

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARY'S CE (C) FIRST SCHOOL

Wheaton Aston

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124284

Headteacher: Sue Wesley

Reporting inspector: Barbara Crane
21227

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 25th April 2002

Inspection number: 196390

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 – 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Marston Road Wheaton Aston Staffordshire
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Peter Timson
Date of previous inspection:	July 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21227	Barbara Crane	Registered inspector	English, science, art and design, history, geography, Foundation Stage, equal opportunities.	The school's results and pupil's achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9952	Lillian Brock	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
24895	Kath Hurt	Team inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology, design and technology, music, physical education, special educational needs.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

There are 93 pupils at this voluntarily controlled Church of England school and so it is smaller than most schools. Fifty-six of the pupils are boys and 37 are girls; in some year groups there are twice as many boys as girls. All but a very few of the pupils come from white, English UK heritage families and none are learning English as an additional language. Ten per cent of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is broadly average. Fourteen per cent of the pupils have some form of special educational needs, which is below average and one pupil has extra provision through a Statement of Special Educational Need. When the children start in the Reception class their attainment is average, although the full range of attainment is evident. The pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4. Almost half of the teachers are new to the school in the last 18 months. The headteacher takes a class for the equivalent of two days each week.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. Pupils do well to reach higher than average standards by the time they leave. Pupils of all ages do very well in reading and mathematics. The teaching is good and the pupils enjoy school life. The school is very well led and managed. It provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in English and mathematics are well above average by the time pupils leave the school and standards in science, religious education and history are good.
- The Reception children get off to a flying start because of the very good teaching.
- Pupils enjoy school, develop good attitudes to learning and get on well together.
- Lessons are interesting and teachers plan the work carefully so that they almost always meet the differing needs of pupils.
- The leadership and management of the school are very good. The staff work well as a team and there is a strong focus on improving standards through checking teaching and learning.

What could be improved

- The more able pupils should be doing better in writing by the end of Year 2.
- Some of the pupils do not listen sufficiently carefully to teachers and to each other.
- The provision for outdoor play for the Reception children is very limited.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvement since it was last inspected in 1997. Standards are higher in English and mathematics and there is more very good teaching than previously. The school has resolved all of the issues from the previous report. The time given to teaching subjects has been reviewed and now supports better standards. Resources for reading have improved. The school has put in place very good procedures for checking the effectiveness of teaching and learning. The school's management of finances is now very good and the governors play a full part in checking the school's expenditure. The school is in a good position to improve further.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
Reading	D	C	A	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Writing	E	D	C	D	
Mathematics	E	A	A	A	

A small number of pupils take the tests at the end of Year 2 and this makes comparisons unreliable. In 2001, 13 pupils took the national tests and their results were well above the national average in reading and mathematics and average in writing. While standards in writing have improved markedly over the last three years, the results of the 2001 tests were below those seen in similar schools. The pupils' performance in reading and mathematics was well above that seen in similar schools. Standards have been rising over the last three years due to the school's careful analysis of pupils' performance and adaptations to teaching.

Children in the Reception class do better than expected for their age by the time they start Year 1, in literacy and numeracy, their personal and social development and their knowledge and understanding of the world. The standards seen now in Year 2 reflect the picture in 2001, with high standards in reading and mathematics. Pupils are doing better in reading and mathematics than in writing. While the average and lower attaining pupils are making at least satisfactory progress in writing, the more able pupils should achieve more. By the time the pupils leave the school, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well above average. They use their skills in literacy and numeracy very well to support their learning in other subjects. Standards in science and religious education are good by the end of Year 2 and Year 4. The pupils' work in history exceeds the expectations for their age by the time they leave the school. The pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) competently in all years and reach the expectations for their ages. In all other subjects, the pupils' attainment is as expected for their ages, but their skills in listening are not as good as they should be.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The pupils enjoy coming to school and take full advantage of what it offers them.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The pupils are well behaved when they play together and in lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Good. The pupils learn to use their initiative and develop confidence. Pupils of all ages and abilities get on well together.
Attendance	Very good this year. Attendance was below average last year due to illness and holidays taken in term time.

The pupils are keen to learn and take responsibility. They are good at organising themselves and helping others. There are some occasions, however, when pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 do not listen to each other, or to their teachers as carefully as they should.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The teaching for the Reception children is very good. The teacher has high expectations of the children's work and behaviour and so they learn at a rapid rate. The calm and consistent approach of the teacher creates a secure and warm atmosphere in which the children flourish. Teaching in the other years is good and teachers have a good understanding of what they teach. They plan good opportunities for the pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects and to use their initiative in planning investigations in science. Teaching in mathematics is good, with a strong emphasis on mental calculation and applying skills to solve problems. Teaching of English is good overall, with some strengths and weaknesses. The teaching of reading is very good throughout the school because the basic skills are taught thoroughly. The teaching of writing is good in Years 1, 3 and 4 because the needs of pupils of different abilities are taken into account. Teachers' expectations of what the more able pupils can achieve in Year 2 are sometimes too low and the pupils' targets for improvement are not followed up in teachers' marking. The teachers plan interesting lessons and use resources imaginatively, but some teachers do not ensure that pupils listen sufficiently carefully to adults and to each other. The teachers and the classroom assistants give good support for pupils with special educational needs.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. There is a broad and varied curriculum and a good range of activities outside lessons. The Reception children have limited opportunities for outdoor play.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The pupils' needs are carefully assessed and they are given good support.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are no pupils learning English as an additional language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good in all aspects. The pupils have plenty of opportunities to reflect and express their feelings. The school provides a firm moral framework so that pupils learn what is right and wrong. There are good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and form good relationships through working together.
How well the school cares for its pupils	There is a good level of care shown to the pupils. The staff know pupils very well and give them good personal support.

The curriculum is well planned and so the pupils use what they have learned in one subject effectively when they meet new work in another subject. The pupils are encouraged to explore their ideas and use their initiative. There is a good range of visits and visitors to school and the local environment is well used to enhance pupils' learning. The school has developed a very good system for checking how well the pupils are doing and this is very well used in reading, mathematics and science and to track children's progress in the Reception class. The assessment of pupils' writing is very good, but less effectively used to plan work for the more able pupils in Year 2. The school has a good partnership with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership and is well supported by the staff. There is a tight focus on raising standards through looking at what works well and what needs to improve in teaching and learning. The subject managers work hard and have a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses in their areas and of how to overcome them.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. The well-informed governing body works efficiently to support the school's work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school analyses its performance very effectively and has the right priorities in its planning for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school's priorities are well supported through careful financial management. The governors ensure that they seek the best value for money in their spending.

The teachers carry a heavy burden of responsibility for subjects and they work hard to bring about improvement. The teachers' professional development is very well planned. The school's accommodation, staffing and resources are satisfactory overall, but the library for the Years 1 and 2 pupils is an uninspiring area and has too few books that are up to date and attractive. The Reception children have limited facilities for outdoor play. The school has a reasonable range of computer software, but this is limited in some subjects.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children like coming to school. Children make good progress. The teaching is good and the children are expected to work hard. Parents feel happy to approach the school and teachers are readily available. The school helps children to become more mature and responsible. The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some parents feel that there is too much homework; others feel that there is too little. Some parents feel that the school does not work closely with them, is not approachable and that leadership and management could be improved. The range of activities outside lessons.

The evidence of the inspection supports the parents' positive views but only one of their concerns. Homework is set at an appropriate level for the children's ages. The school is well led and managed and seeks to work closely with parents and asks for their views. There is a good range of activities outside lessons for the size of the school and age range of the pupils. There is room for improvement in the information that parents receive in written reports about children's progress and, in particular, about what children need to do next to improve.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The results of the national tests for Year 2 pupils over the past three years have shown a sharp trend upwards, particularly in reading and mathematics. More pupils have been gaining the level above that expected for their age, year on year. In 2001, the Year 2 pupils' performance in reading and mathematics was well above the average for all schools nationally and also well above the average for schools in similar circumstances. In writing, the results were average compared to all schools but below those in similar schools. The lower results in writing were due to far fewer pupils gaining the level above that expected for their age, and more just reaching the expected level. In reading and mathematics, where results were better, a much greater proportion of pupils attained the higher level.
2. There are more boys than girls in the school. The pupils' results over time indicate differences in boys' and girls' attainment in different subjects, but there is no discernible pattern emerging. On the basis of the work seen during the inspection, boys and girls achieve equally well.
3. Children do very well in the Reception Year and get off to a flying start because of the firm foundation that is laid in learning basic skills. Most are likely to exceed the goals for their age, by the time they start in Year 1, in communication, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, and personal and social development. This is because the teacher's very careful assessment of what the children need to work on next is very effectively used to pitch work at suitably challenging levels for the range of abilities in the class. In all of the other areas of learning the children make good progress and reach the goals for their age by the end of the year.
4. The pupils in Year 1 to Year 4 make good progress in most aspects of their work. On the evidence of the work seen now, the strengths are:
 - Standards in reading are well above average by the age of seven and by the time the pupils leave the school.
 - Standards in writing are well above average by the end of Year 4.
 - Standards in mathematics are well above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 4.
 - Standards in science are above average by the end of Year 2 and by the time the pupils leave the school.
 - Pupils' attainment in religious education is better than expected for their ages in Year 2 and Year 4.
 - Year 4 pupils' attainment in history is better than expected for their age.
5. The areas where pupils should be doing better are:
 - More able pupils should be doing better in writing by the end of Year 2.
 - Pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 do not always listen to each other, or to adults, as carefully as they should.
6. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all areas of their work because their needs are carefully assessed and the teachers plan carefully to adapt the work. The pupils are well supported by both the teachers and the classroom assistants.
7. All pupils make rapid progress in reading because of the very good teaching. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 make good progress in writing in a range of styles. Standards are broadly average in writing for seven year olds and while pupils make good progress in writing in Year 1, teachers' expectations of what more able pupils can achieve in Year 2 are not sufficiently high. Pupils'

skills in listening are broadly average by the end of Year 2 and Year 4 but pupils sometimes do not listen carefully to discussions or instructions. This is because teachers do not consistently expect or insist that the pupils do so. The high expectations of pupils' listening that is evident in the Reception class and Year 1 is not always followed through in later years. The pupils' skills in speaking are average for their age at seven and by Year 4.

8. Pupils of all abilities achieve well in mathematics because of the good teaching. The pupils are quick and accurate in calculation and use their knowledge of numbers well to solve problems. By the time they leave the school pupils confidently work with numbers to 1000. They use a wide range of mathematical language to explain how they arrived at answers. Pupils in Year 2 have a good understanding of shapes such as a triangular prism and they use the terms 'faces', 'edges' and 'vertices' to describe its features. Pupils in Year 4 interpret graphs and tables confidently.
9. Pupils are very competent in planning experiments in science and ensuring that tests are fair because teachers plan good opportunities for them to investigate. They have a good knowledge of the conditions necessary for growth in humans and plants, the way in which forces act upon objects and how materials change when they are cooled or heated.
10. In history, the Year 2 pupils reach the expectations for their age but the Year 4 pupils' attainment exceeds expectations. These older pupils are good at looking at sources such as artefacts and documents and gathering information about what life was like in the past compared to today. They use their knowledge of the present effectively to inform their ideas about why things happened in the past. The pupils' work in religious education exceeds the expectations of the local syllabus. Pupils in Year 2 have a good knowledge of the Bible and talk knowledgeably about the Old and New Testaments. The Years 3 and 4 pupils have a good understanding of religious practices for Christians, Hindus and Muslims. Pupils use computers competently to word process their work, draw pictures and create databases and graphs.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. The positive attitudes to learning found at the time of the previous inspection remain a strong feature of the school. Pupils enjoy school and come prepared to work. The good standards of behaviour contribute effectively to their learning and relationships across the school are good. After a dip in attendance during the previous year, attendance has returned to its previous very good level.
12. From their early days at school, children soon become accustomed to the routines of school life. They benefit from the ordered environment and quickly develop positive attitudes. They learn to relate to others in the school community and understand the standards of behaviour expected of them. Children in the Reception class have very good attitudes to learning as seen when they designed and painted a pig following a story. The teacher had fired their imagination and they made the most of the opportunity to explore the colour, texture and shape of a range of materials. As pupils move through school, they respond well to the demands of their teachers. Their demeanour reflects the view of their parents that their children are happy at the school. They smile readily and have the confidence and ability to discuss their work with visitors. This positive attitude enables them to make good progress in their learning.
13. Pupils' behaviour is almost always good both in class and around the school. When unacceptable behaviour does happen, this is quickly sorted out with the minimum of fuss so that the loss of teaching time is minimal. There have been no exclusions for some years. Pupils show a willingness to learn. They have a clear understanding of what is acceptable behaviour and there is no evidence in class or at play of oppressive behaviour or other forms of harassment. Movement around the school as lessons end is orderly and demonstrates pupils' awareness of the need to consider others who are still working. In lessons, most pupils behave well and want to learn. In a science lesson for Years 3 and 4, for example, the pupils

behaved very sensibly as they negotiated and agreed in a group how to conduct an investigation and how to test their ideas. When their original idea did not work, they applied themselves well to plan a new test. The behaviour of children in the Reception class is very good and this is due to the good personal and social development that is encouraged.

14. Pupils clearly enjoy working in the friendly atmosphere the school presents. The relationships formed between classmates and between pupils and teachers are good. This same good rapport extends between classroom support staff and voluntary helpers. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in class and play activities. All pupils show consideration for the feelings and well-being of others and instances of this were observed during the inspection. The personal development of pupils is good. Older pupils act as 'befrienders' to children in the playground. Pupils write a very interesting newsletter and organise and choose charities to support. They keep and monitor their own record of achievement and clearly enjoy receiving awards for effort, behaviour and attendance. Their pride and delight at receiving certificates for this was seen in the celebration assembly.
15. From a previous record of above average attendance at the school, there was a significant drop in attendance to below the national average in the year prior to the inspection. Records show that this was due to sickness and to the large amount of absence as a result of holidays taken in term time. During the current academic year, attendance at the school has again reached a figure which is well above the national average and justifies the perception of parents in the questionnaire that their children like school and attend willingly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. The teaching is good. Just over four fifths of the lessons seen were good or better and a quarter of the lessons were very good. All but one of the remaining lessons was satisfactory. Teaching meets the needs of all pupils well in almost every area, except for the higher attaining pupils in Year 2 in writing.
17. Teaching for the Reception children is very good. The teacher's very good understanding of what young children need to feel secure, combined with her calm approach and high expectations of children's independence and behaviour, result in a very good environment for learning. The teacher's excellent assessment of what children need to learn next is used very effectively to plan activities for different ability groups and so all children make very good progress. The teacher insists that the children listen carefully to adults and each other and so they pay close attention to discussions and offer sensible answers and opinions based on what they have heard. The teacher is very good at including children of different abilities when she asks questions and often pitches questions at just the right level to challenge the children and maintain their interest and involvement in the whole-class sessions. The children settle quickly to independent activities because they have listened to the teacher's instructions. The basic skills in literacy and numeracy are very thoroughly taught and the activities that follow the very good direct teaching of the whole class build on what has just been learned. The classroom assistants work closely with the teacher and have a good understanding of what to do to extend the children's learning when they support activities.
18. In the other classes, the support assistants and volunteer helpers provide valuable support because they are clear about what they are doing. The support for pupils with special educational needs is good. The pupils' individual needs are taken into account in teachers' planning and so the pupils learn at a good rate. In a Year 1 lesson, for example, a classroom assistant worked intensively with a small group of pupils who were learning the sound made by a string of letters and the work was made enjoyable because of her lively manner and sensitive support.
19. Overall, teaching in English is good, with some strengths and weaknesses. All of the teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and the national strategy for teaching literacy. The teaching of reading is very good because the basic skills are taught thoroughly and practised

effectively. Teachers pay good regard to the needs of different ability groups and encourage pupils to read widely. The pupils catch the teachers' enthusiasm for books. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to speak and broaden pupils' vocabulary through their own use of interesting language. Teachers' expectations of pupils' listening are very variable and are more consistent in Year 1 than in the other years, where teachers sometimes do not insist that the pupils listen to them, or to each other, in the introductory or final sessions in lessons. The teaching of writing in Years 1, 3 and 4 is good, but expectations of what the more able pupils can achieve in Year 2 are too low. These weaknesses were evident in the unsatisfactory lesson seen.

20. Teaching in mathematics is good. The teachers have a good understanding of the national strategy for teaching numeracy and are very clear about what pupils will learn in lessons. Teachers use their assessments well to plan work for pupils of different abilities. There is a good emphasis on quick mental recall of number facts and solving problems.
21. Teaching in science is good because teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and they plan interesting lessons that enable pupils to explore their own ideas and use their initiative. Much of the work is practical and the activities build very effectively upon what the pupils already know. The teachers challenge the pupils to think about why things happen and how things can be explained.
22. In all other subjects, teaching is at least satisfactory and there is some good teaching in history and religious education that leads to good achievement by the pupils. Teachers plan interesting lessons and make good use of resources to capture pupils' interest in these subjects. They ensure that pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy are well used in other lessons. Teachers plan work that links together well, so that, for example, Year 4 pupils use what they have learned about in history to write convincing dialogue between two characters from Tudor times. Some good opportunities are planned for pupils to use ICT to support their learning in art and English lessons and the teachers know that these need to be extended further in other subjects.

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

23. The curriculum is good in the Foundation Stage in all areas except for outdoor play, where there is very limited provision. A very firm foundation is laid in literacy and numeracy because of the teacher's very good planning for the youngest pupils. The school teaches all the subjects that it should to pupils from Year 1 to Year 4, and there are good plans for all areas of the curriculum that successfully guide teachers' planning. This means that pupils gain a thorough knowledge of the topics they study, and build their skills systematically as they move through the school.
24. All pupils have full access to the curriculum offered. Teachers make good use of the information gained from the regular checks of what pupils can and cannot do in adapting their planning so that pupils learn at a suitable level and rate for their needs. There is good support for pupils with special educational needs. At the time of the last inspection their targets in independent education plans were not as clear as they might be. This is no longer the case. They are clear and specific about what pupils are to learn, and are reviewed and revised regularly. The effectiveness of these plans, and the good quality support provided, result in most pupils reaching the expected levels for their age in literacy and numeracy.
25. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been well implemented and this has had a positive impact on standards. Teachers use the guidelines particularly well in mathematics, with a strong emphasis on developing pupils' mental calculation skills. Since it was identified in the last inspection the school moved swiftly to increase the time allocation for mathematics. As a result, standards have risen significantly. This is also true of reading. However, the

impact is not so evident in all pupils' writing standards, and there is more to be done in improving the writing of more able pupils in Year 2.

26. The school successfully teaches subjects through a topic approach where good links are made with other subjects. This was a strength identified in the last inspection and it is still. A good example is a lesson in the Year 3/4 class where pupils learn about the kinds of music and musical instruments played in Tudor times. In geography they record weather conditions, using computers to produce pie charts and graphs. In Year 2, pupils use their measuring skills when investigating the movement of toy cars down a ramp. Such links mean that pupils see the relevance of learning skills and have good opportunities to reinforce them. The school has identified the need to plan in more opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills in subjects across the curriculum. This is a developing area, but there are still too few opportunities in subjects like science, history and religious education
27. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities involving all the teachers, and specialist coaches from outside the school. These include TOPS sporting activities, football, netball, chess, country dancing and gardening. They boost pupils' skills in such subjects as physical education. Visits to places like Shugborough Hall and Moseley Old Hall bring history alive for the pupils, and result in some good writing opportunities in English.
28. Liaison with the nursery, pre-school group and the middle school is good. Staff meet regularly and pupils have useful opportunities to visit in preparation for their transfers. There are very strong links with the local community, especially the church. People such as the vicar and other local people who talk to pupils about their own lives and how the village has changed help pupils appreciate their own local area and its history. Pupils visit the church and enjoy assemblies led by the vicar and church members where they develop a good appreciation of Christianity and its values. Senior citizens are invited in to lunch each week. Pupils learn to care for their environment, which is one of the school's aims, by designing posters promoting Wheaton Aston as a 'Best Kept Village' and take part in a 'litter pick' around the village. These foster a strong sense of pride in their community and local heritage.
29. All of these contribute positively to the provision for pupils' personal, spiritual, social, moral and cultural development, which is good in each aspect. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to use their initiative and take on responsibilities in the school. Some pupils in Year 4 decided to produce a school newspaper, and formed an editorial team to organise its contents and word process it to create a 'professional' finish. They then asked pupils for feedback and ideas by displaying a letter on the pupils' notice board. Others organised their own fund-raising event for leukaemia research. These activities all provide good opportunities for pupils to learn the skills of co-operation and teamwork. Pupils in Year 4 act as 'mature befrienders' in the playground, helping pupils with problems or worries. They learn to be responsible and to be aware of their social responsibilities to others by activities such as working together to decide class rules, and have created a class poem on a theme of 'working together'. The school has a well-understood system of rewards and sanctions that encourages positive attitudes and a sense of right and wrong. The adults working in the school provide very good role models in the way they value pupils and treat them fairly and consistently.
30. The planning for religious education is thorough and provides rich experiences through practical activities and discussions that promote pupils' spiritual and cultural development particularly well. These enable pupils to reflect on their own and other peoples' lives and feelings. There is a good emphasis on developing pupils' understanding of different faiths including Hinduism and Islam. The school makes good use of visiting speakers to broaden pupils' horizons, like a parent who talks to pupils about her own Sikh faith. Teachers ensure that pupils learn about the impressive achievements of people in their own and other cultures, like famous athletes and artists. Other areas of the curriculum provide good opportunities for pupils to experience the wonder of nature and human achievement. For instance, they marvel at their ability to create patterns by clicking on a computer mouse and are fascinated by the sounds created by old musical instruments. However, more could be done to encourage

pupils to explore and express their own ideas and feelings about the music and stories in assemblies.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

31. The school continues to provide the safe and supportive environment that was the subject of favourable comment at the time of the last inspection. There is good provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils. Effective child protection procedures are in place and the overall good quality of educational and personal support makes a positive contribution to the raising of pupils' achievements.
32. Teachers are sensitive to the needs of those in their charge. They know pupils well and work hard to ensure their welfare. The trusting relationships that pupils enjoy with their teachers give them the confidence to share their worries and help them to cope with the problems that arise in everyday life. Both staff and governors have a responsible attitude towards health and safety matters. The school policy is currently being updated in line with local authority procedures. Appropriate systems are in place for regular risk assessments and for the routine maintenance of fire and electrical equipment. There is one member of staff fully qualified to administer first aid and five others who have participated in a one-day emergency first aid course.
33. The school complies fully with locally agreed child protection procedures. There is a clear focus on the importance of training for all staff, including welfare staff, to raise their awareness of the issues involved. The school's personal and social education programme is used well to promote healthy living and to emphasise the importance of health and safety matters. It contributes well to the self-confidence of pupils. School staff are particularly conscious of the special needs of some pupils and work closely and sensitively with parents, carers and support agencies in the community.
34. This caring approach is reflected in the school's efforts to encourage regular attendance. Records of attendance are carefully analysed and evaluated and prompt action taken as seen in the improved attendance for this year. Registration periods are efficient due to the prompt arrival of most pupils. The school's behaviour policy is proving to be effective in minimising disruption in the classroom. All staff have worked hard to develop strategies to cope with the occasional challenging situation that occurs in the classroom. The strength of the policy lies in the consistency of its application because pupils have a clear idea of the standards of behaviour expected of them. Bullying or any form of harassment is not tolerated. Any incidents of misbehaviour that do occur are dealt with promptly and effectively. Governors have ensured that there is good support for pupils with a special educational need.
35. There are very good procedures for assessing pupils' progress. These contribute very positively to the pupils' achievement in the Reception class and in reading, science and mathematics because the teachers use the information gained very effectively to plan work to meet the pupils' needs. Some very valuable work has been done in assessing pupils' writing and this has paid dividends in Years 1, 3 and 4, where the teachers closely monitor pupils' targets. Less effective monitoring is evident for the more able pupils' writing in Year 2 and so their progress is more uneven.
36. Effective monitoring of pupils' personal development, behaviour and attendance mirrors the careful monitoring of academic attainment. Teachers have good knowledge of pupils in their care. The school benefits from close links with health and educational support agencies. Overall, the educational and personal support and guidance given to pupils at St Mary's have a positive effect in raising their levels of achievement.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

37. Parents view the school as a good school and have indicated that they are mainly satisfied with what the school provides for their children. There is a satisfactory range of information for parents and most of them contribute well to children's learning at school and at home. There is now an effective link with parents and this is an improvement since the last inspection.
38. The parents' questionnaire indicates high levels of parental satisfaction with the quality of teaching, the behaviour of pupils and their progress and development. These comments reflect the views of parents at the pre-inspection meeting and those parents consulted during the inspection. They also reflect the inspection findings. Concerns were expressed by a small number of parents about the approachability of the school and the closeness of the working relationships with parents. Some wanted more or less homework and better information on the progress that their children are making. This indicates that the system for communicating with parents is not always successful. Inspection findings are that while homework is satisfactory, there is room for improvement in the information on pupils' progress given in written reports. Reports to parents are satisfactory with details on the levels that pupils are achieving and an alphabetical grade given for effort, but the progress made in subjects is not always specific and whilst parents can see what their children have achieved, they do not have information on what they need to do to improve. The reports do contain perceptive comments on personal development.
39. The information, which parents receive, about events in the school and how they can help their children to learn is good. Newsletters from the school, the parish and the local authority go out regularly to parents. The school brochure is clear and easy to read but needs a statement on the ethos and values of the school. The school offers three opportunities each year for consultation with parents and these events are usually well attended. There is an ongoing dialogue with parents through the homework diary and a suggestion box outside the school office.
40. Parental involvement in the life of the school is good. This begins with a home visit before children start in the Reception class. About 15 parents help regularly in school and more help out on special occasions. There is a dynamic and supportive Parent Teacher Association that has provided various resources to enhance the learning of the pupils. For example, they helped to purchase equipment for physical education and bought leaving gifts for Year 4 pupils. Parents were involved in the redecoration and refurbishment of some classrooms and have created an attractive learning environment for pupils. The school invites parents and members of the community to assemblies and to lunch in the school on Thursdays. Senior citizens were seen enjoying the opportunity to socialise with pupils in a friendly and informal atmosphere. The school shares children's targets with parents and parents are consulted about new initiatives, for example, the home/school agreement and the anti-bullying policy. Most parents support their children's learning at home and parents of pupils with special educational needs are involved in the reviews of their individual educational plans.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

41. The headteacher provides very good leadership for the school and is well supported by the staff and governors. She has a clear vision for the school and maintains a tight focus on raising standards. The headteacher has set up efficient systems, including the use of ICT, for the smooth daily running of the school that enable her to concentrate on her teaching and managerial tasks. A good climate of self-review and evaluation is firmly established. The school works diligently towards its targets and the staff are undaunted by the heavy load of responsibility they carry in co-ordinating subjects.
42. The school's focus is directed towards improving standards through the careful checking of what works well in teaching and learning and what needs to improve. This is achieved through effective teamwork and all staff have a clear view of the part they play in taking the school forward. As a result of the objective and detailed analysis of pupils' performance, standards are rising. The school's thrust to improve problem solving in mathematics, investigative work

in science and standards in writing, have all met with success due to careful planning to resolve areas of weakness. The teachers receive good feedback on their teaching, following observations of lessons, and the subject co-ordinators are fully involved in checking teaching and learning and sampling pupils' work across the school. This enables them to have a precise view of what needs to be worked on next and they have identified the right priorities in the comprehensive school development plan.

43. The governors provide good support for the school's work and are kept well informed by the headteacher and subject managers. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and the committees work efficiently. Governors visit the school to see its work at first hand and seek the parents' views on initiatives such as the development of the school's anti-bullying policy. The governors fulfil all of their responsibilities well and ensure that careful financial planning supports the school's priorities for development. This is a very good improvement since the previous inspection. Careful consideration is given to seeking the best value for the school's expenditure, and the finance committee monitors the budget regularly. Additional grants, such as that for the early intervention with Year 1 pupils in literacy, are very well used to support improvements and promote rising standards.
44. The school has faced a challenging time with changes of staff, and new teachers are well supported. The professional development of both teachers and support staff is well planned and reflects both the school's priorities and individual needs. There is an adequate number of teachers and support staff, but the headteacher has to share the teaching of the Year 2/3 class and this limits the time available for her other duties. The accommodation is spacious but has drawbacks because the building was designed for a middle school. The school makes the best of the building by bright displays of pupils' work and a very high level of care in cleaning and maintenance. The large hall, which was built for sports, is not ideal for assemblies as the acoustics are poor. There is no outdoor play area to which the Reception pupils have access and in which they can explore space freely and imaginatively. The resources are adequate in most respects, but the library for the younger pupils is an uninviting area that lacks suitably attractive, modern books. There is a limited range of software to support pupils' learning in subjects such as history and religious education.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

Improve the standards achieved by the more able pupils in Year 2 in writing by:

- raising teachers' expectations of what these pupils can achieve;
- making better use of the assessments of pupils' writing to set more challenging work;
- ensuring that teachers check that pupils' targets are being referred to when they mark the pupils' work.

(Paragraphs 5, 7, 16, 19, 25, 35, 56, 59)

Improve pupils' standards in listening by ensuring that all teachers have consistently high expectations that pupils' listen to adults and to each other.

(Paragraphs 5, 7, 19, 56, 59, 63, 67, 71, 74, 110, 112)

Improve the facilities and plan more opportunities for Reception children to experience outdoor play.

(Paragraphs 23, 44, 46, 52)

In addition to the issues above, the governing body should consider the following when drawing up its action plan:

- Improve the quality and quantity of books in the library for the Year 1 and 2 pupils.
(Paragraphs 44,57)
- Improve the range of software available to support pupils' learning.
(Paragraphs 22, 26, 44, 101, 120)
- Seek ways in which the school can help parents to better understand how their children are doing and what they need to do next to improve.

(Paragraph 38)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	23
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	17

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	5	13	3	1	0	0
Percentage	4	22	57	13	4	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	93
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	13

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	6.3	School data	0.2

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

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

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

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	12	11	13
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (86)	85 (76)	100 (95)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	11	13	12
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	85 (81)	100 (95)	92 (71)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

* As fewer than ten boys and girls took the tests in 2001, this data is omitted.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	83
Any other minority ethnic group	1

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23:1
Average class size	23

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	67

FTE means full-time equivalent

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	237500
Total expenditure	238540
Expenditure per pupil	2680
Balance brought forward from previous year	29990
Balance carried forward to next year	28950

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1.8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	93
Number of questionnaires returned	46

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	59	37	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	59	33	9	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	41	50	9	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	48	30	11	4	7
The teaching is good.	63	28	4	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	48	28	20	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	28	13	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	33	4	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	41	37	15	7	0
The school is well led and managed.	50	30	7	9	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	41	9	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	35	15	9	9

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

45. Children start in the Reception year in the September of the school year in which they are five. Their attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. They get off to a flying start in the Reception class because of the very good teaching that takes account of their different needs. Children of all abilities make very good progress in the Reception year and most are likely to exceed the goals for their age by the time they start in Year 1 in communication, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and personal and social development. This is because the teacher's meticulous assessment of what the children need to work on next is very well used to pitch work at suitably challenging levels for the range of abilities in the class. In all of the other areas of learning the children make good progress and reach the goals for their age by the end of the year.
46. The strengths in the provision for children in the Foundation Stage have been maintained since the previous inspection and teaching has improved. The curriculum is very well planned and the assessment of children's progress is excellent. An area for improvement is the provision made for outdoor play, which at present is very limited.

Personal, social and emotional development

47. The teaching in this area of learning is very good and so the children make rapid progress in developing confidence and independence. By the end of the Reception year, most children are likely to exceed the expectations for their age. The teacher very effectively builds the children's self-esteem and promotes their ability to work together and resolve differences amicably. The very good routines and clear expectations of behaviour create a calm working atmosphere and the teacher's clear explanations ensure that children know what they have to do when they work independently or in groups. A quiet word from the teacher is sufficient to quell any over-excitement. The children share equipment and resources and are encouraged to help each other, for example, when putting on their aprons for painting. They respond very well to taking responsibility because they are eager to please the teacher. A group of children, for example, carefully and quickly tidied away the scraps of card left after cutting out shapes in a mathematics lesson. The teacher plans very good opportunities for the children to use their initiative, try out their ideas and choose resources for themselves.

Communication, language and literacy

48. The teaching is very good in this area because the basic skills are taught very effectively and practised thoroughly. Most of the children are likely to exceed the goals for their age by the time they start in Year 1. The children learn the sounds of letters and use those at the start and end of words to work out unknown words. The children learn rhymes and phrases that help them to remember letter sounds and they blend sounds together. They read familiar text confidently, with good expression that reflects the teacher's very good model, and work out unfamiliar words from the sense of the sentence. The teacher uses questions very effectively to help them in this, as in one session, when a lower attaining child was stuck on the word 'field' and she asked, "Where do you think the farmer might fetch the cow from?" Children re-tell stories that they have heard and explain why characters act in a certain way. One child, for example, explained after listening to a taped story that, "All the animals chased the farmer because he is lazy and just eats chocolate."
49. The children are keen to learn because the work in learning basic skills is interesting and they have lots of opportunities to join in with ideas and answers to questions. A more able group,

for example, worked with the teacher on a challenging spelling task and they were kept involved and interested through the teacher's encouragement and support in a fast-paced activity in which they got quick feedback on their accuracy and effort. The teacher places a strong emphasis on the correct formation of letters and so the children make very good progress. They use what they have learned in spelling sessions when they write sentences independently. The children are given very good encouragement to listen to adults and to each other. As a result, they follow instructions carefully and their answers to questions take account of what others have contributed to discussions. The children express their ideas confidently, because they know that the adults take their views seriously.

Mathematical development

50. By the end of the Reception year, most of the children are likely to exceed the expectations for their age. The teaching is very good and so the children make rapid progress. In the first part of the lesson, the teacher focuses on the direct teaching of basic skills and makes the work interesting and fun through well-directed questions, rhymes and catch phrases. The teacher's patient manner and firm control lead to a good working atmosphere. Questions such as "Who can give me a number that is smaller than 9?" meet with a quick response. The children recognise and write the symbols for numbers up to 20. Most children count up to and back from 20 and the more able children know that the digit 2 in 28 stands for two tens. The teacher introduces a good mathematical vocabulary and the children use this when they work. The activities that follow the direct teaching at the start of lessons are closely matched to children's abilities. In one lesson on shapes, for example, the more able children explored the properties of a triangular prism and were surprised when they found that one of its faces was a rectangle because they thought that all of the faces would be triangles. The average attainers discovered packages in the 'grocer's shop' role-play area that were formed by cuboids and cylinders. They explored a packet of cakes and found that it contained five cuboids within a larger cuboid. The children created prices for the shop items and could work out what one or two pence less or more than the asking price would be. Lower attaining children found that a cube has six faces and that each face was a square. This group of children then worked with a classroom assistant to program a toy robot to move in a square.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

51. The teaching is very good and so the children find the work stimulating and enjoyable. As a result they make rapid progress in their learning about why things happen in the world around them. By the end of the Reception year, most of the children are likely to exceed the expectations for their age. The work is planned very well. The children's own experience is used as a starting point from which the teacher extends their understanding through carefully structured activities, questions and opportunities to explore their ideas. In one session, for example, the teacher was working with a group engaged in a small world activity involving farm animals and buildings. The teacher's very good questions enabled the children to work out the difference between straw and hay and she then asked, "What do you think the farmer might use the straw for?" The children successfully used what they had just learned to work out that straw is used for animal bedding. Another group worked competently with hand drills and pliers in the 'farm workshop' to create equipment from wood for the farmer to use. The resources used capture the children's interest. A volunteer helper, for example, used a collection of old objects, such as a butter churn and local photographs from the past, to extend the children's understanding of how farming has changed over time. By the end of the session, the children understood how the use of machinery has altered farming and were able to give good explanations of how they thought particular artefacts from the past were used. The teacher plans good opportunities for the children to use the computer. Most of the children can click on an image, drag it across the screen and then drop it where they want it. They use the space bar, delete and enter keys and also the directional arrows to move around the screen, as well as positioning the cursor with the mouse.

Physical development

52. Most of the children are likely to reach the goals for their age by the end of the Reception year. The teaching is good and the children make good progress, particularly in controlling their finer movements with tools for writing, painting or construction. The teacher gives the children very effective guidance on how to hold and use tools correctly and use them safely. When they change for physical education lessons, very few of the children require help. The children run, hop and jump with an average level of control and make curled and stretched shapes with their bodies. They jump from a low platform and land safely. The children move sensibly and do not bump into each other, as they move around the hall. There are very limited opportunities for outdoor, imaginative play. There is no direct access to an outdoor area in which the children can explore space by climbing, riding or imaginative role-play. Some opportunities are planned, but these are insufficient to allow the children to fully develop their physical skills and use their own ideas in a suitably stimulating environment.

Creative development

53. The teaching in this area of learning is good and children make good progress to reach the expectations for their age by the end of the year. A strength in the teaching is the emphasis placed on children using their initiative and prior learning to explore their ideas. Children have plenty of opportunities to express themselves through painting, drawing and collage and they make models from junk material. They mix a good range of shades of pink to paint pigs from a familiar story. One group, in a session observed, decided that a pink background was not effective for the shade that they had mixed for their pig and so created a darker pink that stood out more effectively. The children clap the rhythm of their names accurately but find it more difficult to follow a longer rhythm clapped by the teacher. They sing a good range of songs and rhymes from memory and join in enthusiastically. Children know how to make the sound from percussion instruments louder or softer. In the role-play areas, the children enjoy acting out parts as shopkeepers and customers or farmers and mechanics. They vary the language they use to fit the parts they are playing and use the vocabulary that they have learned through topic work. The children use the thoughtfully prepared props well to sustain their play acting together.

ENGLISH

54. There has been good improvement in reading standards since the last inspection and there has been good improvement in the results of the Year 2 national tests in writing over the last three years. This has resulted from a concerted effort to improve teaching and learning. Writing remains a priority for the school. On the basis of the work seen now, standards in reading are well above average by the age of seven and by the time the pupils leave the school. Standards in writing and speaking are average by the end of Year 2. Year 4 pupils' writing is better than average and their speaking is average. Listening skills are broadly average for most pupils, but are better than expected for the pupils' age in Year 1.
55. The strengths in the subject are:
- All pupils make very good progress in reading and standards are well above average because of the high quality of the teaching in all years.
 - Standards in writing are well above average by the end of Year 4 because the teacher has high expectations of pupils and plans very good opportunities for them to write in other subjects.
 - The Year 1 teacher's consistent approach to ensuring that pupils listen carefully results in good achievement in this area.
 - Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in reading and writing because the work is well matched to their needs.

- The subject is very well managed and the co-ordinator has a clear view of what needs to improve because she checks teaching and learning and looks at pupils' work.
56. The areas that need to improve are:
- More able pupils should be doing better in writing in Year 2.
 - A significant number of pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 do not always listen to adults or to each other as carefully as they should, because the teachers do not consistently expect them to do so.
57. The pupils are very good, keen readers because the teachers nurture their enthusiasm for books. They gather information quickly from books in the classroom; for example Year 1 pupils used the contents page and index efficiently to find out answers to their questions about how babies grow. The Year 2 pupils have a good understanding of what they read and talk in detail about the characters in stories. One average attaining pupil described a girl in a story as "naughty and noisy and she wants attention because she doesn't think that anyone loves her anymore." When Years 3 and 4 pupils look at persuasive writing, they scan the text to pick out those phrases that create the formal tone of a letter. Older pupils read widely and enjoy poems as well as stories. They put good expression into their reading because the teachers set a very good example for them to follow. The Years 3 and 4 pupils use their library well to research information in other subjects, such as history, geography and science. The Years 1 and 2 pupils make good use of the collections of information books in classrooms but the library for the younger pupils is an uninspiring area that is not well used by the pupils. There are too few attractive and up-to-date books in their library to stimulate them to find information for themselves.
58. Standards in writing are average by the end of Year 2 and well above average by the end of Year 4. The Year 1 pupils make good progress in writing and use their knowledge of how sounds are made by strings of letters when they spell unknown words. They write questions to ask a visitor and use capital letters and full stops. The lower and average attaining pupils in Year 2 make satisfactory progress in writing but a number of the more able pupils still mix capitals and lower case letters in words. While these pupils have targets to improve this aspect of writing, the teachers do not always follow up these targets when the work is marked. The more able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged by the tasks they are given and they write brief pieces that do not develop an idea or use the skills they have learned. The more able pupils produce very neat final drafts of work but their writing in books is too often careless and untidy. The oldest pupils' writing reaches a good standard and they use their skills in writing very well in other subjects; pupils of all abilities in Years 3 and 4 make very good progress in writing. They wrote accounts of their visit to Moseley Old Hall, in connection with work in history, which included a good range of complex sentences organised into paragraphs. They used accurate spelling and punctuation and incorporated the vocabulary that they had learned in the topic, such as 'pomander' and 'spindle'. Pupils know how to use connectives learned in literacy lessons and commas to separate items in lists. One higher attaining Year 3 pupil, for example, wrote: "First of all we went into the still room, where they brewed beer...After lunch we had a tour of the house.....Finally we went into the shop and I bought a glass marble, a chocolate mouse and a pencil." Year 4 pupils use similes to enliven their poetry such as "clever as a calculator" and "common as a disease", when they write performance poetry. They take notes when they research work for science or history. The pupils use ICT competently to present their stories and poems and a group of Year 4 pupils produce a school magazine, to which Years 3 and 4 pupils contribute articles.
59. Overall, teaching in English is good, with stronger and weaker elements. The teaching of reading is very good. The basic skills are taught thoroughly and practised effectively. The teachers make time to talk to pupils about books and assess the pupils' progress carefully. Those pupils who need extra help are well supported by both the teachers and classroom assistants. The more able pupils are encouraged to read challenging texts and broaden the range of books that they read. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to speak and introduce a good vocabulary that the pupils pick up and use in discussions and when

answering questions. Teachers' expectations of good listening are very variable. This is more consistent in Year 1 than in the other years and is rewarded by the higher standards achieved by the pupils. In Years 2, 3 and 4, teachers sometimes talk over pupils and do not insist that they listen carefully to each other. This is more evident when the classes come together in the introductory or final sessions in lessons, when pupils often repeat questions or answers that have just been given, or seek further instructions from the teacher, because they have not listened carefully first time. The teaching of writing in Years 1, 3 and 4 is good. The teachers here have high expectations of what will be achieved in lessons for all ability groups. In a good lesson in Year 3 and 4, for example, the pupils were able to write a very good persuasive letter because the teacher had taught them all the component skills they needed and they approached the task with enthusiasm and diligence. The teaching of writing is weaker in Year 2 than in other years; teachers' expectations of what the more able pupils can achieve are sometimes not high enough and the pupils are not always encouraged to check the accuracy of spelling or punctuation, work at a good rate or take pride in presentation. These were the factors that resulted in the unsatisfactory teaching and learning in one lesson.

60. The management of English is very good and this has had a very positive impact on the improving standards. The co-ordinator has checked teaching and learning by observing lessons and undertaken extensive analysis of pupils' work to see what needs to improve. The teachers have had good feedback about their teaching and adaptations have been made to planning to improve handwriting and spelling. This has paid dividends and the right priorities have been identified in action planning. The co-ordinator has helped teachers to assess every pupil's writing and set precise targets for improvement. These targets, however, are often more effectively followed up by the teachers in Years 1, 3 and 4 and this is where the best progress is made.

MATHEMATICS

61. Standards in mathematics are well above average by the end of Year 2 and in Year 4. This is a significant improvement on the findings of the last inspection and confirms the most recent test results of pupils by the end of Year 2.
62. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school because:
 - The teaching is good. Teachers are enthusiastic and provide interesting, challenging activities so that pupils are enthusiastic and eager to learn.
 - Planning is thorough and follows the National Numeracy Strategy guidelines closely so that pupils make good strides in each of the areas of mathematics as they move from class to class.
 - Systems for checking what pupils can do in mathematics are very good. Pupils achieve well because teachers use this information wisely to match work carefully to the different abilities in each class.
 - There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' skills in mental calculations so that they become quicker and more accurate when solving problems in their heads.
 - There are good support systems in place to help the least able and those with special educational needs, so that they often reach the standards expected for their age.
 - There is strong and effective leadership and management of the subject.
63. Sometimes pupils' learning is not as good as it might be because:
 - A few pupils do not listen as carefully as they might and miss important teaching points.
 - There are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop independence in learning to organise their own work and choose the ways in which they will record their findings in investigations and problem-solving activities.
64. By the age of seven and by the time they leave the school in Year 4 most pupils are quick and accurate in their counting, confidently working with numbers to 1000. They explain their calculations clearly using a wide range of mathematical language because from an early age

teachers encourage them to learn and use the correct terminology. In Year 1, the teacher encourages them to use the new words they learn to explain the differences between numbers. Her practical questions like "Would you rather have one sweet or 100 sweets?" enable pupils to use words like 'greater', 'bigger', 'more' and 'less' when comparing numbers to 100. Constant repetition in Years 2 and 3 strengthens pupils' skills in counting in 2s, 5s and 10s so that they quickly find the multiples of each on a 100 grid. Pupils in Year 4 worked very hard when responding to the teacher's challenge in a brisk and lively introduction. They quickly and accurately added and subtracted two- and three-digit numbers, and identified two numbers on a target board to total a given number.

65. There is also a strong emphasis on using the correct mathematical language in the work on shape, space and measures. Pupils in Year 2 have a good understanding of shapes and their features because the teacher encourages them to learn and use the correct terms to describe them. They know the correct name and features of more complex shapes, such as a triangular prism, describing them in terms of the number of 'faces', 'edges' and 'vertices' each one has. Pupils' learning is strengthened when they use their mathematics skills in investigations and problem-solving activities. This was seen in a Year 1 lesson where pupils worked in groups to sort and order a set of number cards right at the end of their lesson. They compared and arranged their numbers by discussing which should be first and which should come next. They co-operated extremely well and were soon ready to show others. Pupils in Year 4 use their ICT skills well when investigating the heights of pupils in their class, recording their detailed findings in a computer-drawn block graph. However, a heavy use of worksheets sometimes means that pupils do not develop their own skills in organising and reporting their results as well as they might.
66. Teaching is consistently good or better. Teachers have a good understanding of the subject and provide clear demonstrations and explanations that pupils understand. They are very clear about what pupils are to learn. Their planning is thorough, and firmly based on information about what groups and individual pupils can and cannot do. The work set for pupils is almost always adapted so that more able pupils work at a higher level and the tasks for less able pupils are pitched at a lower, but still challenging, level according to their needs. 'Springboard' sessions in Year 3 provide a good boost for these pupils. They benefit from working in a small group where practical activities and careful questioning help them reach the standards expected for their age. Classroom assistants and other adult helpers provide invaluable support for these and other pupils, such as helping them use a computer program when learning their 10 times table in Year 2. Teachers plan good opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills in other lessons.
67. Games and practical activities were a strong feature of the excellent teaching seen in Year 1. In a lesson where they learned to compare numbers, pupils concentrated extremely well throughout the lesson because the teacher targeted her questions carefully to capture their interest and attention. This was further boosted by the use of a puppet. 'Freddy is watching you', she said and they sat up and worked very hard. There were lots of happy faces as they played 'Freddy's' counting game, taking turns fairly and helping each other. The classroom assistant and teacher worked effectively as a team so that each group of pupils, working with numbers either to 10, 20 or 50, developed good counting and ordering skills. A brisk pace kept the same level of interest and concentration right to the end of the lesson so that pupils achieved very well and their behaviour and attitudes to work were excellent. However, in the oldest classes a few pupils did not concentrate and listen as well as they might, missing important teaching points that slowed their progress.
68. The very good leadership and management of mathematics is an important factor in the significant improvement brought about since the last inspection. More time has since been allocated to teaching the subject, and all the weaknesses found then have been dealt with quickly and effectively. There are thorough and regular checks on teaching and pupils' attainments, where strengths and weaknesses are pinpointed and effective action taken. As a

result, teachers have a clear view of what needs to be done and focus their attention on bringing about improvements.

SCIENCE

69. There has been good improvement in the subject since the last inspection. Standards are above average by the end of Year 2 and Year 4.
70. The pupils achieve well in science because:
- The teaching is good; the teachers have a firm grasp of the subject; they plan interesting activities that build very effectively on what the pupils understand and already know.
 - Pupils have plenty of opportunities to try out their ideas when they devise and plan investigations.
 - Pupils' attainment is assessed thoroughly and the information gained is well used to plan future work.
 - The subject is very well managed, with a clear focus on identifying areas that need improving in teaching and learning.
71. Areas for improvement are:
- To ensure that all pupils listen carefully to each other and the teacher.
 - To improve the range of software available to support the pupils' learning.
72. Pupils in Year 1 have a good understanding of how babies change from new born to toddlers. They know that a new baby's head needs supporting because the neck muscles are not strong. When a mother and a four month old baby visited the Year 1 pupils, they observed that these muscles must be stronger because the baby could hold its head up without support. The pupils had thought of sensible questions to ask the mother about the baby's sleeping and feeding habits. They know that a baby's food has to be mashed up or sieved because it has no teeth. Year 2 pupils investigate how materials change when they are heated or cooled and record their observations. One average attaining pupil decided to see if smaller chunks of chocolate melted faster than larger chunks. A higher attaining pupil explained in his recording that when ice chunks melt, the water level in the container dropped because "the ice takes up more space than the water". When the pupils devised an investigation to see which vehicles travelled further down ramps with different surfaces, one group tried to make the test fair by "keeping the ramps the same height, starting cars in the same place and don't push them". The pupils use their skills in literacy and numeracy well in science. They interpret a table showing distances travelled by vehicles and work out the middle distance travelled from three measurements. Results are given as written accounts, tables or bar charts. The lower attaining pupils are often supported in recording by a framework provided by the teachers but the average and higher attaining pupils more often devise their own method for recording. The Year 2 pupils have a good understanding of electrical circuits. They use a good scientific vocabulary to describe what they are doing when they make circuits to make a buzzer work. One higher attaining pupil was fascinated by the way in which a buzzer sounded louder when it was close to the surface of the table but became quieter as he moved it higher above the table.
73. In one lesson, Years 3 and 4 pupils were planning an investigation into what helps grass to grow. They demonstrated a well-organised approach to the task and decided in groups how to make their tests fair, what equipment they would need and how to record their findings. The pupils are good at refining their ideas. One group had decided to keep all other conditions the same, but vary the space between grass seeds to see if this affected growth. They used 5 millilitres as a measure for the grass seed that they were planting, but soon discovered that this gave a huge amount of seed and decided to count the seeds. From their discussions about the possibility of living without plants, the pupils deduced that this would not be possible as their diet relied on plants or meat from animals that fed on plants.

74. The teaching is good. Pupils' different abilities are taken into account in lessons and the pupils with special educational needs are well supported. The more able pupils are suitably challenged to go further in researching and investigating. As a result, all of the pupils learn at a good rate. Teachers give pupils plenty of opportunities to think about setting up experiments that are fair and use what they already know to make predictions about what might happen. The pupils are very interested in the work because much of the work is practical and they are all actively involved, even in the class discussions. In one lesson with Years 3 and 4 pupils, for example, one pupil from each group acted as a scribe for other's ideas about what they felt would be the important factors in helping grass to grow. Each group quickly generated ideas that were then shared with the rest of the class. The effective use of a planning sheet enabled pupils to see how variables in the test could be altered and clarified their thinking about what needed to remain the same. The classroom assistant gave very good support to groups as they started to gather equipment and work through setting up the experiment. Teachers do not always insist that the pupils listen carefully and this limits the quality of some of the pupils' answers to questions. The pupils sometimes repeat answers that have already been given, or do not take account of what others have said because they do not listen carefully. The pupils have some opportunities to research on the Internet or CD-ROM and the Years 3 and 4 pupils have used computers in their work on branching databases when classifying plants. There is scope for more use of ICT to support pupils' learning and this has been identified as an area for development by the co-ordinator.
75. The very good management of the subject has a very positive impact on the standards reached by the pupils and their rate of progress. The subject manager observes lessons and samples pupils' work in order to identify what works well and also what needs to improve. Her effective monitoring and analysis of pupils' performance pinpointed weaknesses in some aspects of learning about materials and forces. Suitable adaptations were made to teaching that enabled the pupils' learning in these areas to improve. In addition, the co-ordinator identified assessment and teachers' questioning of pupils as areas to work on and there has been very good improvement in both aspects. The pupils' attainment is usually assessed through investigations at the end of units of work. The information gained is very effectively used to adapt the curriculum; for example, the co-ordinator changed the planning for the unit of work covering light and shadow because of weaknesses that led to pupils' lower attainment.

ART AND DESIGN

76. The pupils' work reaches the expectations for their age by the age of seven and by the time they leave the school. Only one lesson was seen but evidence is drawn from discussions with pupils, their previous work and teachers' planning. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and standards have been maintained.
77. The strengths in the subject are:
- There are some good links made with other subjects and so the work is made more relevant to pupils.
 - There is some good use of ICT to support pupils' learning.
78. Areas for improvement are:
- The pupils do not use sketchbooks as well as they might to explore and refine their skills and ideas.
 - There is little work in three dimensions other than in clay.
79. The pupils make satisfactory progress in all years. Pupils in Year 1 create portraits after looking in a mirror and improve the representation of the parts of their eyes after careful observation. They looked at Matisse's 'Snail' collage and then created pleasing compositions in collages from torn paper. Year 2 pupils mix subtle shades when they paint butterflies and capture the symmetrical patterns on the wings. They paint heads in the style of Paul Klee's 'Senecio' that reflect the piece's simple form and shades of colour. The pupils' pencil drawings

of historical artefacts often reach a good standard, with some close attention to detail in the form. Year 3 pupils have researched Charles Rennie Mackintosh's work on the Internet, as part of their work on pattern, and have created multiple copies of a motif using a computer program, after looking at designs by William Morris. Year 4 pupils sketch patterns in the environment and are currently collecting visual information from a range of cultures, such as African batik fabric and Islamic geometrical patterns as a starting point for their work on repeated pattern. There is little evidence of pupils using sketchbooks to practise skills and refine their ideas. There is some work in clay, but little other work in three dimensions.

80. In the lesson seen in the Years 3 and 4 class, the teaching was good, and evidence suggests that teaching overall is at least satisfactory. The lesson observed was an introductory session using ICT that involved pupils creating an image that could be repeated and rotated to make a composition. The teacher's very good demonstration of the program enabled all of the pupils to understand how it could enhance the speed and accuracy with which they could create a repeating pattern. Good support for pupils, who worked on the computers, by a volunteer helper meant that that teacher was able to work with other groups to refine their ideas for designs before trying them out on screen.
81. The new co-ordinator for the subject is providing a good lead for improvements and has identified several areas for development. She has started to compile a useful portfolio of pupils' work to exemplify attainment at different levels and has extended the range of media available to pupils. The better use of sketchbooks is planned as a priority for the coming school year.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

82. Standards in design and technology are as expected in Year 2 and by the time pupils leave the school in Year 4, as they were the last time the school was inspected. Pupils achieve satisfactorily as they move throughout the school.
83. Strengths in the subject are:
- Teachers' planning is good, and ensures that pupils build their designing and making skills systematically.
 - Pupils enjoy design and technology because projects are interesting and varied.
84. A point for improvement is:
- To further develop pupils' skills in critically evaluating the strengths and areas for improvement in their finished products.
85. Too little teaching was seen to make a judgement about teaching overall. However, teachers' planning and evidence from displays, photographs and pupils' workbooks show that pupils make satisfactory progress. Right from the beginning pupils learn to design and then make items in connection with their class topics. Pupils in Year 1 draw a picture of their design for a home for a princess, witch or other special person. They learn to cut and join materials with resources like sticky tape and glue, and use these effectively to create walls, roof and extra features like chimneys. They take pride in carefully painting their models to provide a good finish.
86. Teachers' planning is clear about what pupils are to learn and they make sure that activities move pupils on in developing their skills in each year group. As a result, pupils' designs become more detailed as they move through the school. For instance, in Year 2 they label their diagrams to show particular features on the vehicles they design. They use more elaborate ways of joining materials, like an axle to ensure the wheels rotate. Pupils become more aware of the significance of planning a design for a particular market in Years 3 and 4. They examine food packaging, noticing what shapes are most suitable and what makes them attractive to the buyer. They learn how to make a net to create a box shape. When they make

their own box for chocolates they incorporate the best features, like a see-through panel to display the chocolates, free offers to attract the buyer's interest and an attractive, eye-catching pattern for the box.

87. They learn to evaluate products when they examine packs of sandwiches to assess their taste, attractiveness and healthy ingredients. However, pupils are reluctant to critically evaluate their own finished products to judge their effectiveness and see how they might be improved. This is an area already identified by the co-ordinator who is enthusiastic and manages the subject well.

GEOGRAPHY

88. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and standards have been maintained. The pupils' work reaches the expectations for their age by the age of seven and by the time they leave the school. No lessons were observed but evidence is drawn from discussions with pupils, their previous work and teachers' planning. Pupils of all abilities make satisfactory progress in geography.
89. The strengths in the subject are:
- Good use of the local area to extend the pupils' understanding of direction and maps.
 - Good use of places in the news to extend the pupils' understanding of places further afield and how the environment and climate affect people's lives.
90. A point for improvement is:
- The books in the library for the younger pupils are dull and in short supply.
91. Year 1 pupils wrote a short account of a walk through the village to the post office and drew a map of their route. They identified road signs such as 'no bicycles' and 'give way' and also the significant buildings along the way. Year 2 pupils have drawn a plan of the classroom and used a plan of the school to plot routes from one area to another. They can find the countries of the British Isles on a map and also the village in which they live. Pupils study a village in India and interpret a key to find out the physical features of the area. Year 3 pupils have written good accounts of how a volcanic eruption affected the lives of people in the area. When a local road was closed, they thought about the impact that this would have on local people. They have used data from weather records to classify hot, warm and cold climatic zones. Year 4 pupils look at different sources of evidence such as news reports and photographs and use a good vocabulary to express their ideas. Average attaining pupils, for example, wrote a list of the main points from a newspaper report following the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo. More able pupils used these to write a very good script for a television news reporter. Pupils use ICT to support their learning satisfactorily; Year 4 pupils, for example, have researched rainforests on CD-ROM. The older pupils use the library well when they look up information on life in cold or hot climates and how these affect how people live. The resources available in the younger pupils' library are inadequate. The books are old and out of date and do not stimulate their interest in the subject sufficiently.
92. The available evidence indicates that teaching is sound and all of the aspects of the subject are covered. The subject is managed satisfactorily and the shortcomings in the provision of books for the younger pupils have been identified as a priority. The co-ordinator checks teachers' planning to ensure that the scheme of work is followed and that the work is suitably meeting the needs of different age groups in the mixed age classes.

HISTORY

93. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. The pupils' work reaches the expectations for their age by the age of seven and exceeds the expectations for their age by the time they leave the school. Only one lesson was seen, but evidence is drawn

from the pupils' previous work, teachers' planning and assessments, and discussions with pupils.

94. The strengths in the subject are:
- The good range of visits to places of historical interest and the visitors to school who give pupils an understanding of the history of the local area.
 - Historical objects are very well used to capture pupils' interest and extend their understanding of how everyday things have changed over time.
 - The good use of pupils' skills in literacy in their work in Years 3 and 4.
95. A point for improvement is that:
- The pupils in Year 2 do not take as much pride as they might in the presentation of their work.
96. Year 1 pupils have visited an old house in the village and know that it has had several different uses, such as a shop and a farm, before becoming a family home. They look at old photographs of the family and explain how the people's clothes are different to modern day. Year 2 pupils spent some time acting as pupils in the Victorian schoolroom when they visited Shugborough Hall and were impressed by the strictness of the teacher and formality of the classroom. They compare what wash day was like in Victorian times and understand that some aspects of washing – such as sorting clothes into different colours – remain the same, but that modern appliances use electricity and that this was not possible in the past. The Years 3 and 4 pupils are good at finding out things for themselves from books and the Internet. Their work following a visit to Moseley Old Hall shows a good level of understanding about Tudor homes and daily life. In discussion, pupils talk in detail about the sanitary arrangements in Tudor times and that beds had curtains around them for warmth and privacy. There are some very good quality written accounts of the events and people of the time, such as how Henry VIII tried to impress the King of France through a display of wealth and how he had to create his own church because he was desperate for a son and could not divorce his wife.
97. The teaching is good and lessons are interesting. Teachers plan to start from pupils' own experience of the world and this makes new learning more relevant. There are good links between history and music and art. The good range of artefacts, visits and visitors to school ensures that the pupils are keen to learn. Teachers give pupils good opportunities to research information and share this with others through attractive displays. The presentation of pupils' work in displays in Year 2 is good, but work in their books shows some lack of care in setting out and is often untidy, which mars the quality. The subject is satisfactorily managed and resourced. The co-ordinator checks teachers' planning to ensure that the national guidelines are followed and linked to the school's two-year rolling programme of topics. There is some software that pupils can use with computers to support their learning, but the school has few simulation programs that pupils can explore.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

98. Standards in ICT are in line with expectations in Year 2 and when pupils leave in Year 4. This is broadly similar to the standards found when the school was last inspected. However, the school has identified ICT as an area for improvement and there have been moves recently to plan more experiences into subjects like English and mathematics. Other subject co-ordinators see this as a priority for their subjects also. The co-ordinator working in the Year 3/4 class provides a good example for others to follow and the quality of some of the work in Year 4 is good. Overall, standards are steadily rising.
99. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily and better in Years 3 and 4 because:
- Teachers are more confident in planning opportunities into subjects like mathematics and English.

- They make good use of adult volunteers to help pupils learn new skills.
 - The co-ordinator provides a strong lead and example for others in their teaching and boosts pupils' achievements in Years 3 and 4.
100. A point for improvement that the school is already working on in order to improve standards is:
- Providing more software and planning more opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills in all subjects, particularly in subjects like history and religious education.
101. The youngest pupils draw 'monster' pictures and know how to program the floor turtle to move forwards and backwards. In Year 2 they create attractive pictures of 'night time' and program more complex routes for the turtle. Good links with English are seen when pupils in Year 1 develop their knowledge of letter sounds to improve their spelling accuracy in a 'Star spell' computer game. Pupils build on this so that in Year 2 they word process their alphabetical shopping lists and print them off. They operate the mouse efficiently to click and drag objects around the screen, for example when playing a 10 times table game. Sometimes, though, computer work is offered when other tasks are completed, as in a mathematics lesson where only one pupil had the opportunity to work on the computer.
102. The teaching is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good in Years 3 and 4. Teachers are gaining in confidence and expertise in teaching the subject, and make sure that pupils know how to use the software. Sometimes, as when Year 2 pupils work on a mathematics game, this is done with individual pupils with support from adult helpers. They supervise pupils until they are confident in operating the program. Class demonstrations are particularly effective in the Year 3/4 class taken by the co-ordinator. Her enthusiasm and clear instructions successfully stimulate pupils' interest and they listen and observe intently. Pupils gasped when she showed them how patterns could be created by designing a 'stamp' and moving it around the screen. They were eager to try it out for themselves, sometimes creating attractive repeating patterns. This class benefits considerably from regular support from a parent volunteer who guides and encourages their developing skills alongside the teacher. The range of experiences is much wider, and this means that pupils achieve well. They research history topics using CD-ROMs to find out about Henry VIII. They cut and paste text to produce a list of class rules and change the style and size of font to add impact to their captions. They use computers to report their investigation findings, as in geography where they collect data on the weather and then produce computer graphs and pie charts showing the rainfall, temperature and cloud. They create more complex databases to sort and classify, for instance a branching database classifying musical instruments.
103. ICT is a developing subject in the school and there is a good awareness that more needs to be done to raise its profile in the curriculum. More training and software is needed to help teachers plan more and varied experiences across subjects like science, history and religious education. The school is well placed to improve standards further.

MUSIC

104. It is not possible to make a judgement about the standards or the quality of teaching as, due to the way the timetable is organised, only one lesson was observed during the inspection. A visiting musician led this. Music has been a relatively low priority for development since the last inspection when standards were above average. Then, pupils had opportunities to participate in additional activities like a choir and recorder group. The co-ordinator, who provided a strong lead and subject expertise to help others then, has left. The present co-ordinator has many other responsibilities within the school.
105. However, teachers' planning and records indicate that they teach the full range of activities in the music curriculum. The school makes good use of visiting musicians to provide interesting musical experiences for pupils. In a good link with history, pupils in Years 3 and 4 thoroughly enjoyed a visit by a musician who demonstrated instruments played in Tudor times. The

teaching was very good, and pupils were fascinated from the moment she began talking. They developed a good understanding of the range of musical instruments and how and when they were played because she encouraged them to think hard by asking probing questions. "What happens to the sound when the recorder is bigger?" she asked, and were amazed to realise the sound was lower. They showed a keen interest in learning how the different types of music were played for different occasions. As a result of this experience they know the names of Tudor instruments and how they are played. "That was very good", said one boy when she performed several pieces of music using the instruments. Afterwards a group of pupils worked with her to practise and perform a piece of Tudor music for their classmates. Their performance would have been even better if some of them had listened more carefully to instructions for their performance.

106. Pupils sing tunefully and expressively in assemblies. Sometimes music plays as they enter, but there are too few opportunities for pupils to discuss the composer or the mood created by the music in order to develop their appraising skills. The school has a very good music room that is used by a specialist teacher who provides guitar and keyboard tuition for several pupils after school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

107. The standards reached by pupils by the end of Year 2 and in Year 4 are as expected for their age as they were the last time the school was inspected.

108. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in physical education as they move through the school because:
- Teachers make good use of the school's resources.
 - Planning is thorough and builds pupils' skills systematically.
 - The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities that further develop pupils' skills.

109. Points for improvement are:
- Pupils do not always listen carefully enough to their teacher's explanations and instructions.
 - Pupils do not evaluate their own and others' performances enough in order to see what works well and what could be improved.

110. The quality of teaching is satisfactory throughout the school. Teachers' planning is good with all aspects covered in sufficient depth. They are clear about what pupils are to learn in lessons and activities are carefully focused on achieving these objectives. Pupils understand the need to warm up and cool down when exercising. Pupils in Year 2 know why it is important to eat healthily and to take regular exercise because their teacher provided a useful discussion at the start of their lesson.

111. The school hall is very large and provides a good space for physical education lessons. However, the acoustics mean that sometimes it is very hard to hear what is said. The apparatus for gymnastics is relatively new. Teachers have benefited from training in its use and have established good routines and safe practices. "Why do we have to work as a team to put out the apparatus?" asks the teacher and the discussion encourages them to remember the safety issues. As a result, pupils set it out and put it away safely and sensibly. They balance, climb and jump from the apparatus with care and control. They travel along the apparatus in different ways, sometimes incorporating a roll and ending with a good balance. Although the teacher encourages them to watch others' performances, pupils do not think hard enough about what might make these even better. As a result, pupils often copy others and their movements are not as imaginative as they might be. Although behaviour is generally good, a few pupils do not listen when the teacher is talking and so miss important instructions and advice. These two factors mean that pupils sometimes do not achieve as much as they might. They were also a feature of a well-organised athletics lesson with Years 3 and 4 pupils.

Very good links were made in the introduction where the teacher inspired pupils particularly well in a discussion about the origins of the Olympic games and the achievements of famous athletes such as Denise Lewis. Her demonstrations of 'stepping into the throw' and 'following through' meant that pupils became more accurate in aiming at a target. This improved significantly when she introduced a competitive element in the form of points for accuracy. There were good pointers on how to make a fast turn when running round an obstacle. However, although pupils were enthusiastic, some pupils did not make as much progress as they might because they were not listening to these and other teaching points.

112. The co-ordinator manages and promotes the subject well. Pupils benefit considerably from a good range of extra activities. There are regular lunchtime sessions for football, and after-school clubs for netball, country dancing and other sports arranged through the 'Tops Sport' initiative. These all mean that pupils learn the skills necessary for each sport and become good team players by the time they leave the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

113. Pupils in Year 2 and Year 4 exceed the standards expected in the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus for teaching religious education, as they did the last time the school was inspected.

114. Their achievements are good because:

- Planning is thorough, relevant and interesting.
- Good resources are used effectively.
- Good teaching provides valuable opportunities for discussion and sharing ideas that make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to learn about other faiths.
- Story themes in assemblies make a good contribution to pupils' religious education.

115. A point for improvement, already identified by the school is that:

- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to use ICT as part of their work.

116. Good teaching throughout the school means that the pupils enjoy religious education. The lessons are interesting, and often involve practical activities and opportunities for pupils to talk about their own feelings and ideas. Each aspect is well planned and taught in depth, so that pupils not only know the facts, but also have a good understanding of the deeper meanings. Pupils in Year 2 have a good knowledge of the Bible and talk knowledgeably about the Old and New Testaments. They enjoy listening to stories from the Bible, like Jonah and the Whale and Noah's Ark, and remember them well because the teachers and visitors in assembly read and tell stories expressively. A good example of this was seen when pupils became engrossed in the story of Daniel and the lions, where interesting illustrations were also projected onto a screen.

117. Pupils have a good understanding of the special books, celebrations and symbols in different faiths. This understanding is strengthened considerably when they examine the good range of resources and artefacts that the school provides. Pupils in Year 2 show a thorough understanding of why the Bible is important to Christians. In one lesson pupils brought in their own special books and explained to others why they were important to them. For instance, an old storybook was important because, "It belonged to my mum". A good discussion followed, prompted by the teacher's careful questioning so that pupils were more aware of what makes objects and people 'special' to others. A wide range of different Bibles was set out and pupils enjoyed examining them, handling them sensitively.

118. These strengths in teaching are also evident in the Year 3/4 class. Pupils were learning about religious practices in the home for Christians, Hindus and Muslims. The teacher based the lesson firmly on pupil's own experiences like the customs and practices in their own home, such as visiting grandma each week. There was a good balance of information and questioning in the valuable discussion that followed, and pupils were encouraged to talk about

their own experiences, which added to their awareness of other people's lives, their faiths and their feelings. Good use of resources, like a statue of Ganesh and a Puja tray, attracted pupils' interest and brought the subject to life. These strengths all meant that pupils thought hard and gained a good understanding of the significance of a prayer mat for Muslims, a shrine for Hindus and a church for Christians as a place to pray. Pupils develop a good vocabulary related to different faiths because the teacher introduces and explains terms like 'Puja' and 'shrine' as they arise. They express their own feelings sensitively and maturely when they write their own prayers. "Peaceful and calm God, I thank you for our food to eat and water to drink" and "Jesus is with us and will help us on our way" are examples of their thoughts.

119. There are few opportunities for pupils to research topics or use computers to record their prayers and other responses to their learning. However, the subject is well managed and the co-ordinator is clear about what needs to be done.