence. They say they lack training and miss specialist guidance and support. Resources for learning are barely adequate in range or quantity and this does not help. The school needs to recognise that many schools lack a music specialist but find better ways around the problem, for example, by at least assigning someone to organise the provision, to call upon advice and training from outside and to invest in schemes based upon tapes to support the non-specialist. Many schools employ part-time specialists to help.
153. As a consequence of the above, the teaching observed, while satisfactory, lacked the pace, challenge, breadth and richness that good or very good teaching requires. In one lesson, the learning was better than the teaching because the pupils' keenness and good attitudes overcame the lack of confidence of the teacher. They were learning an African song and were clearly enjoying singing and wanted to create a musical and

expressive performance; the problem was that the teaching lacked the dynamism and encouragement to meet their high aspirations. For these reasons, the teaching over time is unsatisfactory and, consequently, pupils from Years 1 to 6 make insufficient progress and do not grapple with the skills and knowledge a rich curriculum requires. Planning meets the requirements of the National Curriculum but is not effectively implemented. In a dynamic and creative school such as St John the Baptist, it is like a table that has lost one leg.

154. To balance this picture, there are well-managed and weekly hymn practices. These are well led and, even though the teaching lacks expertise, the pupils sing with enthusiasm. They follow a melody, sing softly and loudly to create dynamics and are beginning to understand how phrasing and rhythm bring texture and meaning. Especially in Years 1 and 2, pupils naturally respond to the music, moving their bodies and limbs expressively, and this highlights a natural musicality. This offers a considerable opportunity on which the school can build.
155. Through the local education authority, pupils have a good range of individual music tuition, and during the inspection a specialist teacher taught keyboards to a group of eight older pupils, the majority of whom were boys. This teaching was expert, dynamic and highly effective. The Education Action Zone provides each pupil with a high quality keyboard they can take home to practise, and most do.
156. As the school rectifies lack of coherence and balance in the curriculum, it is essential that governors address provision for music, alongside the other performing arts. This will increase pupils' aspirations overall and build their creativity and confidence in performance and individual and group creativity. It will enrich the religious life of the school, and should widen pupils' appreciation of the important part music plays in other cultures.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

157. Provision for learning is good. Strengths include:

- Good quality of teaching
- Extra-curricular provision

and areas for improvement include:

- Development of a school policy and a progressive and continuous scheme of work
- Assessment procedures.

158. By the end of Year 2, most pupils make good progress and their attainment is in line with national expectations. In dance, pupils have developed good basic skills; for example, they move freely and with a sense of space. They can be still and create shapes. Most are able to respond sensitively and expressively to music. In gymnastics, pupils develop good ability to make lower, middle and upper body shapes. As in dance, pupils find the sequencing of movements more difficult.
159. By the end of Year 6, most pupils make good progress and their attainment is in line with national expectations. For example, in Year 3 most pupils throw and catch accurately over short distances. In Year 5, pupils acquire very good basketball skills - running, moving, passing and shooting, and, in Year 6, most throw and catch sufficiently accurately for rounders and with sufficient hand and eye co-ordination to put bat to ball.

160. Most pupils with special educational needs and pupils for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress and attain standards commensurate with their capabilities. Although there is effective support in lessons for these pupils, some have low levels of co-ordination, which slow the process of acquiring skills.
161. The quality of teaching and learning is good. All the teaching is at least satisfactory and some is very good. Lessons are well structured, allowing pupils to warm up and practise skills progressively. For example, in a dance lesson, pupils practise an increasingly complex set of movements before attempting to create their own sequence of movements. Teachers' class management is good, and lessons move at a challenging pace and are well organised with due regard to health and safety issues. In the best lessons, teachers have a very good command of subject. For example, a qualified basketball teacher from Canada teaches Year 5 pupils; he has very high expectations of the pupils and they respond well to this challenge. The local sports council sponsors his work. In another very good lesson, teacher and pupils demonstrate skills, which enables all pupils to evaluate their own progress. Where lessons are less successful, teachers lack the skills to demonstrate confidently and time is wasted in class organisation.
162. Pupils enjoy physical education; they work hard and concentrate well. Pupils work together with due regard for others' strengths and weaknesses. Pupils' positive attitudes contribute positively to their own learning. There is a high level of participation in most year groups.
163. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Pupils learn ball games, invasion games, athletics, gymnastics, dance and swimming. For talented players there is a 'fast-track scheme' sponsored by the Education Action Zone, which helps pupils to progress into local community teams. A strength is the wide range of extra-curricular activities for girls and boys. These include cricket, football, netball, athletics and cross-country, and almost two-thirds of all pupils participate in extra-curricular activities. All activities are equally open to all pupils. Parents contribute to extra-curricular activities, helping with transport and coaching the netball team. Physical education makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, principally by developing the disciplines required for sports and encouraging team spirit, alongside developing an understanding as to how sport plays an important part in not only the health but also the achievement of individuals and groups.
164. The leadership is good but the management requires some improvement. There are sufficient resources and they are well organised. As at the time of the last report, there is no school policy or scheme of work for physical education, nor is there any monitoring of teaching. There has been an improvement in extra-curricular provision and an improvement in pupils' attainment in dance. There has been a satisfactory improvement since the last report.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

165. Provision for religious education meets statutory requirements and will be inspected during a diocesan inspection.