

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST MARY'S RC LOWER SCHOOL**

Caddington

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109630

Headteacher: Mrs T Kiddy

Reporting inspector: Mr Neil McAllister  
Ofsted no: 22220

Dates of inspection: 30 April - 3 May 2001

Inspection number: 196117

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

© Crown copyright 2001

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

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First School
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	3 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Dunstable Road Caddington Luton Bedfordshire
Postcode:	LU1 4BB
Telephone number:	01582 602420
Fax number:	01582 663974
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Clive Wadia
Date of previous inspection:	July 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
22220	Neil McAllister	Registered inspector	Mathematics Information and Communication Technology Design and Technology Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
14214	Gillian Smith	Lay inspector		Pupil's attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils?
31914	Colette Gribble	Team inspector	English Geography History Special Educational Needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
22223	Helen Ranger	Team inspector	Science Art and Design Music Physical Education The foundation stage	

*Religious education and collective worship were not inspected. This was the focus of a separate inspection carried out at the same time by the Diocese.*

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates Ltd.  
Demeter House  
Station Road  
Cambridge  
CB1 2RS

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

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

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>11</b>
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>28</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Mary's Roman Catholic School is a smaller than average sized voluntarily-aided lower school with 109 full-time pupils between the ages of four and nine, along with 23 children in the nursery who attend part-time. It serves an area on the outskirts of Dunstable in Bedfordshire but as a Catholic school it draws some of its pupils from a much larger area. Its geographical position makes it difficult for some parents to transport their children to the site and the school has continued to experience a small but steady fall in numbers since the last inspection. Ten pupils left the school at the end of the previous term. The vast majority of pupils are of white United Kingdom heritage and at the time of the inspection there were no pupils with English as an additional language. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals in the school (22 per cent) is slightly above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is a little above the national average. When children enter the nursery, their attainment levels are broadly average.

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

St Mary's provides a satisfactory education in a caring and orderly environment and its pupils develop well personally. It provides satisfactory value for money. There are weaknesses in some aspects of its management and this has had an impact on the relationships within the staff of the school and with parents. Very high levels of staff turnover and difficulties in recruitment and retention of teachers are having a significant negative impact on many aspects of the work of the school. The results in the most recent tests for seven-year-olds were well above average but results have varied dramatically over recent years. The level of work in Year 4 is below expectations although, overall, progress for the pupils in this year group, as for other year groups, has been satisfactory over time, reflecting sound teaching.

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

- Standards achieved in the previous year's Key Stage 1 tests were very high compared with similar schools.
- Standards in information and communication technology are well above expectations in Key Stage 1 and above expectations in Key Stage 2.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to school, behave well and develop well personally.
- The school supports pupils' spiritual and social development well.
- All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, are included in the full range of curricular activities available.

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

- Attainment in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 4.
- The recruitment and retention of effective teaching staff and, subsequently, the contribution they make to the co-ordination of curriculum subjects.
- The effectiveness with which good relationships between staff are managed and promoted.
- The use of pupils' assessments in providing information for the next stage of pupils' learning.
- School improvement planning beyond the current year.

*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 July 1997. Since then, the quality of teaching has improved significantly, particularly in Key Stage 1. This has been supported by more effective monitoring and improved planning. The frequent changes in teaching staff have limited improvements in the co-ordination of subjects, although the effective leadership and co-ordination of information and communication technology has had a significant impact on the school's provision. Standards in information and communication technology have improved substantially and this is beginning to have a positive impact

on standards in other subjects. Systems for assessing pupils' attainment and progress have been improved and increasing use is made of computer technology to keep records but there are weaknesses in how the information from assessment is used to guide future planning. Improvements have been made to the development planning process which now links the school's priorities to likely costs and includes suitable measures of success. However, there is still no clear and shared written plan beyond the current year. Procedures for the appraisal of teaching have been improved through the introduction of performance management. Despite the changes in staffing, a positive climate for learning has been maintained. The school is in a satisfactory position for further improvement although this will depend largely on its success in recruiting and retaining suitable teaching staff.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by seven year olds based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
reading	C	E	A	A*
writing	C	E*	A	A*
mathematics	C	E*	B	A

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average   E

The school's results improved substantially in 2000. When compared with schools with similar intakes, performance was in the highest five per cent of schools in reading and writing and was well above average in mathematics. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are average, based on inspection evidence, for the current year. Since the last inspection, overall standards have been broadly maintained although results have fluctuated widely in the last two years and can give a misleading picture of the overall trend. The school's targets for seven year olds in the current year are suitably high but teachers' predictions and the level of work observed indicate that the school is likely to fall short of these in the tests to be carried out this term. Targets for 2002 suggest average attainment next year. The high performance in the most recent tests reflects a more able group but also very effective teaching. The very high expectations and very good teaching are clearly evident in some of the work of the pupils in this year group. This higher level of performance suggests pupils in other year groups could do better.

Results in the 1999 Key Stage 1 tests were very low. This group of pupils, now in Year 4, included a much higher than usual proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including one pupil with statements and has suffered severe disruption due to many changes of teacher during their time in the school. The current level of attainment for these pupils, the oldest in the school, is judged to be below expectations in English and mathematics. This indicates at least satisfactory levels of achievement over the last two years for this group. Results of optional tests for Year 4 taken in 2000 were close to the local authority average in reading but slightly below average in writing and mathematics. Targets for Year 4 in 2002 were originally set too low. These were changed to reflect more accurately the very good results achieved by this group at the end of Key Stage 1.

Standards in science at the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly average, although far fewer pupils are working at the higher level this year compared with last year. In Key Stage 2, pupils in Year 4 attain below-average standards. Standards in information and communication technology are well above average by the end of Key Stage 1 and are above average in Key Stage 2. This subject has developed as a particular strength of the school. In most other subjects, standards are broadly in line with expectations but the level of art in Key Stage 2 is below expectations. Achievement in the foundation stage is satisfactory in all the areas of learning. Most children are on course to attain the national Early Learning Goals by the end of the reception year.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils enjoy school and are keen to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good in lessons, in the playground and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils get on well with others.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Rates are close to the national average.

The school is a friendly and orderly community where pupils show respect for one another. There is very little unauthorised absence.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	satisfactory	satisfactory	satisfactory

*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.*

Ninety-three per cent of teaching was judged to be satisfactory or better, including a third which was good. Seven per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory. The key skills of English and mathematics are taught satisfactorily. Teachers' plans are sound, overall, and are good in the Foundation Unit (nursery and reception class). Support staff and resources are used particularly well in the Foundation Unit. The needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are generally met well throughout the school. Pupils are motivated by the activities they undertake and show good levels of concentration. They are given plenty of opportunities in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 to work both independently and collaboratively and they use these well.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The statutory curriculum is in place for all groups but there are fewer than usual additional activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Pupils' individual plans provide clear and concise targets and pupils are supported well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good, overall, with particular strengths in spiritual and social provision. Moral and cultural provision are satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Procedures for monitoring and promoting pupils' overall development and welfare are satisfactory but the information available on pupils' attainment and progress is not yet used sufficiently to raise standards.

The curriculum provides specific support to ensure that all pupils, including those with complex special needs, are included fully in all aspects of school life. Time for physical education is relatively low and the organisation of the timetable means that the time available is not used efficiently. The quality of

information for parents is good and overall links with parents are satisfactory.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Roles and responsibilities need to be reviewed. There are weaknesses in relationships between staff which have contributed to the many staff changes.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are able, active and well-informed.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school increasingly collects information on how well its pupils are doing but is at an early stage in using this to secure improvements.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Funds are directed to priority areas and spending is monitored carefully by governors.

Improvements have been made in key areas of teaching and curriculum planning. The headteacher and governors are committed to raising standards further in all aspects of the school, but this has been adversely affected by problems in recruitment and retention of teaching staff. The number of teachers and support staff was satisfactory at the time of the inspection although only two teachers are on permanent contracts beyond the end of this school year. The extensive site provides good indoor space and good playground accommodation. Levels of learning resources are satisfactory but there are some shortages in basic mathematics equipment. The school applies successfully the principles of best value in its use of the available resources, including specific grants, and ensures that money is spent prudently.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Their children enjoy school and make good progress.</li><li>• Children are helped to become mature and responsible.</li><li>• They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The level of turnover of teaching staff.</li><li>• The range of activities outside lessons, especially sports.</li><li>• Information about how their child is getting on.</li></ul>

The inspection team broadly agrees with parents' positive views. Pupils' progress has varied significantly but is satisfactory, overall. The number of teachers who have left the school in recent years is very high and this is having a negative impact on pupils' levels of achievement. Inspectors feel that there are fewer than usual sporting and other activities available outside lessons. Inspectors feel that the quality of information provided compares well with other schools.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

**The core subjects: English, mathematics and science, plus information and communication technology**

1. Results of the last statutory tests and teachers' assessments indicate that standards at the end of Key Stage 1 were well above average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics in 2000. The school performed very well compared with schools in similar contexts, achieving results in the top five per cent of similar schools nationally. Standards are average, based on inspection evidence, for the current year. Since the last inspection, overall standards have been broadly maintained although results have fluctuated widely in the last two years and can give a misleading picture of the overall trend. The school's targets for seven year olds in the current year are suitably high, but teachers' forecasts and the level of work observed indicate that the school is likely to fall short of these in the tests to be carried out this term. The school's targets for 2002 suggest average attainment next year. The high performance in the most recent tests reflects a more able cohort but also very effective teaching, which focused strongly on ensuring that as many pupils as possible achieved or exceeded the expected level. The very high expectations and very good teaching are clearly evident in some of the work of the pupils in this year group. This higher level of performance suggests that pupils in other year groups could do better.
2. Results in the 1999 Key Stage 1 tests were very low. This group of pupils, now in Year 4, included a much higher than usual proportion of pupils with special educational needs and has suffered severe disruption due to many changes of teacher during their time in the school. Over a third of the pupils in this group have left the school in the last two years, many of whom performed successfully in the tests. The current level of attainment for these pupils, the oldest in the school, is judged to be below expectations in English and mathematics. This indicates at least satisfactory levels of achievement over time for this group, given the circumstances in which they have been taught. Results of optional tests for Year 4 taken in 2000 were close to the local authority average in reading but slightly below average in writing and mathematics. Targets for Year 4 in 2002 were originally set too low. These were changed to reflect more accurately the very good results achieved by this group at the end of Key Stage 1 and, if achieved, would indicate satisfactory progress over time.
3. Standards in science at the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly average, as at the time of the last inspection, although far fewer pupils are working at the higher level (Level 3) this year compared with last year. Results of the statutory teachers' assessments in 2000 were in line with the national average and were above average compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory over time, but the work given to pupils this year is not as challenging as in 2000. In Key Stage 2, pupils in Year 4 attain below average standards. This again reflects the high level of pupils with special educational needs and the frequent changes of teacher, which have affected the quality and continuity of their work more than in English and mathematics, and evidence indicates that their achievements have been unsatisfactory.
4. Standards in information and communication technology are well above average by the end of Key Stage 1 and are above average in Key Stage 2. This subject has developed as a particular strength of the school since the last inspection and pupils throughout the school have made rapid progress since the computer suite has been established. Their skills in the use of computers are having a significant impact on their learning in many subjects and particularly in literacy and numeracy lessons.
5. Pupils develop good speaking and listening skills in both key stages. Pupils' reading and writing

skills are generally sufficient to help them in other subjects, although in Key Stage 2, pupils' weaker literacy skills do not sufficiently support their work in science. The level of handwriting and presentation in this key stage is unsatisfactory and reflects the frequent changes of teacher and different levels of expectation. Pupils in both key stages have developed satisfactory mental recall of number facts, although only the higher-attaining pupils in Year 4 make effective use of a range of strategies when applying their numeracy skills to problem-solving and work in other subjects.

6. Key Stage 1 test results have shown slightly lower attainment for boys in writing and mathematics compared with girls over recent years, although lesson observations, samples of work and discussions with pupils, indicate little difference in overall performance between boys and girls. Pupils who have special educational needs, including those with statements, make sound progress in both key stages. This is promoted by good Individual Education Plans, which are much improved since the last inspection and now contain precise and measurable targets in English and mathematics that are relevant and appropriate to individual pupils' needs. The school currently has no pupils that it identifies as especially gifted or talented. The few pupils in the school with particularly high attainment are supported appropriately through challenging extension work.

#### **Standards achieved in the non-core subjects**

Subject	KS1	KS2 (Y4)
Art and design	satisfactory	unsatisfactory
Design and technology	satisfactory	satisfactory
Geography	satisfactory	satisfactory
History	satisfactory	satisfactory
Music	satisfactory	satisfactory
Physical Education*	satisfactory	satisfactory

*\*based on limited evidence; a dance lesson in Key Stage 1 and a games lesson in Key Stage 2*

7. Since the last inspection, standards have been maintained in most non-core subjects. In music, an improved programme of work supports teachers' planning well and has resulted in an overall improvement in Key Stage 1. Pupils' singing is of good quality throughout the school. The school has not maintained the good standards in geography identified in the previous report although the level of pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards have been maintained in art and design in Key Stage 1 but have fallen in Key Stage 2. Pupils in this key stage have had too few opportunities to build on their knowledge, skills and understanding.

#### **Children in the Foundation Stage**

8. Most children join the nursery when they are three with widely varying but, overall, broadly average levels of attainment. Their progress in the nursery and reception class is satisfactory and supported by sound teaching. Most are on course to attain the national Early Learning Goals by the end of the reception year in personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development.

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

9. The previous inspection found that pupils had positive attitudes to their life and work in school and this continues to be the case. Pupils of all ages enjoy coming to school and they are keen to take part in the wide range of activities available. Boys and girls approach their work with a shared commitment and desire to learn. They usually settle quickly at the start of lessons and persevere with things they find difficult. They take care with their work and are proud of what they have done. The majority listen carefully to their teacher and enjoy contributing to class discussions. For example, during an English lesson that was dealing with the reading and spelling of 'oo' and 'oa' sounds, Year 1 pupils thoroughly enjoyed reading about 'Olly the Octopus' and had fun experimenting with the various different words. During discussions, the majority of

pupils wait their turn and are careful not to interrupt each other. A few pupils of all ages, however, find it difficult to concentrate on their work and are too talkative during lessons. They interrupt when someone else is speaking and fail to understand that their unsolicited comments serve only to distract the teacher and their more settled classmates. Although teachers usually manage to cope when this happens, the repeated interruptions can disturb the 'flow' of the lesson and limit the learning that is taking place.

10. Pupils behave well in and around the school. There is a strong sense of community and pupils are proud to belong to St Mary's School. They are friendly and out-going and get along well with members of staff and with each other. Pupils of all years mix freely and they are well-mannered and polite. Members of staff lead by example and address pupils with the respect and consideration they deserve. Pupils respond similarly and their positive approach to learning helps to make this school a calm and sociable place. The behaviour of pupils at lunch-time and play-times is good and there is a very pleasant atmosphere in the playground. Pupils play energetically and happily in mixed age and gender groups. They use equipment safely and sensibly. During the inspection, there was no sign of any bullying, racism or other anti-social behaviour. Should pupils have to stay indoors because it is raining, they respond sensibly and with good humour. There has been one fixed-term exclusion during the last school year.
11. Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils are confident and interested in what is going on around them. They undertake a wide range of tasks around the school, from returning the registers to the office to helping to distribute the milk and post. Pupils of all ages are quick to use their initiative and relish responsibility. They spontaneously offer help to one another during lessons if someone is unsure what to do. Relationships are good and Catholic and non-Catholic pupils get along well. When required to do so, pupils can be relied upon to work harmoniously on their own or in small groups.
12. The level of attendance is satisfactory. It was close to the national average at the time of the previous inspection and this has continued to be the case over the intervening years. If their child has been absent, parents are prompt in providing the school with a reason. Over the last four years, the number of unauthorised absences has fallen sharply and the level is now well below the national average. When pupils are absent, it is usually because they have been ill, but around one fifth of the pupils are taken out of school for a family holiday. The absence of these pupils inevitably means that they miss the work that is undertaken by their classmates and this could place them at a disadvantage in the future. Pupils usually arrive in good time for the start of the school day and registration takes place promptly. Time-keeping during the school day is good and this helps pupils to make the most of their time at school and underpins their positive attitudes to learning.

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

13. Teaching is satisfactory in the foundation stage and in both key stages. During the inspection, teaching was at least satisfactory in 93 per cent of the lessons seen. This represents a substantial improvement since the last inspection, notably in Key Stage 1 where a very large proportion of teaching was unsatisfactory at that time. Overall, a third of the teaching is judged to be good and, in Key Stage 1, half the lessons observed were good.
14. Inspectors' overall judgements about teaching are based on evidence of pupils' progress over time as well as on the lessons seen. This shows that the quality of teaching has varied significantly with the high turnover of staff. Evidence from good quality pupils' work in Year 2 indicates that particularly good teaching during this year has promoted high achievement for pupils. This good practice is reflected again in the vastly improved test results in the previous year. The difficulty in recruiting and retaining suitably qualified and experienced staff is having a negative impact on pupils' learning. Teaching in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory, overall, but some weaknesses are evident in pupils' work and these are related to inconsistencies in the level and quality of work expected by different teachers. Both class teachers in this key stage were new to the school and had just a few days before the inspection to get to know the pupils.

15. The teaching in the foundation stage is satisfactory, with good features. The caring staff work well together for the benefit of the children and provide a secure start to their education. Good relationships with the children and their parents are promoted. The children are handled sensitively if they are upset. However, the staff do not always set clear enough guidelines for the behaviour they expect and do not have consistently effective strategies to deal with some of the more extreme behaviour.
16. Adults in the nursery and reception class encourage children to mix well and to take responsibility through activities, which encourage independence and concentration. They plan frequent activities that encourage children to listen and talk to others and develop the skills needed for early reading, writing and mathematics. These are integrated well into general activities in the nursery and through suitably structured daily lessons in the reception class. Thus, children are gradually introduced to the format and content of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, which they will meet in Key Stage 1.
17. The quality of planning in the foundation stage is good and is enthusiastically carried out by the teacher and support staff. They provide varied and exciting activities with a different focus each day to maintain the children's interest. They have clear aims linked to development in all areas of learning. Pupils' physical development is encouraged through daily opportunities for structured outdoor play using the spacious and improved outdoor area.
18. Literacy and numeracy are given a suitably high priority in both key stages,. The school has implemented the national strategies for literacy and numeracy effectively and teaching in these areas is sound, overall, with good features in Key Stage 1. Strengths in this key stage include effective planning that builds on previous work and focuses on developing specific reading, writing and number skills. The structure of lessons is generally sound but there is often too little time allowed for finishing written work in both key stages. The frequent changes of teacher in Key Stage 2, and the different levels of expectation evident in pupils' written work, have resulted in unsatisfactory handwriting and presentation in this key stage. The lack of adequate records on pupils' achievements is making it difficult for new teachers to pitch work at the correct level. For example, in science, in Key Stage 2, lessons were directed at the majority of the class rather than catering for the needs of the full range of capabilities.
19. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally secure. They are confident and knowledgeable in the teaching of information and communication technology skills and this is supporting their teaching in most subjects. Teaching in this subject is at least sound in all classes and is often good, reflecting regular access to a wide range of worthwhile activities in the computer suite and ensuring very good achievement by the pupils.
20. In general, teachers' planning is satisfactory and most lessons have a clear and progressive structure that builds on previous work. Teachers define learning objectives so that pupils understand what they are to learn, although this practice is less well established in Key Stage 2. This reflects staffing changes and limited experience of this good practice by some teachers. Pupils with special educational needs are supported by appropriate, well-designed Individual Education Plans. Teachers include all pupils in every activity successfully and most work in classes across both key stages is adapted effectively in order to meet their needs. Pupils' strengths are identified and sensitive encouragement promotes their confidence as, for example, when a pupil took a leading part in discussions in a history lesson. Effective support for individuals and small groups is given by learning support assistants. In addition, outside agencies visit the school to offer advice and the loan of resources for pupils with additional needs. Support staff are used in a flexible way to reduce over-dependency and encourage pupils to show independence in learning.
21. Teachers' expectations are suitably realistic. High expectations in some literacy and numeracy lessons in Key Stage 1 are evident in the challenging tasks, particularly in oral parts of the lesson. Teachers in both key stages generally give good oral feedback to pupils to encourage

them and let them know how they are doing; this is again particularly effective in oral parts of lessons in Key Stage 1. A weakness apparent in pupils' books in Key Stage 2 is insufficient insistence on good presentation supported by good handwriting. The marking of work through the school is not consistent despite a comprehensive marking policy. There is evidence of good practice in Year 2 work, where detailed and constructive comments give pupils clear feedback and reflect the teacher's high expectations. In general, however, pupils' work is rarely annotated to show pupils their strengths or weaknesses or what they need to do to improve. Throughout the school, teachers have high expectations of pupils independent use of computer software and encourage pupils' positive attitudes to handling new or unfamiliar activities. Pupils consequently persevere to achieve what they want, confidently and patiently starting again when things go wrong.

22. Teachers' methods are generally sound. Explanations are clear, so that pupils know what to do, and a good pace is generally maintained. Lessons are suitably structured to provide a balance of adult input and pupil activities. Many lessons benefit from an introduction to review previous learning and to present new work, followed by group or individual practice and a summary to review what has been learned. Teachers circulate well and use probing questions to identify the level of pupils' understanding. A suitable pace is maintained in most lessons. In some less successful lessons, insufficient time is allowed at the end of the lesson for the review or there is not a clear enough focus during this on the intended learning objective.
23. Although teachers' management of pupils is sound, overall, and promotes good relationships with pupils, there are inconsistencies and some weaknesses in the way that pupils' behaviour is managed in lessons. Teachers have a range of strategies for ensuring that pupils listen and make positive contributions in class discussions. These are not sufficiently well-established, however, and, throughout the school, oral lessons include a lot of unnecessary chatter and, in some cases, frequent interruptions that spoil the 'flow' of the lesson. A calm and friendly approach makes pupils feel comfortable and valued and they want to work. This works particularly well with lower-attaining pupils. Classroom assistants are deployed effectively by teachers and used flexibly to provide specific support where it is needed.
24. Homework is given in all classes but the amounts, types and regularity vary considerably. Parents felt there was no clear structure for this to develop as their children moved through the school. They commented on the very large amount of homework given to Year 2 in the previous year and while they thought the amount excessive they felt that the impact on their children's progress was very positive. The school has recently reviewed and clarified the arrangements for homework in each year group.
25. As a result of the teaching provided, learning is, overall, satisfactory in the foundation stage and in both key stages. This includes pupils with special educational needs. In lessons in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, pupils develop good levels of interest, concentration and independence through the activities planned, the realistic expectations and the level of support given. Pupils acquire skills, knowledge and understanding in a more systematic way than at the time of the last inspection, although the changes of teaching staff are limiting the impact that this should have on pupils' progress.

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

26. The school is providing a satisfactory curriculum, which shows some improvement in its overall balance since the last inspection, although there are weaknesses in the way the weekly timetable is organised. Less time than usual is allocated for physical education, with just one lesson each week. The curriculum provides pupils with an adequate range of learning opportunities and covers all the subjects of the National Curriculum. Statutory requirements are met and policies have been rewritten to conform with the revised National Curriculum. The curriculum for the foundation stage is satisfactory and procedures for working towards the recognised early learning goals are being

implemented.

27. The National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy are securely in place and national guidance materials are used well to support teachers' planning in other subjects. Termly plans include a range of activities to suit all levels of ability. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. Pupils are identified early in their school career according to the Code of Practice and the writing of Individual Education Plans is supported using computer software. These provide clear and concise targets for all pupils. The planned curriculum provides specific support to ensure that all pupils, including those with complex special needs, are included fully in all aspects of school life. In most classes, work is adapted adequately to match pupils' individual needs and this supports the sound progress they are making. Every effort is made to ensure equality of opportunity to all activities for all pupils. Pupils of both genders are given opportunities to show responsibility in class and during practical activities and both girls and boys belong to the school football team.
28. Personal, social and health education is becoming fully integrated as a subject into the timetable. Other opportunities arise within lessons and during assemblies, lunch-times and breaks for pupils to cover health and social issues. These include special projects in class, as, for example, when pupils discuss 'What makes you happy?' in a Year 2 lesson. Sex education or drug misuse are not part of the school curriculum but the school prospectus discusses the need for parents and carers to take responsibility in a caring and responsible way for these issues.
29. There are fewer than usual opportunities for extra-curricular activities in the school. A parent-led football club is held on Saturdays and lunch-time football tuition is provided by an external agency. A former school choir has been disbanded since the previous inspection, although sessions in school time for a few pupils to learn the recorder, violin and keyboard are continuing. More recently, a teacher who has joined the school on a temporary basis is offering singing and tuition in a range of percussion instruments.
30. The school has effective links with the middle and high schools on the campus and with other institutions. Pupils gain valuable experiences from weekly visits by pupils from a local special school. Pupils from Key Stage 1 bake cakes and share news and conversation, and become actively involved with their visitors by using their signing system. A partnership with a student from a local college has resulted in the design of a new school website. There are strong community links with the local residents' group. The whole ethos of the school is strengthened by its relationship with the church and there are regular visits to the school by the parish priest and other parishioners. Pupils also visit church regularly, although the school is quite a distance away. A parent of a non-Catholic pupil confirmed the importance of the church's teachings when she stated that her son is so spiritually moved by being part of the school community that he had requested a crucifix for his forthcoming birthday.
31. The school continues to provide well for pupils' personal development. Provision for pupils' spiritual and social development is a strength of the school. Generally, the provision within the curriculum aims to educate each child to reach their full potential and the school has clear objectives in terms of love and mutual respect. The code of conduct outlined in the school prospectus embraces care, courtesy and concern and stresses the need to value everyone.
32. Pupils are provided with good spiritual opportunities to reflect and ponder their place in the world. During a lesson observed covering knowledge and understanding of the world, in the reception class, pupils marvelled at the creation of their wormery and related each stage of its development with excitement and great anticipation. The animation they clearly felt was intense and intriguing as they stood, almost in reverence, around the wormery case. Discussions with Key Stage 2 pupils about their view of school life included an in-depth description by a lower-attaining pupil of how he felt 'safe' with his peers because they supported and encouraged him, even when they were busy. He said he now felt happy to show others how to think first and then ask because he knew how important quiet times were. Staff encourage pupils to respect and appreciate one another and good examples of spiritual awareness were noted in assemblies and lessons where quiet reflection is encouraged.



33. Provision for moral development is satisfactory. There are class rules in most classes and pupils care for one another and for school property, although the systems for rewards and sanctions vary throughout the school. This does not encourage the whole-school approach to understanding right and wrong that was identified in the previous report and is reflected in pupils' responses in some classes, where a minority of pupils interrupt or do not listen. Opportunities for pupils to raise large amounts of money for good causes, such as cancer research, encourage their awareness of the need to help others.
34. Pupils' social development is good. Staff and pupils interact with each other in a socially competent and confident manner. Most lessons are harmonious and pupils are given frequent opportunities to work together. There are high expectations of pupils' own responsibility when, for example, working in the computer suite. Staff present good role models in the development of politeness and patience. Pupils enter school happily and offer polite pleasantries as they move around the building. There is good evidence of collaborative learning in classrooms and pupils are helped to develop caring attitudes to others less fortunate than themselves. The inclusion of all pupils in all aspects of school life and the close involvement of children from other schools is effective in promoting this aspect.
35. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. There are opportunities within school for pupils to appreciate the work of artists, musicians and historical figures. Pupils' awareness and understanding of multicultural issues is promoted in various ways; for example, when pupils from other religions share their cultural experiences. Pupils have visited a wide range of places in the locality, such as museums and art galleries.

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

36. The previous inspection found that the school provided good day-to-day personal support for its pupils. All members of staff continue to work hard to provide a welcoming and positive environment. Parents are confident that their children enjoy their time at school and feel that they are well looked after during the school day. Although procedures for pupils' personal support are securely in place and are having a positive impact on their achievement, there continue to be weaknesses in how teachers' assessments are used when deciding what pupils will do next. Overall, procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare and health and safety, including child protection, are now considered to be satisfactory.
37. The support provided for pupils with special educational needs, particularly for pupils with statements, is sound. There is adequate provision available for the range of difficulties presented by these pupils. There are effective links with outside agencies and pupils are identified and supported in line with the current Code of Practice for special needs. Classroom assistants give sensitive and caring support and focus appropriately on pupils' individual targets. Pupils with statements receive the appropriate level of support, as outlined in their Statutory Assessments. There are regular meetings to discuss pupils' progress and well-being. Records are kept of all meetings and the school follows the relevant guidelines for annual reviews of statements.
38. The school has satisfactory procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. These have improved since the last inspection. A detailed policy for assessment that clearly outlines a wide range of ways in which teachers can check pupils' academic and personal progress is in place. A thorough assessment is made of children's skills in key areas when they enter the nursery at the age of three and, again, when they start their Reception year. The school uses the national tests in English and mathematics from Year 2 to Year 4 effectively to establish attainment against the expectations of the National Curriculum and supplements these with other published tests. Teachers' assessments of attainment in science are carried out as required nationally at the end of Year 2, although there is little recorded detail of these. Recently the school has designed good grid sheets that can record each pupil's results in tests over time and, thereby, track individual progress. These are recent and have yet to be completed fully by the

teachers but they are useful in helping them to set targets for pupils to reach in English and mathematics by the end of each year. The school is making increasing use of computer software to record pupils' assessments and track their progress, although the opportunity this provides for making summary evaluations is not yet being exploited sufficiently.

39. In the foundation stage, there are good assessment arrangements for children in the nursery for each main area of their learning. These have not yet been extended to cover the Reception age group or linked to the revised curriculum but the teacher plans to do this. Samples of class work are kept for individuals in English and mathematics in each class and, in the foundation stage and Key Stage 1, samples are kept in several other subjects. However, these samples are too rarely dated, assigned a National Curriculum level or annotated to describe what they tell the teacher about that pupil. This limits both their effectiveness in showing how well a pupil is doing over time and their use by other teachers – for example, when pupils transfer to the next class. Reading records are kept for each child, but these usually list the texts covered rather than acting as a diagnostic tool to record pupils' successes or the points that need to be improved in their reading. Good practice occurs in Year 2, where the teachers regularly share short-term targets for improvement with each pupil in English and mathematics and record these at the front of the pupils' workbooks.
40. The various procedures outlined in the school's assessment policy are complex and the teachers have not yet been able to implement them fully. Some seem to find them unmanageable in their present form. The frequent staff changes in Key Stage 2 have also led to assessments being delayed or not completed. These factors have had an impact, especially in science, where teachers do not have a clear enough overview of individual attainment against the levels of the National Curriculum. Assessment in the 'foundation' subjects is mostly informal and teachers have yet to become fully conversant with the revised national levels of attainment. There is, however, some good practice in this area. For example, a teacher in Key Stage 1 has completed assessments of pupils' attainment in art according to the new levels of the National Curriculum.
41. The use of assessment information to guide teachers' planning is weak and does not yet contribute to raising standards sufficiently. For example, the new teachers in Key Stage 2 have not had access to summary assessments of the pupils in their classes to use as a basis for planning work at the right level. Several teachers have too little knowledge of the point that pupils have reached in their learning to ensure that subsequent lessons are planned efficiently. This was a weakness at the time of the last inspection that has not yet been overcome.
42. Although procedures for monitoring pupils' personal development are largely informal, they are effective. They are based upon class teachers' knowledge of their pupils' individual circumstances and, although several teachers are new to the school, they soon get to know their pupils. Relationships are good and teachers are sensitive to pupils' 'ups and downs'. Pupils use their time at school productively and caring teachers constantly encourage pupils to work hard and to do their best. These factors have a positive influence on the progress that pupils make and on the standard of their work.
43. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting behaviour are satisfactory. The standard of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and, by providing lessons that are interesting and well-organised, teachers lay the foundation for a calm and orderly learning environment. Systems for rewarding outstanding work or exceptional effort are effective and, each week, class teachers nominate two pupils from their class to receive a certificate of achievement during the weekly praise assembly. Within each classroom, pupils also discuss and compile their own system of rules and rewards. Current incentives vary from the award of individual merit marks to the wearing of an 'I am special' badge. These systems work well and help to motivate pupils to work hard and to do their best.
44. Although there is a whole-school behaviour policy, individual teachers vary widely in their expectations and management of pupils' behaviour. The result is that some pupils do not have a clear idea of exactly what is, and what is not, considered to be acceptable behaviour. For example, some teachers allow pupils to chatter and repeatedly interrupt during lessons, whereas

others do not. In such a situation, the behaviour of an unsettled minority can have a detrimental effect on the amount of work that can be covered during a lesson and, therefore, on the progress that the rest of the class is able to make. The high level of staff turnover further aggravates this situation. A more standardised approach to behaviour management is needed in order to establish the ground rules more clearly for pupils and staff alike.

45. Procedures for monitoring attendance are satisfactory. Teachers complete registers carefully and accurately. The office staff review registers each week and report to the headteacher if the attendance of any pupil gives cause for concern. The traveller support service and the education welfare officer provide good support and the school is conscientious in following up any unexplained absences. This is reflected in the level of unauthorised absences that has now fallen to well below the national average.

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

46. This school sees a close partnership between home and school as fundamental to its drive to raise standards. Almost every parent who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire, as well as those who attended the meeting, indicate that their child enjoys coming to school and feels that the standard of behaviour is high. Nine out of ten parents also feel comfortable about approaching the school with suggestions or complaints and are confident that the school is helping their child to become mature and responsible. A significant number of parents, however, are worried about several important areas that directly affect their children. The most pressing of these is the high level of staff turnover. Although the overwhelming majority of parents feel that their child is continuing to make good progress, they are worried about the impact that so many changes could have upon their child's education. The inspection team understands their concerns but feels that this issue needs to be addressed more effectively.
47. A high proportion of parents feel that the school does not work sufficiently closely with them and that they are not kept sufficiently well-informed as to how their child is getting on. Inspectors do not agree with these concerns and feel that the quality of information provided compares well with other schools. Parents are invited to a termly consultation evening with their child's teacher and they also receive regular newsletters that keep them up to date with the work being covered in each subject. Pupils' annual reports give parents a clear idea as to what their children know, understand and can do. Although the school prospectus and governors' annual report contain much useful information, they omit the levels of authorised absence. The inspection team agrees with parents' concerns over the relatively restricted range of extra-curricular activities, which is limited to weekly and weekend football clubs and peripatetic music tuition for a few pupils. This provision again reflects the disruption caused by staffing changes.
48. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are informed appropriately when their children are placed on the special needs register. There needs to be more information sharing with parents when an initial concern is expressed. Parents and carers of pupils with statements work very closely with the school and have extensive knowledge of their children's individual needs and level of support. There is an 'open door' policy for parents to visit when they need to discuss their child's progress or change in circumstances. There are also opportunities for parents to attend special assemblies.
49. There are effective links with parents and these enable them to make a worthwhile contribution to their children's learning both at home and at school. The majority of parents try to ensure that their children attend regularly and avoid booking a family holiday during the term. Around one pupil in every five, however, is taken out of school for a holiday, the duration of which occasionally exceeds the annual ten-day maximum. These absences inevitably mean that they miss the work that is undertaken by the rest of the class and could place them at a disadvantage in the future.

50. Parents offer valuable support to the school in a number of ways. For example, they help to decorate parts of the school; recent examples include the new library and some technical help in the computer suite. In addition, the school association is active and organises an interesting range of fund-raising and social events. These include a summer school fete, and funds raised have recently been used to provide library and text books and outdoor play equipment for the nursery. In addition, some parents provide voluntary help during the school day. For example, they may hear pupils read or provide 'an extra pair of hands' during practical activities, such as cooking and design and technology. Parents also encourage their children to complete their homework on time and to support school Masses at the local church.

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

51. Since the last inspection, some aspects of the school's management have improved, although a number of weaknesses remain, notably in its leadership by the headteacher and key staff. These are having a negative impact on the school's provision and the standards achieved.
52. There is a high level of staff turnover and the school is experiencing considerable difficulties in the recruitment and retention of teachers. At the time of the inspection there was a sufficient number of appropriately qualified and experienced teachers and support staff to meet the demands of the curriculum, although several teachers are employed on temporary contracts and will be leaving at the end of the current academic year. This situation is continuing to have a negative impact on the standards achieved and the quality of education provided in English, mathematics and science, especially for pupils in Years 3 and 4. The difficulties in deploying staff to manage areas of the curriculum has resulted in significant weaknesses in the co-ordination of some subjects. The headteacher has taken on many of these responsibilities herself and has insufficient time to carry them out effectively. Provision for extra-curricular activities has deteriorated since the last inspection. The impact of staff changes is reflected further in parents' concerns about aspects of the school's management and is supported by evidence of poor relationships among the staff of the school over recent years.
53. The headteacher has a clear vision for the future based on her drive to improve teaching and raise standards in many aspects of the school. She has put in place relevant aims and policies to underpin this vision and placed a strong emphasis on equal opportunities for all pupils. She has secured improvements in areas identified as weaknesses by the last inspection, most notably in teaching and curriculum planning. Results of statutory tests in Key Stage 1 rose dramatically in the previous year. However, the many and frequent changes of staff have not created easy opportunities for the staff to come together as a team and to share the vision for the direction of the school. Weaknesses in the way relationships between staff have been handled have been an important factor in the level of staff turnover. Some teachers have felt undervalued and insufficiently involved in decision-making.
54. There has been satisfactory improvement, overall, since the last inspection. The successful monitoring and support for teaching has helped promote improvements in its quality. High- quality teaching was an important factor in the improved standards last year, although further changes in staff have undermined this improvement. Substantial improvements in provision for information and communication technology have led to high standards in this area. Despite the difficulties presented by high staff turnover, a positive climate for learning has been maintained. Improved planning and assessment procedures are in place, although the information gained from the assessment of pupils is still not used effectively to support teachers' planning. Relationships among staff have improved recently and there is greater determination to work together towards the aims of the school.
55. The school is increasingly monitoring its own performance with useful support from the local education authority. Weaknesses in teaching have been identified and subsequently addressed through monitoring and support by the headteacher and local authority advisory staff. The co-ordinators for every core subject have observed teaching in all classes and have provided support as needed. Increasing use is made of new technology. Much of the school's documentation is

usefully standardised and held on computer. Information from pupils' assessments and subsequent targets for improvement are recorded using computer software although there is no analysing or summarising of the information in order to evaluate any implications for teachers' planning. While the school has rightly identified the need to improve writing in all key stages there has been little investigation of specific strengths and weaknesses in pupils' writing.

56. There are clear development plans that identify areas for improvement in the current year. A good feature is the provision of a working copy of the improvement plan on display in the staffroom. This gives a clear picture of the school's progress towards its identified priorities for the current year. These are all carefully considered and relevant to the school's position although some sections have been over-ambitious given the context of the school and its staffing issues. For example, there are too many targets for mathematics and these have had to be reduced significantly to make them manageable. The action plan for design and technology is unrealistically ambitious.
57. The governing body is effective in ensuring that statutory duties are fulfilled and has a clear understanding of the issues currently facing the school. The strengths in its management identified in the last report have been maintained. Governors are consulted and involved in the various stages of the planning process and there are very detailed sections in the improvement plan that set out clearly the action being taken over the year by different governing body committees. Recent action to implement performance management systems indicate the willingness and resolve of the governing body to take the school forward.
58. The school's educational priorities are supported satisfactorily through its financial planning. Initiatives identified on the improvement plan include forecasted costs, and careful and regular monitoring of spending by the governors' finance committee ensures that the governing body is kept well-informed. Specific grants are used appropriately. Prudent spending decisions have been made and 'best value' is sought in the deployment of funds. Careful choices in purchasing and the use of national grants have enabled the installation of a very well-equipped computer suite, a significant achievement for a small school. The retaining of a relatively high proportion of its budget as a contingency was appropriate in the last financial year due to uncertainties over staffing and the possible loss of substantial income generated by lettings of the premises. Plans for longer-term expenditure lack precision owing to the school's improvement plan having no overview of development priorities beyond the current year. There needs to be a clearer and shared longer-term vision of the school's priorities and the subsequent implications for financial planning. The school's financial procedures and accounting systems were judged to be satisfactory in a recent audit and the school is preparing to address the issues raised and to implement its recommendations.
59. The management of special educational needs is satisfactory. The headteacher is currently the co-ordinator. While very knowledgeable and experienced in this aspect, there are limited opportunities for her to fully extend the role as she would wish. For example, there is insufficient time to monitor and evaluate the school's provision or work with outside agencies. There are efficient procedures for identification, assessment and planning for pupils with additional needs. A range of procedures has been implemented to simplify the amount of paperwork for the role; for example, the use of a computer program for generating Individual Education Plans. The overall number of classroom support hours is broadly average. Support assistants ably support teachers and provide effective help and guidance for pupils with special needs. The governor responsible for this aspect is enthusiastic and supportive. She has attended appropriate training and is developing her role to include future legislation and procedures.
60. The school has appropriate policies for monitoring the performance of newly qualified teachers and for providing them with guidance and training. Arrangements for the induction of other teachers who are new to the school are satisfactory. Procedures for implementing special staff training in information and communication technology are underway and the programme has improved teachers' knowledge and confidence in using computer technology in their teaching. Some who began the training have now left, and although new staff receive support from the co-ordinator they are not involved in this training. Procedures for staff appraisal have improved since the last

inspection, with satisfactory performance management systems being developed. Staff involved in caretaking, cleaning, lunch-time supervision and meals provision work hard and make an important contribution to the school community and to the quality of day-to-day school life.

61. The overall quality of accommodation is good. Classrooms have plenty of space and attractive displays of the pupils' work help to create a bright and interesting learning environment. Several large open-plan areas are shared for practical subjects, such as art and design, and the school hall is spacious. The high standard of accommodation has a positive impact upon the standard of pupils' work in English, mathematics, science, technology and art and design. Although the new computer room is relatively small, it represents a very good use of the available space. The school has spacious grounds that are more than adequate for teaching physical education and science. The playground is large and outdoor facilities for children in the foundation stage are good. The school is kept clean and well-maintained and there have been some notable improvements since the last inspection, such as the replacement of windows, although the small external courtyard area remains undeveloped. The level of learning resources is generally satisfactory, although there are some shortages in, for example, mathematics, where more practical apparatus is needed to support the teaching of numeracy. The high quality of resources for information and communication technology is beginning to have a positive impact on standards in many subjects.

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

62. To improve the overall quality of provision and raise standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:
- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science for the oldest pupils in the school so that they at least meet the expectations for their age by:
    - reducing to a minimum the disruption caused by teachers leaving the school;
    - raising teachers' expectations of pupils' achievement;
    - building on the good practice that led to high achievement in the previous year in Year 2.  
(paragraphs: 2, 3, 18, 21, 52, 53)
  - Implement an effective policy for retaining teaching staff and recruiting new staff sufficient to meet the needs of the school's curriculum by:
    - urgently seeking initiatives which will attract new staff;
    - improving relationships among staff and involving staff more actively in the decision-making process;
    - deploying subject and management responsibilities fairly and effectively, according to the experience and expertise of the teaching staff;
    - taking a longer-term view of the development of curriculum subjects and ensuring ambitious but carefully prioritised and manageable targets for individual action plans.  
(paragraphs: 51 - 56)
  - Ensure that assessment information is consistently and effectively used to determine priorities for action and to support teachers' planning by:
    - prioritising the assessment information that will be collected in order to make it manageable;
    - monitoring the collection and recording of this information;
    - analysing and evaluating the information to identify strengths and weaknesses;
    - making sure that teachers have this information in order to plan effectively to address the issues raised.  
(paragraphs: 38 - 41)
  - Ensure that the school improvement plan includes an overview of the school's priorities beyond

the current year.

Other issues which should be considered by the school:

- The standard of art in Key Stage 2. *(paragraphs: 7, 106)*
- The time allocated to physical education and its most effective use. *(paragraphs: 26, 137)*
- The limited range of extra-curricular activities. *(paragraph 29)*
- The quality and consistency of the marking of pupils' work. *(paragraph 21)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	30
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	32

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	0	33	60	7	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	23	109
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	21

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		27

#### English as an additional language

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

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.9
National comparative data	5.2

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.5

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



### ***Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1***

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000	11	13	24

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	9	10
	Girls	13	13	12
	Total	23	22	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (76)	92 (34)	92 (66)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	10	10
	Girls	13	12	12
	Total	23	22	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (34)	92 (41)	92 (55)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	4
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	0
White	77
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	1	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

## **Teachers and classes**

### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y1 – Y4**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	5.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17
Average class size	23

### **Education support staff: Y1 – Y4**

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	62.5

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	12*

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	57.5

Number of pupils per FTE adult	8*
--------------------------------	----

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

*\* These figures do not take account of  
the Reception children in the Foundation  
Unit who share the same teacher.*

## **Financial information**

Financial year	2000/2001
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	259,647
Total expenditure	260,341
Expenditure per pupil	2,061
Balance brought forward from previous year	24,214
Balance carried forward to next year	23,520

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	143
Number of questionnaires returned	39

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	23	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	44	51	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	36	8	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	46	17	0	3
The teaching is good.	46	36	8	3	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	46	18	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	38	10	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	41	46	8	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	33	49	18	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	28	26	23	8	15
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	51	9	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	11	21	21	26	21

*(figures may not total 100 due to rounding)*

### Other issues raised by parents

Parents indicated significant concerns about the number of teachers leaving the school in recent years and about the falling numbers of pupils on roll. They indicated concerns over the way the school was managing these issues.

## **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**

63. Provision for children in the nursery and reception classes ('The Foundation Unit') is satisfactory, with good features. The unit provides children with a secure start to their education. It is led by caring staff who establish good relationships with the children and their parents and provide sound teaching for all three age groups. The staff work well together for the benefit of the children.
64. Most children join the nursery when they are three. The assessments made at that point of their basic skills in language, mathematics and personal development indicate that, while their attainment varies considerably, overall, it is in line with the average for the local authority. They make satisfactory achievements through the foundation stage in all the areas of learning. Most are on course to attain the national Early Learning Goals by the end of the reception year in:
- personal, social and emotional development;
  - communication, language and literacy;
  - mathematical development;
  - knowledge and understanding of the world;
  - physical development;
  - creative development.

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

65. Children's personal, social and emotional development is in line with expected levels, overall. There are strengths in their levels of confidence and independence but a few children show immature or unacceptable behaviour at times. Teaching in this area is sound. Adults encourage children to mix well, to learn about other people and to take responsibility at a suitable level for their age. They set up activities which encourage independence, socialisation and concentration.
66. The children are interested in activities and want to learn. They maintain their concentration satisfactorily. They are settled enough to join the whole school in assembly where they sit and listen well. Most show more confidence than is often seen in this age group, both in nursery and reception. They talk freely about their work to adults and often choose and organise their activities efficiently. Most relate well to other children and adults and the various age groups mix well at work and play. The children are comfortable with the staff. They are praised openly when they are kind or helpful and taken aside for private words if they are thoughtless to others. A small number, especially in the reception class, show poor attitudes to others at times. They occasionally behave in a way that disrupts the learning of their classmates, upsets other children and takes a considerable amount of adult attention to control. The children are handled sensitively if they are upset. However, the staff do not always set clear enough guidelines for the behaviour they expect and do not have consistently effective strategies to deal with some of the more extreme behaviour of this minority.
67. Children increasingly learn to take care of themselves. For example, while those in the nursery change their footwear for physical activities, the children in reception change into their shorts and T-shirts and dress themselves at the end of the lesson, with a minimum of adult help. Levels of independence are often high in all age groups. The children in the nursery daily choose some of their own activities and they often pursue these without direct adult supervision. They are good at getting out equipment and at clearing away at the end of activities. They treat other children with respect. For example, the adults encourage them effectively in their outdoor play to negotiate if they want to use a large wheeled toy that is being used by another child. They take turns and play safely with regard to other children's needs.

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

68. In communication, language and literacy, children reach expected levels and their speaking skills are often good. Teaching is sound for this area of learning in both nursery and reception. Adults plan frequent activities that encourage children to listen and talk to others. They systematically encourage good reading habits and develop the skills needed for early writing. Satisfactory additional help is given on an individual basis to any child who finds learning difficult. In the nursery this is achieved because of the high ratio of adults to children. It is less easy to provide in reception, where the teacher is generally the only adult available and the numbers of children are much higher.
69. The children speak confidently and a significant minority have a wide vocabulary for their age. Listening skills are satisfactory. In nursery, the children responded well to a story about a beetle and understood its humour. They have an appropriate repertoire of rhymes and songs and the higher attainers adapt the words of these creatively to a given situation. In reception, most children speak in whole sentences and describe their ideas, feelings and events. They begin to identify the sounds made by letters in writing and use these to help them read new words. They enjoy looking at books and are beginning to recognise common words. Parents contribute well to the children's developing reading skills by helping with frequent practice at home. The children use written texts confidently in many activities; for instance, they understand how to use letters and forms in their post office role-play area, pretending to read from these. Most write their name correctly by the time they are five and can copy an adult's writing. The highest attaining children write simple sentences on their own, forming recognisable letters of an appropriate size.

### **Mathematical development**

70. Children's mathematical development is sound and this area is taught satisfactorily. In the nursery, the children begin to count small numbers accurately and relate these to real objects. In a matching game, they counted the number of cards they still needed to win. In their post office area, they use money confidently to buy stamps or to give change. They begin to understand about quantity by filling containers with lentils or water and are encouraged by the class assistant to use terms such as 'more than' and 'less than'. Children in reception count objects reliably to 10 and begin to complete simple addition problems in practical situations. Many count from memory well beyond 10. They use comparison terms such as 'bigger' and 'smaller', 'longer' and 'shorter'. They know the names of simple shapes such as squares, circles and triangles.
71. The adults ensure that mathematics is taught daily. In nursery, this is an integrated part of the general activities, and skills are mainly taught as they arise through play in the course of the session. The reception teacher also encourages this integrated approach to mathematical development but, in addition, gives more structured daily lessons which are gradually introducing the children to the format and content of the National Numeracy Strategy which they will meet in Key Stage 1. This is appropriate to their age and maturity. Opportunities for learning are frequently exploited throughout the day, such as counting objects around the room or the numbers of children doing a certain activity.

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

72. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is satisfactory, overall, and they have a higher than average appreciation of the natural world and good computer skills for their age. The children in reception develop early skills in history and geography, for example, by comparing themselves now with when they were babies and by drawing the route they take from home to school. They talk knowledgeably about the worms, fish, tadpoles and crickets in their class. In both nursery and reception, they looked closely at real birds' nests and eggs and made good versions of nests themselves. Every day the nursery children are encouraged to design or build their own models and thus develop early technology skills. All the children use computers proficiently for their age. Adults give them regular opportunities to use both the computers in the foundation unit and the computer-room in the main school. The younger children learn to write and print their name. They use interactive books. Older ones create well-composed pictures on the computer.

73. The teacher and support staff provide varied and exciting activities that are changed frequently to maintain the children's interest. No two days are the same and areas of the nursery such as the role-play space are set up daily with a different focus. This is achieved by the dedication of the staff in planning and organising each day's work with enthusiasm. They have clear aims linked to the children's development in this area. Frequent opportunities are taken by adults to talk with children about their work and this supports language development well.

### **Physical development**

74. Children regularly develop their physical skills and improve their co-ordination to a satisfactory level. Nursery children play confidently on the wheeled toys and climbing apparatus in the outdoor area. Both the nursery and the reception classes use the large school hall for lessons. They develop control and confidence in running, hopping and jumping. They handle equipment in the foundation unit sensibly and safely and develop increasing control over tools such as pencils, paint-brushes and scissors with careful guidance from adults. Nursery children mould, roll and cut playdough to make 'cakes'. The children begin to understand the importance of keeping healthy and comment on how they feel after activity in the hall.
75. Teaching is sound. Adults show children the correct ways to use tools and help when necessary. They provide daily opportunities for outdoor play when the weather permits and the teacher has made recent improvements to the spacious outdoor area. Children receive frequent reminders about toilet, washing and changing routines but are encouraged to become as independent as possible in these.

### **Creative development**

76. Children attain expected levels in their creative development. They use a range of medium and techniques, painting frequently and creating collages with materials such as paper, glitter and natural materials like leaves and grass. They have produced careful pictures of spring flowers, combining paint, stencil and sculpture skills. In the nursery they begin to understand paint mixing by experimenting with adding lighter or darker colours to a base colour. All the children learn a range of rhymes and songs and, in reception, they start to explore basic elements of music, such as how to clap a regular beat. They achieve well in the creative aspects of their play, especially in the role-play areas and outdoors. They frequently express imaginative ideas by dressing up and re-creating situations linked to shopping, meal-times or family outings.
77. Again, in this area of learning, the adults provide frequent, varied opportunities for children's development. They balance well the need for the children to play independently and to have more structured opportunities for adult input and support. In the nursery, the support staff often take an active part in the role-play to encourage the children's thinking and by talking about their ideas.

## ENGLISH

78. Results in the year 2000 National Curriculum tests for seven-year olds, at the end of Key Stage 1, were well above the national average in reading and writing and very high when compared with similar schools. These results were a dramatic improvement compared with those achieved the year before. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are, however, currently achieving at broadly average levels and this is in line with the school's predictions for the end of the current year. At the last inspection, attainment in all aspects of English was average by national standards and this indicates that, despite wide variations over the last two years, standards in Key Stage 1 are being maintained.
79. In Key Stage 2, pupils are attaining below average levels in English. This reflects a number of factors, including the high proportion of pupils in Year 4 with special educational needs, the very high turnover of staff and the loss in recent years of pupils who were expected to do well in the tests. This year group performed poorly in the 1999 Key Stage 1 tests as seven-year olds, but, overall, their achievement since has been at least satisfactory.
80. The National Literacy Strategy is well established; the school has been focusing on improving standards of writing, particularly in Key Stage 2, and targets for Year 4 have been raised since the beginning of the year. The implementation of the literacy hour is promoting pupils' achievement, which is generally satisfactory in each element of English. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well in both key stages and make satisfactory progress towards their individual targets.
81. Speaking and listening skills are good in both key stages. Throughout the school, most pupils speak clearly and confidently in lessons. In Key Stage 1, pupils are given suitable opportunities to express their views and feelings and most develop a good understanding of the main points in discussions. Pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 enjoy listening to stories in 'Big Books' such as 'Olly the Octopus' and 'The Jolly Witch'. There is a good level of challenge in the questions posed by staff, which encourage thought and consideration before pupils answer. In both these classes, teachers ensure that all pupils are involved in the speaking and listening tasks. This helps pupils with special educational needs in particular to feel included in the oral part of lessons. In the early part of Key Stage 2, there is a good interaction between the teacher and pupils as they discuss capital letters and full stops in the book they are reading together. More able pupils are challenged well in this lesson and all pupils respond to the teacher's enthusiasm and interesting delivery by listening attentively and answering willingly and articulately; but insufficient time is given for the lower-attaining pupils to consider their responses.
82. There are appropriate opportunities given in both key stages for pupils to listen and discuss their work when completing written work in lessons. Discussion during plenary sessions, at the end of lessons, is, however, limited as there is too little time made available for pupils to consider what they have achieved.
83. Pupils' attitudes to oral lessons are generally positive. They show genuine interest. However, there is a tendency for a few pupils to continue their discussions after the teacher has requested their attention. Precious time is lost and pupils are occasionally distracted by inappropriate 'chatter' as some teachers do not establish clear guidelines about when to listen and when to speak.
84. By the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils are reading accurately at an appropriate level using word-building strategies. Higher-attaining pupils read well and use good expression. Pupils in Key Stage 2 read a variety of texts accurately using different strategies, including the context of the writing, to tackle unfamiliar words and help their comprehension. Most show understanding of the main points of fiction and non-fiction texts. They consider reading important and talk confidently about which books they like and why. Improvements in reading skills across this key stage are recognised as a priority by staff in the light of current predictions which indicate barely average performance. All pupils are encouraged to choose both fiction and non-fiction books, and there is a range of reading material available in both classes to encourage this. Staff and pupils value reading and there is evidence around the school of the pupils' interest in literature; for example, in

Key Stage 1, where there are displays of *The Enormous Crocodile*, detailing the progress made by the pupils in learning key words and phonic awareness in Year 1. Similarly, a display of 'Story Starters' in Year 2 graphically demonstrates to pupils how the start of a book or story can be developed from an imaginative or intriguing opening sentence. A new library area has been designated in the school which is spacious, light and airy. Parents and friends have designed and decorated this room and funds are being raised to buy more books and provide an extensive library resource, which should be more widely accessible. The current lack of good library facilities is limiting pupils' independence in choosing books in both key stages. Few pupils know where their local library is and fewer say they want to visit or join to borrow books. The older pupils have yet to familiarise themselves with simple indexing and cataloguing systems.

85. Writing in Key Stage 1 is in line with expectations. Pupils are gaining independence in writing as they build words from initial sounds and cues. Sentence construction is improving in older pupils in this key stage and some higher-attaining pupils are producing written work of several sentences as they complete their work on 'The Jolly Witch'. In Key Stage 2, examples of extended writing in pupils' books and on display in classrooms and around the school indicate that, while work in Year 3 is broadly as expected, the level of writing in Year 4 is below expectations. Pupils at the beginning of the key stage are beginning to write more elaborate sentences as they organise letters to an 'Agony Aunt'. They choose interesting words within a basically correct sentence structure. This work is adapted well for lower-attaining pupils who retell their own stories prior to receiving additional help in writing them. The work in the second year of Key Stage 2 shows little development in comparison, although these pupils have made satisfactory progress relative to their prior attainment. A focus on improving pupils' writing is a major element in forthcoming targets for school development.
86. Standards of handwriting in Key Stage 1 have been maintained, and appropriate use is made of a published handwriting scheme. There are some good examples of handwriting in pupils' books in Key Stage 1. Pupils use punctuation skills well. Higher-attaining pupils use paragraphs and clear, well-formed handwriting. However, the level of handwriting and presentation is unsatisfactory in Key Stage 2, with many examples of unfinished and untidy work. High quality presentation, using the computer to redraft and improve writing is, however, promoted well in both key stages. Improved spelling is encouraged for all pupils through the use of spelling lists and regular tests adapted to suit individual pupils' attainment levels. Pupils in Key Stage 1 make good use of computer software to list and check their spelling.
87. Pupils with special educational needs, particularly those with statements, produce satisfactory work and have maintained progress towards the targets outlined in their initial assessments. They are helped by effective classroom assistants who implement their Individual Educational Plans. Regular reviews of these plans help to focus on new targets, for example, in handwriting and other areas of literacy. The additional support provided for pupils with special educational needs in a lesson in Year 4 was used effectively and one pupil with complex needs was well motivated and produced a good poem with scribed help.
88. Pupils' attitudes are positive in most lessons and pupils with varying needs are fully involved in all activities. In one Key Stage 2 lesson, a pupil with special needs led the group discussion, following a class lesson on writing poetry, and inspired and encouraged the rest of the group with his enthusiasm and diligence.
89. The quality of teaching of English in both key stages is at least satisfactory with some good teaching in Key Stage 1. This demonstrates good progress since the last inspection when there was unsatisfactory teaching in a large proportion of lessons observed in this key stage. Strengths include effective planning that builds on previous work and focuses on developing specific reading and writing skills. Teachers have high expectations and use support staff and resources effectively. Explanations are clear, so that pupils know what to do and a generally good pace is maintained. Teachers have sound subject knowledge, although there are some weaknesses in elements of the teaching of literacy. The organisation of literacy lessons is generally sound but there is often too little time allowed for writing up work in both key stages. In all lessons observed, pupils had to finish their written work hastily and there were few opportunities for pupils to



consider and discuss what they felt they had achieved at the end of lessons. Pupils in Key Stage 2 classes do not always have lesson objectives made clear to them. This reflects staffing changes and limited experience of the literacy strategy by some teachers. Literacy skills are developed well in other subjects, including mathematics, music, history and geography. In these lessons, pupils develop an adequate range of relevant vocabulary and show confidence in speaking and listening.

90. The marking of work through the school is not consistent, despite a comprehensive marking policy. There is evidence of good practice in Year 2, but, in general, pupils' work is rarely annotated to show pupils their strengths or weaknesses or what they need to do to improve. The school recognises the need to extend this good practice and to improve consistency in the day-to-day assessment of pupils' written work. There are home/school link books which are taken home regularly by all pupils across the key stages. However, these books provide little useful information as there are few additional comments other than initials by adults indicating pages read. There is a need for more detailed analysis of pupils' performances in tests so that teachers are clear about strengths and weaknesses in reading and writing and can plan accordingly.
91. English is currently being co-ordinated by the headteacher until a new appointment can be made. A suitable action plan is in place with an appropriate focus on improving writing, but her other responsibilities mean that there is too little time to support and monitor this initiative effectively. The monitoring of teaching through classroom observation has been introduced and should be continued in order to improve consistency in teaching.

## **MATHEMATICS**

92. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 were above average in 2000 and are broadly average, based on inspection evidence, for the current year. Since the last inspection, overall standards have been broadly maintained, although results have fluctuated widely in the last two years and give a misleading picture of the overall trend. The school's targets for 2002 suggest average attainment next year. The higher level of performance achieved in 2000 and the current level of work in Year 1 suggest that pupils could do better.
93. Results of the 2000 tests and teachers' assessments indicate that the school's performance was above average, with a much higher than average proportion achieving beyond the expected Level 2. Compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, performance in these tests was well above average. This represented a dramatic improvement compared with the results from the previous year (1999) which were very low. That cohort, now in Year 4, included a much higher than usual proportion of pupils with special educational needs and has suffered severe disruption due to many changes of teacher during their time in the school. The high performance in the most recent tests reflects a more able cohort but also very effective teaching, which focused strongly on ensuring that as many pupils as possible achieved or exceeded the expected level. The high expectations and very good teaching are clearly evident in the work of the pupils in this year group.
94. However, the school's predictions for Year 2 pupils this year indicates that the percentage achieving expected levels will be broadly average. This is confirmed by inspectors' judgements of the level of pupils' work in numeracy and all areas of mathematics in Year 2. Pupils in this year group have a sound knowledge of place value to 100, and confidently use counting on and back when working out addition and subtraction problems. They know how to work out sums involving nine or eleven quickly by working to the nearest ten. They use the correct names for common two-dimensional shapes and describe how and why some are symmetrical. Pupils in Year 1 demonstrate good knowledge of number and the work in this year group is above expectations. They use their knowledge of addition facts to ten and beyond, odd and even numbers and place value to 'guess the number'. They double numbers quickly to work out additions, such as 7+8. Pupils achieve well due to the regular practising, consolidation and application of number strategies to simple problems.

95. Attainment for the oldest pupils in the school, those now in Year 4, is below expectations and the sound standards identified in the last inspection report have not been maintained. The Key Stage 1 tests for this cohort in 1999 were very low and since then over a third of its pupils have left the school, many of whom performed successfully in the tests. Targets set at the beginning of the year and the current level of pupils' work confirm that the vast majority pupils in this year group have made at least satisfactory progress relative to their attainment at the end of the previous key stage. This is as a result of sound numeracy planning and the regular practice and application of number facts to simple problems. Pupils in this year group round numbers accurately to the nearest ten or hundred and explain confidently how they would add larger numbers mentally. The higher attainers are confident in using these strategies when tackling number problems. Pupils' knowledge of fractions is less secure, with only the highest attainers recognising mixed numbers or the equivalence of simple fractions.
96. Most teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject, have high expectations of the level of number work and teach pupils a wide range of appropriate strategies for working with number. The three-part lesson structure of the national numeracy framework is soundly established and teachers make sure that pupils are aware of what they will be learning in the lesson. Good use is made of practical aids, such as individual whiteboards in Year 2, where all pupils quickly write their answers to oral questions. In a lesson in Year 4, the absence of similar apparatus, such as digit cards, meant many pupils were not involved actively in the oral work and the teacher was not able to assess the general level of understanding. The level of achievement in the main part of this lesson was less than satisfactory for the higher attainers because pupils focused too much on the written recording of problems and did not complete the task set. Teachers make use of a plenary session to summarise what has been achieved in the lesson but these sessions need a clearer focus in order to establish the extent to which pupils have learned what was intended.
97. In all year groups, teachers make good use of information and communication technology to develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Classes make regular use of the computer suite for numeracy lessons. Effective use is made of specialist software that ensures pupils are working at appropriate levels and therefore achieving well.
98. Pupils with special educational needs are supported particularly well in Year 2 and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. The teaching assistant focuses clearly on the targets on their Individual Education Plans, provides sensitive support where needed, but has high expectations of the pupils doing the work themselves. Pupils with special needs in Year 4 are supported in lessons but the level of work is not always appropriate, and in the lesson seen was too difficult. This reflects the limited assessments available to help the new teacher to pitch the work correctly.
99. Systems for assessing pupils' attainment and progress have improved since the previous inspection and include checks of understanding following blocks of work, along with annual non-statutory tests in Years 3 and 4. These are used to develop targets for the following year, but there is too little analysis and evaluation of pupils' strengths and weaknesses so that future work can focus on specific areas that need improving. There is good practice in individual target-setting in pupils' books in Year 2, although this is not evident elsewhere in the school.
100. The subject is currently being co-ordinated by a teacher on a temporary contract. The main elements of the action plan are being addressed successfully and the school has rightly cut down on the over-ambitious number of initiatives identified for development in the current year. An appropriate focus on evaluating and subsequently improving the effectiveness of plenary sessions in numeracy lessons is under way. While the overall level of practical resources is satisfactory there is a need for more apparatus, such as digit cards and number fans, to support whole-class teaching in numeracy sessions.

## **SCIENCE**

101. The 2000 teacher assessments of seven-year olds at the end of Key Stage 1 show that they attained standards that were in line with the national average but with a much larger than average

proportion attaining the higher than expected Level 3. Compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, the percentage of pupils who attained the expected Level 2 was above average and a very high proportion reached Level 3. Inspection findings for the group of pupils who are currently in Year 2 show that their attainment is broadly average, as at the time of the last inspection. Their achievements are satisfactory, including those who have special educational needs, but fewer pupils are working at Level 3 than last year. This appears to be because the work given to pupils this year is not as challenging as in 2000. In Key Stage 2, pupils in Year 4 attain below-average standards. This is because the class has a relatively high level of pupils with special educational needs, pupils' literacy skills do not sufficiently support their work in science and they have had frequent changes of teacher, which has affected the quality and continuity of their work. In the lesson seen during the inspection with this class, learning was satisfactory, but an examination of pupils' work this year and discussions with the pupils indicates that their achievements have been unsatisfactory over time. While the work covers successfully some of the required elements of the National Curriculum, not enough has been taught to achieve the expected levels and pupils' skills and knowledge are not checked or revised often enough. Standards in this key stage have fallen since the last inspection.

102. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have a satisfactory understanding of scientific enquiry and facts. In Year 2, they have carried out experiments and observations on plants, setting up fair tests to explore the conditions needed for growth. They predict sensibly what will happen in their experiments and record their work in diagrams and tables, for instance, when testing magnetism. They have a satisfactory understanding of the importance of diet and exercise on the body as a result of their current work on human health. Good teaching at the beginning of the year provided high levels of practical and investigative work for pupils, which established their understanding well.
103. By Year 4, pupils recall facts about animal classification and habitats but are unclear as to how animals are suited to their environment. They can classify materials as solids or liquids but do not have a satisfactory understanding of the work they did on topics such as solubility, melting or evaporation. The work seen in the books of pupils in Year 3 does not reflect the high standards they achieved in the 2000 assessments and indicates unsatisfactory progress this year. Work on aspects of the curriculum, such as plant growth, is at a low level in this year group.
104. Teaching was satisfactory in the lessons seen. Additional evidence from pupils' previous work indicates good teaching in Key Stage 1 and unsatisfactory teaching in Key Stage 2, this year. In Key Stage 1, lessons are planned systematically and, at best, cater well for the needs of higher attainers and stretch the rest of the pupils well. There are frequent opportunities for pupils to take part in practical activities. The teacher seen created a pleasant, calm atmosphere for learning and explained tasks clearly. In Key Stage 2, the teachers have only taken over the classes very recently. Because of this and because of the absence of adequate records on pupils, they directed their lessons at the majority of the class rather than catering for the needs of the full range of capabilities. Their explanations of tasks were clear and both created a pleasant, orderly atmosphere for learning. Pupils responded to this cheerfully and co-operated well with their teachers and classmates.
105. There are weaknesses in how the subject is managed. There is currently no co-ordinator in place to monitor pupils' attainment and the development of the curriculum. Teachers have made a satisfactory start in implementing the revised curriculum and in using national guidance in their planning. Appropriate assessment procedures are outlined in the school's policy but these are not yet in place in classes. As a result, teachers have too little information about pupils' progress in lessons and over time. This leads to a lack of continuity and efficiency in pupils' learning.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

106. Just one lesson in Key Stage 1 was seen during the inspection. Pupils' previous work and teachers' plans were seen and conversations held with pupils in Year 4 about their work this year. This evidence indicates that pupils attain the levels expected nationally by the end of Key Stage 1 but below expected levels by Year 4. Since the last inspection, standards have been maintained in Key Stage 1 but have fallen in Key Stage 2. These judgements reflect the quality of teaching in

each key stage. Teaching is judged to be satisfactory, with good features, in Key Stage 1 but unsatisfactory in Key Stage 2, where pupils have had too few opportunities to build on their knowledge, skills and understanding. Standards in this key stage have been adversely affected by staff changes, which have led to a lack of continuity in pupils' learning.

107. Pupils' achievements are sound in Key Stage 1 and frequent opportunities are provided for them to extend their learning. They have experienced a wide variety of medium and techniques as a result of the breadth of activities planned by their teachers. In Year 1, they use paint to create firework pictures and papers to make shape collages that link well to their learning in mathematics. Pupils in Year 1 study three-dimensional work by close observation of sculptures in materials such as glass and wood. These foundations are built on in Year 2 where pupils extend the range of materials and skills they use; for example, in seed collages combined with printing to make attractive masks in a native American style. They combine their computer skills with art to produce detailed symmetrical pictures and work in the style of Mondrian. Their use of computer painting software enables them to appreciate quickly the way the artist uses colour and shape and they produce good quality results. Pupils refine their drawing skills to produce observational drawings of percussion instruments. They achieve a three-dimensional effect in a large display depicting the Great Fire of London. Activities such as these are witness to the good cross-curricular links that are made in this key stage. Pupils learn about other famous artists and practise painting in their style, producing their version of Monet's 'Poplars'. However, pupils too rarely have the opportunity to use their imagination and ideas freely in their work or to create in their own style.
108. Pupils underachieve in Key Stage 2. In both Year 3 and Year 4, there have been too few worthwhile opportunities for them to work in art or design this year. Teachers have established sketch-books in both classes, and this is an improvement since the last inspection. However, these are used infrequently and the quality of work in them is poor, especially in Year 3. The pupils are capable of high quality work. This can be seen in Year 4 in good collages representing aerial views. These combine paint, paper, fabric and crayon techniques well and are displayed to good effect in the school hall, where they celebrate pupils' achievements and stimulate the younger classes. The same class has completed successful string and 'press print' pictures, but most of the remaining work seen in the key stage is at a low level for pupils of this age. Pupils have a very limited knowledge of famous artists and their work.
109. Teachers have reviewed their lesson planning, making use of recent national guidance. When used appropriately, this underpins their teaching well and encourages progression in pupils' learning. The co-ordinator has produced a useful action-plan for the subject. She is aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the school but has limited time available to develop or monitor the subject alongside her other considerable responsibilities. Good photographic records are kept of work in Key Stage 1 and of school displays, which help to record information about standards and coverage in the subject. Apart from one teacher who has begun to assess pupils' work in line with the recent national changes, assessment in art is limited. Procedures are not in place to use teachers' assessments of pupils' work to ensure progression in their achievements and so raise standards across the school.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

110. Pupils throughout the school attain expected levels in design and technology. Since the last inspection, standards have been maintained in both key stages and the quality of teaching has improved in Key Stage 1. Sound planning, based on national guidelines, is providing better guidance for teachers and enabling them to provide a range of purposeful activities that ensures the progressive development of pupils' skills and knowledge. This is evident in the work that pupils produce and their explanations of what they are doing. Teaching is satisfactory in both key stages. Teachers give appropriate time to evaluating existing products before creating initial 'prototypes' and encourage pupils to evaluate carefully what they have made.
111. Pupils' achievement in Key Stage 1 is sound, overall, with evidence of good achievement in the early part of the year in Year 2. When making a fruit salad, pupils in Year 1 begin to classify foods according to sensory properties and learn to cut the fruit carefully. This is extended in Year 2, for example, where pupils describe properties of fabrics and explain why they might be suitable for making a colourful coat for Joseph. They comment confidently on techniques for joining fabrics, such as sewing. Earlier work on vehicle designs and moving toys in this year group is of good quality and shows that pupils are able to evaluate their finished products by comparing them with their original designs and identifying further improvements that might be made.
112. Pupils' work in Key Stage 2 continues to show satisfactory levels of achievement so that by Year 4 they meet the expectations of the design and technology curriculum. Pupils produce good quality diagrams of torch designs. They describe the techniques they used to make them and how and why they chose particular materials. They make good use of their knowledge of electrical circuits, gained in science lessons. Progress is less secure in Year 3, where photo frame and cereal box designs show limited development of skills and knowledge.
113. Increasing use is being made of information and communication technology to develop pupils' designs and extend their knowledge. For example, painting software is used in Year 2 to create wheel designs for vehicles and pupils' computer control work in Year 4 is extended through designs for 'burglar alarms' to protect valuables. Lists of instructions for laminating an octopus design in Year 2 provide effective links with work in literacy lessons. There is little evidence of pupils in Key Stage 2 practising and improving their making skills through focused tasks involving, for example, measuring, cutting and joining. This is an appropriate area for development.
114. The subject is being managed by the headteacher during the absence of the co-ordinator. A comprehensive action plan has been devised. This indicates in great detail a range of appropriate areas for further development but is very ambitious and is already falling behind the schedule proposed owing to other subject priorities.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

115. Pupils are attaining in line with age-related expectations at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Year 4 although the good standards achieved at the time of the last inspection have not been maintained. The quality of teaching and learning is sound in both key stages, promoting satisfactory achievement including those pupils with special educational needs, who are achieving adequately in relation to their prior attainment.
116. Most pupils are making sound progress in Years 1 and 2 and have a secure knowledge of local features and the natural world. They understand simple mapping and weather systems and keep a weather diary, which includes reading a thermometer and understanding a water cycle. Pupils in Year 2 enjoy their work involving Barnaby Bear, a 'travelling teddy' who takes turns in accompanying pupils and staff home during weekend breaks and holidays. The diary of Barnaby's travels is a chronicle of his adventures and there is sound photographic and written evidence to support pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world. The work helps pupils to identify changing environments; for example, they discuss changes in the weather and the

implications of these with clear understanding. Teaching in this key stage is sound. Lively and challenging discussion and effective use of a video programme in Year 2 showing dramatic weather changes reflect the good teaching in the lesson observed. Pupils' work is adapted well to meet individual needs, which includes playing weather games, recording in the weather dictionary and pupils planning co-operatively a computerised design for the cover of the dictionary.

117. Pupils in Key Stage 2 show a satisfactory understanding of the names and locations of continents and locate places on a map and globe confidently. They begin to explain differences in the features and life style of distant places, linking some of these to differences in climate. They enjoy the subject, are very interested and listen attentively.
118. Teaching in this key stage is judged to be satisfactory. The level of questioning and responses in a lesson in Year 4 indicates that pupils have developed a sound general knowledge. Good use was made of a range of specialist resources such as workbooks, large laminated cards and a globe, although the lack of a larger world map in the discussion session made it more difficult for pupils to appreciate the location of Mexico. A lack of focus in identifying precisely what pupils would learn reflected the new teacher's unfamiliarity with the planning and the resources available. Pupils were nevertheless engaged fully in the discussions and worked collaboratively and effectively together to find out about features of a Mexican village. Pupils with special educational needs were supported well and fully involved in the lesson.
119. There is currently a 'caretaker' co-ordinator for geography due to staffing changes. The policy has been revised in the light of the changes in the National Curriculum and targets set within the school development framework to introduce new schemes of work. There is a limited range of work recorded in pupils' books in Key Stage 2 and work seen is less well-presented over the last term. Recent staff changes have restricted the opportunities to display ongoing work effectively.
120. There is, currently, satisfactory management and co-ordination of geography. The headteacher has assumed responsibility during staff changes. There are limited opportunities for the monitoring of the subject. However, the headteacher regularly looks at teachers' plans and samples pupils' work, making written comments in their books and awarding merits when appropriate. Resources are satisfactory, overall. Pupils have made visits to local places of geographical interest in the past, but these have reduced since the previous inspection. School development includes plans to improve the central resource base.

## **HISTORY**

121. Sound standards throughout the school have generally been maintained since the last inspection and improvements have been made both to planning and teaching. Overall, in both key stages, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and the current policy has been revised to meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum framework. Good use is made of national curriculum guidance materials.
122. Evidence from lessons, discussions with pupils and a scrutiny of their work indicates that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are making satisfactory progress in developing historical skills and knowledge.
123. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils show appropriate knowledge and understanding of life in the recent past. In a lesson based on the television programme 'Lisa Looks Back', pupils think and talk well about the changing patterns of family holidays. They are guided well by the teacher who challenges the full range of pupils' abilities by posing thought-provoking questions requiring extended answers. There are opportunities for pupils to reflect on pre-decimal currency and its value by today's standards. Good teaching in the lesson observed ensures that every pupil is engaged fully in the lesson prior to group work based on designing a postcard and practising 'telegram' messages. A good level of interest is sustained, with all pupils working at appropriate levels using graded worksheets. Pupils with special educational needs are encouraged and

supported in practising writing messages prior to making an actual postcard. There are clear objectives for the lesson but limited time at the end to reflect on whether these are achieved. Pupils work collaboratively and with sustained interest.

124. In Key Stage 2, pupils use relevant terms such as 'century' to describe historical periods and have a satisfactory understanding of chronology. They have a secure factual knowledge of the Tudor period, including the life of Henry VIII, and describe some of the main differences in life at the time. Effective use of information and communication technology enables them to produce good quality written and artistic presentations of their work. Pupils in a lesson observed focused on events from World War II, looking at the causes of evacuation. The use of a tape of 'evacuees' relating their individual experiences provoked interest and gave much useful information. A small majority of pupils clearly had difficulties understanding some of the vocabulary used, for example 'billeting' and 'host family' and 'evacuee'. Most pupils made valiant attempts to write about their feelings and pupils achieved satisfactory levels of written work in this lesson, although there were only limited opportunities for discussing some of the vocabulary used and, at the end of the lesson, in considering what they have learned. Teaching in this key stage is judged to be satisfactory. Flexible and effective support is given to a group by a classroom assistant provided for a pupil with special educational needs. This helps the group to produce levels of writing appropriate to their abilities. Teachers make appropriate use of homework tasks to support work in lessons, such as pupils asking relatives about their experiences of the war and for artefacts.
125. The co-ordinator has recently left the school and there is little effective monitoring of the school's provision and the quality of teaching and learning in history. There are no clear and manageable procedures for the assessment of pupils' knowledge and understanding.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

126. Standards in information and communication technology are well above average by the end of Key Stage 1 and are above average in Key Stage 2. This subject has developed as a particular strength of the school since the last inspection, when standards were judged to be satisfactory, but pupils' development of skills was limited by resources that were too old. Dramatic improvements in the quality and range of hardware and software have promoted high levels of achievement throughout the school. A computer suite now provides regular access for all age groups and a well-balanced curriculum is in place to ensure that pupils develop good skills and knowledge from an early age. The subject is being managed and supported very well by the co-ordinator
127. Pupils are particularly confident in the basic operations of logging on to the network, opening and closing programs and handling a wide range of software. From a very young age they quickly develop a range of general skills and are able to apply these to new software. Pupils in Year 1 create name labels, using different text sizes, styles and colours; explore symmetry in picture designs; and control an on-screen 'turtle' to make it follow a specific course. The use of word processors develops in Year 2 to include more comprehensive skills in presenting written work. Using painting software to explore the style of the artist Mondrian, they develop skills in altering line widths and using flood-fill effects. Pupils in Year 1 collect information as part of a traffic survey and use the computer to present this in the form of different graphs, which are interpreted effectively.
128. Pupils continue to achieve well in Key Stage 2 and to extend their skills in creating and presenting written and artwork; for example, combining pictures and text. Their knowledge of computer control is developed further through work using portable computers linked to lights, buzzers and sensors, controlling traffic lights and lighthouses by entering and amending sets of instructions. They use key words and questions to search the Internet and to print the information they have found, but they do not as yet 'capture' or save the information for later use. Pupils in Year 4 describe how computers are used in the world beyond school, for example, in shops and offices, although their understanding of how a simple computer database can be used to sort and

search for information is less well-developed.

129. The teaching is at least sound in all classes and is often good. Good teaching in Key Stage 1, based on regular access to a wide range of worthwhile activities in the computer suite, ensures very good achievement for this age group. Teachers are confident, knowledgeable and plan their lessons well, with a clear focus on the development of specific skills. Planning and preparation were less effective in a Year 4 lesson, however, where insufficient floppy disks containing picture images were available. The result was that less than half the class achieved the objective of producing repeated patterns, although the teacher ensured that other pupils were usefully engaged in searching for information as part of their work in geography. Throughout the school, teachers have high expectations of pupils independent use of the software. This is reflected in pupils' positive attitudes to their work. Consequently they persevere to achieve what they want, confidently and patiently starting again when things go wrong, without being told, by reloading the software. The older pupils collaborate effectively by discussing things with their partner or neighbour.
130. Teachers are undergoing extensive training as part of a national programme and this, coupled with good support from the co-ordinator, is ensuring that teachers develop their own knowledge and confidence. The number of teachers leaving the school is making this training difficult to manage because teachers new to the school are not included.
131. The computer suite provides a very good resource for all age groups and the facility has been enhanced further with the recent installation of a computer projector, enabling teachers to give clear demonstrations of software to the whole class. Regular timetabled access, up to three times a week, gives opportunities for lessons in literacy, numeracy and many other subjects. Good quality mathematics software, including Internet web sites, is used in both key stages to support numeracy skills and to develop strategies for problem-solving. Pupils' artwork is enhanced through the use of painting software, and pupils' confidence and knowledge in accessing the Internet enables them to search for information, for example, about Mexico.
132. The school is suitably placed to continue its rapid development in the use of information and communication technology to support teaching throughout the school and to involve pupils in its wider use, for example, with the forthcoming publishing of its own well-designed web site.

## **MUSIC**

133. The attainment of pupils in both key stages is broadly in line with that expected of their age and pupils have positive attitudes to their work. This represents an improvement in Key Stage 1 since the last inspection, when pupils' attainment was unsatisfactory. The school has since implemented a programme for all year groups based on a good quality published scheme that supports teachers' planning and offers activities that systematically meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. In addition, pupils of all ages sing regularly in assemblies. The singing, often led by the headteacher, is of good quality. The headteacher uses her own singing ability well to lead and improve pupils' efforts. Provision is further enhanced for a minority by specialist tuition in piano and violin that is offered to older pupils. The teachers who have joined the school very recently in Key Stage 2 are both pianists and competent musicians and are currently offering pupils in Years 3 and 4 good quality experiences in music.
134. Pupils in Year 2 enjoy music. They learn new songs quickly and use their voices with expression and control. They handle and play percussion instruments well, maintaining a steady beat as necessary as an accompaniment to singing. They read a simple score to make sure that they play their part correctly. In Key Stage 2, pupils achieved well in the lesson seen in Year 3. This was as a result of the teacher's high expectations of what they could achieve, her clear guidance on technique and her ability to improve on pupils' performance. The pupils rose to the challenge and made rapid progress in learning, singing and playing Serbian and Welsh lullabies. Part of the class played a range of tuned percussion and maintained their parts well alongside the singers.



They followed a score which used the names of notes, and the higher attainers were able to follow parts of a score written in conventional notation.

135. Teaching, overall, is satisfactory in both key stages. There are recent improvements evident in Key Stage 2 which are compensating for the disruption caused by the staff turbulence in these classes. This turbulence has had negative effects; for example, the school choir no longer meets and pupils say that they miss this. The headteacher is currently acting as co-ordinator for this subject, alongside several other subjects. Her extensive workload means that she is unable to monitor provision as effectively as she would wish and this is a constraint on its further development.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

136. Evidence of standards in physical education was very limited during the inspection. Only one lesson could be seen in each key stage and, in Key Stage 2, this was the class's first lesson with a new teacher. Additional information was gained from looking at teachers' plans and talking to the oldest pupils about their work. Attainment in both the lessons seen was average and pupils' achievements were satisfactory, as at the time of the last inspection. The lessons were in dance and games. Teachers' planning indicates that all the additional areas of the National Curriculum will be covered over the year. Swimming is not taught and the school assumes that its pupils will learn to swim at their middle schools.
137. The school's curriculum is supplemented by a well-attended Saturday football club and by private tuition in football offered at lunch-time by an outside provider. Extra-curricular provision has reduced since the last inspection and a number of the parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting expressed concern that physical education is a low priority for the school. The inspection team was unable to gain sufficient evidence to judge this. However, each class is currently timetabled for only one extended session of physical education each week, which is unusual in primary schools, and the overall time allocated to the subject is relatively low. In both the lessons seen, the time allowed was not used rigorously. The sessions were overlong for pupils to sustain their interest and energy fully in the planned activities. The school intends to review its arrangements.
138. Pupils in Year 1 showed positive attitudes to their lesson. They moved confidently to music and changed the speed, level and direction of their movements. They showed imaginative interpretation of the theme of a snowy landscape, adapting their movement to moving in deep snow and in a cold cave. All the class, including those with special educational needs, concentrated well and there were obvious improvements in the quality of their performance by the end of the session. However, they had few opportunities to reflect on the quality of their performance or to watch others demonstrate good practice.
139. In the lesson seen in Year 4, pupils showed their new teacher their throwing and catching skills with small balls. They used satisfactory techniques when catching by watching the ball carefully and having their hands in position. Most were able to demonstrate accurate underarm throws. In their warm-up routines, they showed satisfactory co-ordination in running and had an awareness of the safety of themselves and their classmates. Pupils enjoyed their lesson and showed the good quality of relationships they had already developed with their teacher.
140. The teaching seen was sound. A pleasant atmosphere for learning was established in each lesson and the teachers' explanations were clear. The pupils' behaviour was controlled well. In both the lessons seen, several pupils did not have appropriate clothing in school. In Key Stage 1, this meant that alternative activities had to be found and, in Key Stage 2, the lesson had to take place indoors because pupils did not have suitable footwear for outside. In this respect, the parents of some pupils do not support their children's learning and progress in the subject.
141. The headteacher is currently co-ordinating this subject in addition to her existing workload. She

has little time to develop provision or to monitor standards. The school is fortunate in having a large hall and extensive outdoor site. The planning of lessons is being reviewed in accordance with national guidance to ensure progression across the school.