

INSPECTION REPORT

LUDLOW INFANT SCHOOL

Ludlow

LEA area: Shropshire

Unique reference number: 123379

Headteacher: Mrs A Weller

Reporting inspector: Julia A Elsley
16892

Dates of inspection: 10th June – 13th June 2002

Inspection number: 196476

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	County
Age range of pupils:	3-7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Sandpits Road Ludlow Shropshire
Postcode:	SY8 1HG
Telephone number:	01584 872765
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Sally Hughes
Date of previous inspection:	9 th –12 th June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
16892	Julia Elsley	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities Foundation Stage Science Music	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are children taught? How well does the school care for its pupils? What should the school do further to improve?
14083	Andy Anderson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents? How well does the school care for its pupils?
26965	Paula Protherough	Team inspector	Special education needs English Art and design Design and technology Religious education	How good are the curricular opportunities offered to pupils?
20498	Mary Hamby	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology History Geography Physical education	How well is the school led and managed?

The inspection contractor was:

Hugh Protherough Inspections Ltd.
PO Box 396
Banbury
OX15 5XJ

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33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Ludlow Infant School is an average sized school with 189 pupils on roll, aged from three to seven years. Since the last inspection, the school has opened a nursery class and 64 children attend either the morning or afternoon session. The school serves the surrounding area that is socially diverse and where there is a mixture of both private and local authority housing.

The proportion of children (18 per cent) who are entitled to free school meals is below the national average. This is lower than in past years because of the Family Tax credit increases and to the fact that many parents have part-time employment, which prevents them from claiming free school meals. The proportion (28.2 per cent) of the pupils included on the school's register for special educational needs is above the national average. There are three pupils with statements of special educational need. The children come from a pre-dominantly white ethnicity background. There is one child for whom English is an additional language.

All the children start school in the term that they are five. On entry, their attainment covers the full ability range, but overall it is below average. The school receives a government grant that is shared with the local junior school and community centre. It is used to support and engage the local community in the social, emotional and educational development of the children. The work is further enhanced by and benefits from additional funding from the New Opportunities and the Rural Development Fund.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a school that is making good progress in improving its effectiveness. It is the result of the very good leadership from the headteacher and governors who are committed to raising standards and improving the quality of education provided. The headteacher values highly the work of her staff, monitors the teaching and ensures an overall good quality of education for the pupils most of whom are achieving well. The school offers good value for money.

What the school does well

- The head and deputy headteacher provide very good leadership and a clear sense of direction for the work of the school.
- The overall management of the school is very good. The governors and staff have a very good strategic overview of their roles and responsibilities.
- Excellent procedures are in place for the monitoring and improving attendance.
- The teaching in the Foundation Stage of Learning ranges from good to excellent.
- The provision for children with special educational needs is good.
- The children's attitudes, interest and enthusiasm towards learning and school are good and have a positive influence on their individual achievements. The children take great pride in the presentation of their work.
- The very good procedures and the levels of care shown by the adults enable all children, including those with special educational needs, to feel secure and confident in their achievement and progress. The relationships between the adults and children are good.
- The school's partnership with the parents is very good. The parents receive very good information about the work of the school. The family literacy and numeracy sessions before school are excellent.

What could be improved

A number of inter-related aspects of the teaching such as:

- A greater focus on the provision of work that matches individual children's prior attainment in order to challenge them to higher levels.
- More opportunities for the children to work independently across the whole curriculum by reducing the number of worksheets given to pupils.
- The editing, saving and retrieval of work with information computer technology
- The marking of the children's work to ensure a more accurate picture of the level that pupils are capable of achieving
- The outdoor curriculum provision in the Foundation Stage

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1997. Subsequently, the headteacher, staff and governors have tackled the resulting issues conscientiously and successfully. Consequently, even though standards are slightly lower than those reported last time, the school has made good improvements. The governors now have a very good understanding of their duties and responsibilities and carry them out effectively. The teachers' planning now highlights the learning objectives of each lesson clearly and precisely. The procedures for the assessment of children's attainment is now firmly in place, but the school recognises that there is still some headway to make in tracking the attainment of the pupils across all subjects more accurately. Immediate action has been taken to ensure the health and safety of all the pupils. Everyone connected with the school has the willingness and motivation to continue to improve the quality of education.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
Reading	C	D	E	C
Writing	B	C	C	A
Mathematics	D	D	D	C

Key

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

Generally, the pupils enter the Reception class with below average attainment in their personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. However, the good, and often very good teaching, enables them to make good progress; in the current cohort a significant majority of children are reaching the early learning goals expected at the end of the Foundation Stage, except in spoken English.

Year-on-year, the school's results in the national tests show that pupils' attainment is below average in mathematics and well below average in reading. However, in writing they are reaching the expected standards. The 2001, results however, when compared to those schools with a similar number of pupils entitled to free school meals are higher. When the pupils who took the tests in 2001 entered the school their attainment was well below that of other children in the county, and the number of children with special educational needs was high. These factors had a significant influence upon last year's results. The present Year 2 cohort also had a very low

attainment on entry, but the vast proportion of the pupils are achieving the challenging targets set by the school because of the improvements in the overall quality of teaching and the strong commitment of the staff. Nevertheless, the proportion reaching the expected levels is below average, though a small minority of children should reach Level 3 in reading, writing, mathematics and science. This is a steady improvement on the results of the previous year when the very high percentage of the children with special educational needs within the cohort is taken into account. In all other subjects, the inspection findings show that standards are satisfactory, except in information and communications technology where standards are slightly below the national expectation. This is because the Year 2 children have yet to be taught to edit save and retrieve their work. The standards of the pupils' work in religious education are satisfactory.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The children are enthusiastic, keen and well motivated to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Whilst the majority of lessons are orderly, isolated incidences of inappropriate learning behaviour were seen. The children generally behave well in the playground.
Personal development and relationships	Good. The children relate well to each other, to adults and to visitors.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The attendance levels have improved.

There is a very good ethos within the school, which reflects the aims and values set by the headteacher, governors and staff.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Taken overall, the teaching is consistently good, often very good with some excellent teaching across the Foundation Stage of Learning. Teaching at Key Stage 1 is satisfactory overall with some good teaching seen. There was no evidence of unsatisfactory teaching during the inspection. This is a considerable improvement on the last inspection where almost 18 percent of the teaching was unsatisfactory. The teachers' planning has improved, and the lessons are well prepared and organised with resources readily at hand. The teachers' questioning skills are very good and their introductions to lessons are conducted with a brisk pace and a quiet rigour. Role-play activities are very well structured and used to support the children's learning. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is secure and the skills taught are appropriately transferred across to other areas of the curriculum. However, more open-ended tasks and less use of worksheets would allow the children to work independently to a higher level and allow them to be more creative in their responses. The teachers' assessment procedures also need to be sharpened. They should include more constructive comments on the completed work and better oral feedback so that the children know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. This would help to accelerate their progress, particularly the higher attainers.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. The curriculum is broad and balanced and reflects the national priorities for literacy and numeracy. Some aspects of the provision for outdoor play in the Foundation Stage need improving.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The children are well supported to ensure that they make progress in line with their capabilities.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The overall provision is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school makes very good provision for the health, safety and welfare of the children.

There is a good home/school partnership and the parents have become more involved through the literacy and mathematics family sessions that enable them to support their children's learning. The personal relationships between the children and adults are good. The approaches to assessment need to be extended to cover all subject areas. Although the teaching at the Foundation Stage is enhancing the children's achievements, the provision could be improved further by a wider use of play experiences in the outdoor learning environment.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good overall. The headteacher and deputy headteacher give a clear direction to the educational developments at the school in order to maintain and improve upon the achievements of all pupils in their care. The teachers are becoming increasingly confident in developing their roles and meeting their curriculum responsibilities.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governing body fulfils all its statutory responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school effectively monitors and evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of its work. The priorities of the development plan are appropriate and implemented well. As a result, the school continues to improve.
The strategic use of resources	Good. There are effective systems to prioritise how money is spent.

The headteacher provides clear direction so that the management of the school continues to improve. The governors work very closely with the staff and are conscientiously applying the principles of best value in all their financial decisions. The various members of staff are well qualified and their expertise is effectively deployed to meet the demands of the pupils in their care. The school's accommodation is adequate to meet the demands of the school's curriculum. The overall levels of educational resources are satisfactory.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children like school• The staff encourages them to become actively involved in the life of the school.• The staff are friendly and approachable. Any concerns or complaints are dealt with sensitively.• The school promotes good attitudes, behaviour and values.	

The inspectors' judgements support the views expressed by parents about the school, in the questionnaires, at the pre-inspection meeting and during the course of the inspection. The inspection team found that the school is very welcoming and provides very good guidance and support for both parents and pupils. It gives very good information to parents about what is happening at school, the curriculum and in the annual written reports on their children's progress.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

- 1 Any subsequent reference in the report to 'all children' automatically includes those with special educational needs. A closer analysis of the pupils' work shows that there are no significant differences in the achievements of boys and girls in any aspect of the curriculum, though there is some variation from year to year. This comes about because the school has an inclusive approach that ensures that the curriculum is fully accessible to all its members. Occasionally, it appears that there is a greater focus on boys during discussions, but this is because there is an imbalance of boys and girls in the age groups. The teachers make a conscious effort to ensure that there is no gender bias within their teaching.

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- 2 Since the last inspection there has been some variation in the performance of successive cohorts of pupils because the school community is now more diverse than it was five years ago. The results achieved by the pupils in the national tests of 2000 and 2001 at the end of Key Stage 1 were not as good as those of previous years. On each occasion there was a far higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs taking the tests than is usually the case. However, the results in comparison with those achieved in similar schools were average in reading and mathematics, but well above average in writing. This was because the pupils were well taught and encouraged to exceed the expected levels in their work.
- 3 The school collects a good range of information about the pupils' performance. Detailed analysis of this data shows that the proportion of children with special educational needs is even higher in the cohort of Year 2 pupils who have just recently taken the 2002 tests. This has affected the standards attained in other subjects of the National Curriculum and accounts for their being lower than at the time of the previous inspection. These children started school in their reception year with very low scores on the assessment tasks in spoken English, listening and mathematics skills.
- 4 The school has a strong commitment to raising standards. From the nursery through to the Year 2, the school has started to put in place a comprehensive record that provides information on each child's development. The headteacher, governors and staff use this information well to set realistic targets for individual pupils and for each successive cohort. The evidence shows that the staff has set challenging targets in English and mathematics for every child and that the pupils are likely to achieve their targets and in some cases exceed them. This is because the pupils have developed very good attitudes towards attaining their goals. It is a **key strength** of the school. The strength in the monitoring of standards is demonstrated by the way in which the headteacher and her staff know the children well. The knowledge is not just based on the test results and levels achieved but includes an in-depth knowledge of the background and learning ability of each child.
- 5 An analysis of the assessments made when the children enter the school shows that there is a considerable variation in attainment across all year groups. Overall, however, the inspection findings confirm that the levels for the Year 1 and 2 pupils were very low when compared to the attainment of other pupils in the County. Nevertheless, the inspection findings also indicate that overall these children have made a steady, consistent and satisfactory progress in their work. The overall attainment of the current reception cohort on entry is just below that of the pupils of similar age in other parts of the County. The nursery class makes a significant contribution in preparing the children for full-time education and they settle quickly into the routines of school. The reception classes successfully build on the good work of the nursery by increasing the levels of challenge both in teacher-directed activities and through child-initiated play. The inspection findings show that a **key factor** in the children's attainment and progress by the time they leave the reception classes is the high quality of the teaching. It is quite clear that the vast majority in the current reception cohort are on course to achieve the early learning goals set out in the Foundation Stage curriculum guidelines, except in spoken English which is slightly below the expected level. Moreover, because of the inspiring teaching, a significant minority of the cohort is working towards the early programmes of study of the National Curriculum in their writing, reading and numeracy skills.

- 6 The standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are likely to be just below average in reading, writing, mathematics, and science by the time the present pupils leave the school. However, a significant minority of children is likely to reach the higher level 3 because of the teachers' improved planning and the effect of the literacy and numeracy strategies.
- 7 In English, mathematics and science the overall standards are slightly below the expected levels and lower than those reported at the last inspection. Despite this, a significant number of children have exceeded the targets set by the school at level 2 or above, and a few pupils are achieving the higher level 3 across all three subjects.
- 8 In English, a strong emphasis is placed on improving the pupil's spoken English and their listening skills. The introductory sessions to lessons and the role-play activities help to improve the pupils' spoken English, and as a result it is well within the expected age-related expectation by the end of Key Stage 1. All pupils receive a thorough grounding in the use of phonics to support their reading, both in the literacy sessions and individually when they are quietly reading with an adult. Consequently, the pupils are reading quite fluently, with some expression and understanding of text, and standards are steadily improving. Much time is spent on improving skills and again standards are improving. The school is suitably targeting spelling and handwriting and the presentation of work is good. However, the overuse of 'fill in the gaps' worksheets limits the independent writing achieved across other subjects. This is part of **a key issue for action**.
- 9 Mathematical and scientific discussions and an emphasis on investigation skills are strong features of the introductory sessions and children make good progress during this part of the lessons. However, the recorded evidence shows that the work has been insufficiently challenging because it has not adequately built on the pupils' prior attainment. As a result, the pupils have made only modest progress overall. This is part of **a key issue for action**. Some aspects of information and communications technology are in line with what is expected because the children are making satisfactory progress in the use of software programmes and the Internet to support other curriculum areas in both the computer suite and in the classrooms. Standards overall, however, are lower than they should be because the school does not afford the pupils the opportunity to amend, save and retrieve their work.
- 10 Attainment in religious education is in line with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. All pupils are making satisfactory progress in their knowledge and understanding both in lessons and assemblies.
- 11 The overall standards and quality of work in history, geography, music, art, design and technology and physical education are within the expected levels and the pupils' progress is satisfactory. Again there is the variation in standards achieved since the previous inspection, but for the same reason stated at the beginning of this paragraph.
- 12 The school strives hard to support the many lower-attaining pupils who find learning difficult. The effective management of special educational needs means that the support for these pupils helps them to make good progress towards the targets identified on their individual education plans. This is one of the **school's key strengths**.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 13 The pupils' attitudes, interest and enthusiasm towards their learning and to school are good. This is **a key strength** of the school. They arrive promptly each morning and are keen to start the day's activities. Many arrive early with their parents in order to attend the mathematics and reading sessions, which are held twice weekly before school starts. This is **another key strength** of the school. The majority of pupils quickly settle down in registrations, assemblies and in class. Children of all ages demonstrate positive attitudes to their work. They are attentive to their teachers, willingly ask and answer questions, and freely offer their own ideas and opinions. Most take pride in the presentation of their work. All parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that their children like school.
- 14 The majority of children are well behaved. The teaching and non-teaching staff, parents and most of the pupils themselves have high expectations of the standards of behaviour that are acceptable in the school. The children in the nursery and reception class consistently behave very well and are learning to act in a

mature and responsible manner. Taken overall, behaviour is satisfactory at Key Stage 1. The pupils move around the school in a quiet and orderly manner and their behaviour at breaks and at lunchtime is good and sometimes very good. On occasions, however, particularly in the classes with a preponderance of boys and where there are children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, a small minority displays inappropriate behaviour in order to seek attention. This can disrupt the learning of the rest of the class and teachers have to then spend an inappropriate amount of their time with these children, if the support staff are not available. There were no signs of either bullying or isolation of individual pupils. There have been no exclusions in recent years.

- 15 The relationships in the school are good. The pupils relate well to their teachers, to other adults and also to one another. Although slightly reticent with visitors, they are polite, courteous and welcoming. Children of all ages play well together in the playground. In the classrooms, most pupils collaborate, share resources, take turns and listen to each other. However, many pupils in their enthusiasm to please and share their knowledge call out answers instead of waiting to be asked by the teacher. Most pupils show respect for their teachers, each other and the environment. During assemblies, they are respectful of the occasion, willingly join in activities and bow their heads reverently during prayers.
- 16 The children's personal development is satisfactory overall, and is good in the nursery and reception classes. Most pupils willingly take responsibility for their work and in many lessons they were observed working quietly and effectively on the given tasks. However, they have few opportunities, apart from the Year 2 Friendship Squad, to take on formal responsibility around the school or contribute to day-to-day running of the school. The management is aware of this and there are, for example, plans to form a School Council. There is a good range of social and educational visits and the children encounter an appropriate range of visitors. The school supports local, national and international charities and the pupils are made aware of others less fortunate than themselves. The majority of the parents agree that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible.
- 17 The attendance rate has improved significantly since last year, but is still slightly below the national average. The rate of unauthorised absence is below the national average. Attendance levels are adversely affected by a small number of persistent offenders, for example, parents withdrawing their children during term time for long holidays abroad. Lateness is systematically recorded, but the overall level is low.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 18 The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection, when a significant proportion (almost 18%) was unsatisfactory. Of the lessons observed during the course of the present inspection, almost half were either good or very good. Just over half of the lessons were satisfactory and a few of the lessons were excellent. There was no unsatisfactory teaching.
- 19 At the Foundation Stage, the teaching is strong overall and in some instances inspirational. It promotes the children's independent learning through enquiry, exploration and discovery very well. However, modifications to the organisation in the nursery and development of the outdoor provision to encompass all the areas of learning would further enhance the children's achievements. This is part of a **key issue for action**.
- 20 A **major factor** in the improvement of the teaching is the way in which the school has successfully developed the weekly planning. This was an area identified as a weakness at the last inspection. All teachers now ensure that their lesson plans have very clear, precise learning objectives and that the children are aware of what they are going to learn. This happens because the teachers know their children well and make learning fun. The classroom routines are firmly established and the pupils feel very secure in the familiar setting. All staff employed by the school have a good rapport with the children and relationships are good.
- 21 All lessons start promptly. The introductions to most lessons are presented in an interesting and exciting way. This is **another strength** of the school. In the reception classes for example, the mental mathematics and phonic sessions have a quiet rigour and the brisk pace ensures that they stimulate and enrich the children's interest in learning. Through the use of good questioning, the teachers generally challenge the pupils to think and reflect, and thereby cater for the wide spread of ability within the class. However, this

was not always apparent in some of the mathematics lessons at Key Stage 1. The teachers have successfully adopted the national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy, and they make effective use of the planning grid when preparing for the teaching of English and mathematics. The literacy and numeracy training has enabled the teachers to become more skilful in defining exactly what they want their pupils to do, know and understand. This is a direct result of the hard work by staff to achieve to successfully achieved an award from the Basic Skills Agency. Furthermore, they use a range of different teaching methods not only in these contexts, but also across the curriculum. The teachers' knowledge of the subjects of the National Curriculum ranges from satisfactory to good, and ensures confident, competent and well-focussed presentation of new concepts.

- 22 A **particular strength** is the way in which the teachers are developing the pupils' spoken English and listening skills through very good role-play in both the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. These play activities are carefully planned and well structured to support the children's learning in all areas of the curriculum. For instance, the adults engage with the children during their play in the bomb shelter, the hairdressers, the doctor's surgery or when the children are playing a game with their home made chess set. Their sensitive and purposeful interventions not only extend the children's knowledge of everyday life, but also enhance their social development and encourage collaborative learning. The role-play also provides excellent opportunities to improve the children's use of English grammar and vocabulary, including subject-specific terminology. **Another strength** is the way in which the teachers develop and use the children's basic art skills to support other areas of the curriculum. For example, linked to their work in science the children recently designed four individual clay tiles to depict the life cycles of frogs and butterflies and the stages of growth of a seed. They then took their designs to a local tile factory and made them on site. The tiles were then fired, glazed and framed. They now hang attractively, and in the correct sequence, on the walls around school and in the sensory garden.
- 23 Although the introductory and whole-class sessions that reinforce the lesson objectives are often good at Key Stage 1, in many instances the work sessions are not as challenging as they might be and do not always cater sufficiently for the pupils' differing levels of ability. The work over the course of the year shows that there have been far too many worksheets that do not always match and build upon the children's prior attainment. As a result, there are missed opportunities for pupils to work independently, to organise and to present things in their own ways. Moreover, the activities often fail to contribute to scientific, historical, geographical and mathematical understanding of the most able pupils. These factors are impeding the pupils' progress. The marking of the pupils' work also needs to be improved. The best examples give the pupils a clear indication of what they need to do to improve. In most cases however, the work is marked with a tick and supportive praise, but without giving the pupils constructive help towards meeting their individual targets. The teachers' have done an enormous amount of work since the last inspection to improve their use of assessment procedures to support the planning and target setting for individual children. Nevertheless, there is still some headway to be made in ensuring the accuracy of judgements regarding the level of the pupils' achievement. The overuse of worksheets, the marking of work and a more accurate assessment of the levels of the children's attainment are all part of a **key issue for action**.
- 24 The pupils on the special educational needs register receive good support that enables them to make satisfactory progress in line with their ability levels. All staff use the individual education plans effectively to ensure that the work is suitably matched to the pupils' needs. In lessons, these pupils are fully involved in discussions through individual and small-group support that they receive, thus enabling them to remain part of their social group and to complete their tasks. At present, there are no pupils identified as more able (gifted and talented). All teachers have an appropriate expectation of the children's behaviour, but some find it hard to concentrate and there is a significant minority with emotional and behavioural difficulties within the classes. They are well supported by the teachers and their carers to ensure that there is minimal disruption to the learning, but sometimes these pupils become tired and distracted towards the end of a long session. The learning assistants generally sit close to those children with special educational needs and ask supplementary questions to ensure that they have clearly understood what is expected of them. They are well briefed before the sessions and carry out their work efficiently and effectively.
- 25 The comments at the parents' meeting and the responses to the parents' questionnaire unanimously stated that the children enjoy coming to school and are eager to share what they have learnt.

- 26 The voluntary attendance by the parents and pupils at the family literacy and numeracy sessions before school is successfully supporting and extending the learning in class and helping enormously in the raising of attainment. As a result, the children willingly take home books to read along with their weekly spelling lists.
- 27 A further strength of the teaching is the way in which all members of staff work together as a team, both in lessons and around the school. Everyone has a commitment towards improving the quality of education provided.

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

- 28 The programme for the youngest children is carefully planned to ensure thorough coverage of all aspects of the Foundation Stage curriculum and to take account of the various ways and different rates at which children learn. One slight weakness, however, is the insufficient use of the outdoor environment to extend and enrich the learning in each area of the curriculum. This is **part of a key issue for action**.
- 29 The curriculum in Years 1 and 2 has improved since the last inspection. It is now broadly based, reasonably balanced and satisfactorily meets the needs of all its pupils. The senior management team has reviewed and improved the frameworks for different subjects and the teachers have produced a curriculum map that forms the basis for their half-termly and weekly planning. The school's literacy and numeracy strategies are well aligned to national guidance. The school has been awarded the Quality Mark from the Basic Skills Agency for their work in the delivery of literacy and numeracy. There are more detailed programmes of work for design and technology, physical education and information and communication technology now in place. The provision for the pupils' personal, social and health education is satisfactory. Discrete programmes of work cover relevant topics, such as sex and drugs education, and the pupils have good opportunities to discuss aspects of healthy living and relationships.
- 30 The good range of educational visits and visitors to the school further enhance the school's curriculum. For instance, the pupils visit St John's church, Shugborough Hall and explore the local woodland. The mathematics, English and computer clubs offer good opportunities for the children to reinforce their previous learning. The pupils talk enthusiastically about these experiences and about visitors such as theatre groups, storytellers, artists and musicians. The school has a good liaison with the local library and volunteers also support the reading programme. There are good links with other schools including the junior school to which the majority of the pupils transfer at the age of seven.
- 31 The curriculum for the pupils with special educational needs is well prepared and based appropriately on the targets in their individual education plans. The special needs co-ordinator has a secure grasp of her role. She has made good use of her administration time to implement the guidance contained within the new Code of Practice. There are regular reviews of the progress made by the pupils with special educational needs and the resultant programmes for their education are appropriate and well defined. The various members of the support staff know the pupils very well and take care to ensure that they are properly integrated and included within all the activities that the curriculum offers. The needs of pupils with either physical or sensory difficulties are carefully considered and any necessary modifications made in order that they can have equal access to the curriculum.
- 32 There is a strong feeling of family and community in the school that is particularly evident in assemblies. On these occasions, the pupils are encouraged to celebrate each other's achievements. The staff work hard to encourage and support their pupils and set a good example through their teamwork and enthusiasm.
- 33 Overall, there is satisfactory provision to foster the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In religious education, they are encouraged to reflect on the deeper issues of life that are often close to their own experiences; for example, they are encouraged to reflect on special places, such as churches. In one assembly, the inspired telling of a story about beans that were damaged during the school holiday and then replaced by new bean plants by a member of staff produced spontaneous applause from the children. There are some opportunities provided during lessons to provide experiences, which engender an element of wonder. There was a glimpse of this in Year 1, for example, when the teacher dressed up and told the children that when she turned around and sat down again she would be Queen

Victoria. The school has a strong commitment to fostering the pupils' personal pride and to raising their self-esteem. This was observed in lessons where all pupils were encouraged to answer questions and everyone's contribution was valued. Various awards, such as Smiley Faces, encourage personal and academic successes that are acknowledged publicly in assemblies.

- 34 The provision for moral development is satisfactory and the pupils know the difference between right and wrong. The adults provide good role models in their firm, but sensitive approach to the pupils. The assembly topics also encourage and reinforce moral values and in a music lesson the pupils were given the opportunity to discuss fairness in relation to the sharing of instruments. The pupils are encouraged to treat each other with consideration and respect and there is a behaviour policy that is detailed and explicit. Each class has sound expectations of the pupils' behaviour with good examples being appropriately celebrated. However, the school policy is not always consistently applied, which is why occasional elements of inappropriate behaviour were observed in one or two lessons.
- 35 There are frequent opportunities for the pupils to develop their social skills during the school day. They are encouraged to explore and discuss ideas in many lessons and are constantly reminded to listen to each other. Collaborative working is planned into many lessons with clear ground rules. Many pupils are encouraged to undertake useful tasks and to help keep areas of the school tidy. Visits linked to history lessons provide broader experiences for the pupils in meeting people outside the school.
- 36 The pupils' cultural development is promoted satisfactorily overall, and is done well in relation to their learning about their local culture. Some topics in history also enlighten the pupils about cultures in the past, such as life in Victorian times. Lessons in art, music and PE provide some opportunities to study the work of artists and respond to the music of other countries. Displays around the school, especially the current attractive exhibition in the corridor library area, allow the pupils to view artefacts and fabrics from Africa. Stories are used to present a picture of life in parts of Africa. There are some opportunities for pupils to explore, experience and learn more about the many different cultures that are present within 21st century Britain.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 37 The school provides very effective care for its pupils. The headteacher places a very high priority on pastoral care and gives very good leadership in this aspect. This is **a key strength** of the school. All members of staff are very approachable, caring, and totally dedicated to the welfare of the children in their charge. The members of the non-teaching staff give very good support for both teachers and pupils. The experienced teaching assistants and nursery nurses are well deployed to support children's learning, particularly those who have additional educational needs. This has a positive effect on the progress these children are making. The adults are alert and vigilant when supervising the pupils during the mid-session breaks. Experienced midday staff undertake lunchtime supervision conscientiously, and the standard of care is very high. This is **a key strength** of the school.
- 38 The procedures for child protection are securely in place and fully understood by all staff. The governing body and the headteacher take their health and safety responsibilities seriously and all the required health and safety inspections, including risk assessment, are systematically carried out and formally recorded. The health and safety key issue regarding the steep grass bank that was detailed in the last inspection has been successfully addressed. All potential health and safety problems are regularly and carefully monitored and appropriate action taken when necessary.
- 39 The school has satisfactory procedures for promoting and monitoring discipline and good behaviour. The behaviour policy, supplemented by a code of conduct, clearly details behaviour expectations and gives guidance to staff for dealing with inappropriate behaviour. However, it is not always consistently implemented by all the staff. Very good use is made of external welfare agencies to support those pupils with specific emotional and behavioural difficulties, and to help and guide some teachers in their handling of challenging behaviour. The class teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils extremely well and have a very good understanding of their individual needs.

- 40 The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are excellent. **This is a key strength of the school.** The registers are completed accurately, reasons for non-attendance are recorded consistently, and absences are rigorously followed up. This has resulted in improved attendance.
- 41 Much time and effort has been devoted to establishing effective systems for assessing and recording the pupils' attainment in the Foundation Stage. In the nursery, the staff make regular on-going assessments of the children's progress across all areas of learning. These assessments are shared with parents and with the teachers on transfer to the reception classes. In the reception class, the pupils are formally assessed in the first five weeks after starting school, and this gives the teachers a good indication of the children's personal and social development, linguistic and mathematical achievements. Other assessments of children's progress in their physical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, and creative development are noted systematically through on-going observations that are recorded at the end of each session. A portfolio of individual children's work is kept from the nursery through to the end of the reception year.
- 42 At Key Stage 1, there are appropriate systems for the monitoring, evaluation, review and support of the children's academic performance and their personal development. Major improvements in the use of assessment procedures have been made since the time of the last inspection. Nevertheless, there is still some way to go in supporting the work in areas such as information computer technology, geography, art and design, and music. The procedures for assessment in English and mathematics show that teachers are beginning to track the pupils' progress conscientiously and are increasingly using the resulting information to guide their planning. However, this work is still in its infancy and in many cases the assessments derive from tasks that involve a considerable number of worksheets that do not always sufficiently match the pupils' needs across all ability levels. Moreover, the marking of work does not always ensure an accurate picture of the level that pupils are capable of achieving. These aspects are part of **a key issue for action.**
- 43 The school makes appropriate use of the information gained from the national test results and other assessment data in order to produce appropriate targets for every pupil. For example, the staff recognised that greater work was needed to raise standards in writing, and this has been successfully targeted as an area for on-going development. Likewise, they have focused this year on developing the children's understanding of mathematical language and tackling problem solving activities in order to raise standards.
- 44 The children with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Careful attention is given to raising their self-esteem and increasing their belief in themselves as successful learners. Thorough and detailed notes about each pupil's strengths and weaknesses are used to set clear and appropriate targets for improvement. They are regularly reviewed with the child and the parent.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 45 The school enjoys the active support of the vast majority of the parents and relationships are good. A good number of parents and governors regularly help in the classrooms, accompany the children on out of school trips and give of their time to help in other ways around the school. Most parents are fully involved in their children's work in school and at home. They support homework and home reading, and consistently enter appropriate comments in the home-school reading books. A very high number of parents were observed joining with their children in mathematics games in the class rooms prior to the start the school day. This is **a key strength** of the school. There is a very active Parent Teacher Association (PTA) that organises fund-raising events, and a considerable amount of money has been raised for the school in this way. The vast majority of parents consistently express an extremely high level of satisfaction with most aspects of the school.
- 46 Communication between the school and home is very good. This is another **key strength** of the school. Most parents agree that they are kept well informed about how their children are getting on. The school sends out regular, informative newsletters and individual letters about specific events and activities. The half-termly parent partnership meetings are well attended and provide the parents with a good deal of useful information, including details of the curriculum. The school publishes a comprehensive, informative prospectus. The governors hold an annual meeting with parents and publish an annual report. The parents are given an informative annual progress report that clearly indicates what the pupils can do, the progress they are making and areas for improvement. They are offered the opportunity to attend

consultation meetings to discuss their children's work and progress with their teachers. The headteacher and her staff are very welcoming and approachable, and make themselves readily available to parents at the start and end of each day. There are also plenty of opportunities for parents to speak informally to their child's class teacher.

- 47 Overall, the partnership with parents is very strong and has a positive influence on pupils' learning and personal development. This is a **key strength** of the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 48 The leadership and management are very good and are **key strengths of the school**. The staff and governors have been successful in building on the strengths recognised in the previous report and addressing the weaknesses with effective plans of action. The overall improvement since the last inspection is good, and the school is now well placed to continue to build on its many strengths.
- 49 The headteacher inspires loyalty within the school community and has been successful in creating a strong sense of teamwork with staff and governors. She has high expectations of staff and pupils and is the driving force within the school. The parents expressed their strong support for her, and all those who responded to the parental questionnaire felt that the school was well led and managed. The headteacher and her deputy work very well together and are effective in providing clear educational direction for their colleagues. The staff know what is expected of them and work hard to fulfil their duties. Their performance is monitored regularly and they appreciate the affirmation of their individual strengths and the pointers they are given for further improvement. The headteacher monitors the teaching effectively and places a high priority on staff development to ensure that all members of staff have the opportunity to keep their skills up to date. In consequence, there has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection, though some aspects still need attention. The governors have an agreed and appropriate policy for Performance Management so that the school can continue to improve through its own self-evaluation. The procedures for self-evaluation are good and encompass a broad range of the school's work.
- 50 The co-ordinators are suitably involved in the evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of their subjects, and play a key role in school improvement. Delegation is effective within the school because all staff know what is expected of them. Key roles, such as the co-ordination of education for pupils with special educational needs, are carried out effectively, and as a consequence these pupils make good progress towards their identified targets. The school has made positive moves to implement the new Code of Practice and the co-ordinator is keen to ensure that the schools' procedures are effective and efficient.
- 51 The governing body works hard and is effective in fulfilling its statutory responsibilities. The governors have an astute understanding of the school's many strengths and its few weaknesses, and are very well informed about the day to day running of the school. Efficient sub-committees consider in detail the business of the school, and recommend action to the governing body as a whole. The governors receive detailed reports from the headteacher, which help to inform their decisions and keep them abreast of causes for concern, for example, attendance. The reports clearly set out the problem, state what has been done to address it, and indicate what might need doing in the future. The governors now have regular reports and presentations by the subject co-ordinators and other staff with leadership roles, and this helps them to monitor the priorities within the school development plan. Individual governors are linked to particular classes and they make regular visits to them to understand more about the teaching and learning, and to report back to the governing body. Collectively, the governors now have a very good strategic view of the school, and an effective overview of the curricular provision. This is another area of improvement since the previous inspection.
- 52 The governing body is properly involved with the school's financial arrangements, and is effective in making use of the available resources. The good financial planning reported at the previous inspection has been maintained, and the school has a suitable amount of money set aside for contingencies. Specific grants are used for their intended purposes, for instance, the recent spending on information and communication technology. The school development plan is realistic in its approach to costing the identified improvements, so that the spending decisions are related to well-defined priorities, for instance the current target to improve reading and the prospective development of mathematics. It is also finely balanced with a suitable range of non-curricular targets, such as improving the access arrangements to the playground to ensure cohesive development across a broad range of the school's work.
- 53 A reasonable start has been made in introducing the principles of best value. Checks are made to compare the cost of various purchases with the quality of the product, and the governors consider carefully the potential effect on standards before authorising major expenditure. They also take account of the views of others when identifying their spending priorities. For example, the re-surfacing of some of the footpath

areas has come about through parental request. The day-to-day administration is efficient, and there are robust systems to ensure financial probity. The school has had a recent audit of its accountancy procedures, which identified only one area for improvement, which has since been rectified. The school continues to give good value for money.

- 54 The school's use of technology is sound, and the staff are beginning to appreciate its potential in assisting them with their work. The teachers, except those in the Nursery, have completed the recommended training in information and communication technology using the New Opportunities' Fund. The school recognises that there are more avenues to explore in its use of new technology, is well placed to do this and has recently set up its own website.
- 55 The school has a wide range of resources for each subject, they are kept in good condition, and the pupils have easy access to them. The school is staffed by a suitable range of appropriately qualified teachers, classroom assistants, administrative and other staff, who work together very well as a team. The governors have made it a priority to employ sufficient teaching assistants to support the teachers in their work, and this policy has proved effective. The teaching assistants are valued members of the teaching team, and are invited to take part in school training to keep their skills up to date. The induction procedures for teachers new to the school are good and are set out well in the school handbook, which also describes clearly a range of other procedures.
- 56 The accommodation has seen significant improvements since the previous inspection and is well managed overall. The nursery has been introduced and four of the classes have been completely re-furnished. However, there is no access for wheelchair users in some parts of the school site, and there are limited toilet facilities for disabled people. The floor covering in one of the toilet areas is shiny and presents a potential hazard when wet. The school has been vigilant in rectifying some minor hazards that were identified at the last inspection, and has been awarded "Safer School" status on the basis of its good practice. The grounds are well cared for and there is a reasonable amount of space for the pupils to play together during recreation periods and to exercise during physical education lessons. The recent introduction of the Golden Jubilee Garden is beneficial, and offers the pupils an area of shade should they wish to spend their playtimes more quietly. The temporary classrooms become quite stuffy during hot weather and parents rightly pointed out that they are rather small for the number of pupils they contain.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 57 The one key issue arising from the inspection relates to the teaching, but it has a number of inter-related aspects that require attention. The governing body, headteacher and staff should now continue to build on the procedures already established to improve the quality of the teaching and learning by:
- Ensuring that the pupils' work is more closely matched to their prior attainment
 - Improving the marking of children's work in order to obtain a more accurate picture of the level that pupils are capable of achieving
 - Increasing opportunities for independent work across the curriculum and a reduction in the number of worksheets given to pupils
 - Teaching the pupils to edit, save, and retrieve their work in ICT
 - Providing more opportunities in the Foundation Stage for children's learning to be extended into the outdoor environment.

Paragraphs 8, 9, 19, 23, 28, 42, 60, 76, 83, 84, 88, 93, 97, 100, 1115, 118, 123

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	40
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	27

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	5	9	24	0	0	0
Percentage	5%	13%	23%	59%	0%	0%	0%

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	32	157
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	28

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	8	62

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.7
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	26	35	61

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	21	24	21
	Girls	30	34	31
	Total	51	58	52
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	84 (79)	95 (91)	85 (89)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	21	20	22
	Girls	32	29	32
	Total	53	49	54
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	87 (87)	80 (89)	89 (87)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	188
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y2

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.1
Average class size	22.4

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	127

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	32
Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	61
Number of pupils per FTE adult	11:1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

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

Financial information

Financial year	2001 –2002
	£
Total income	469,810
Total expenditure	474,741
Expenditure per pupil	1939
Balance brought forward from previous year	29844
Balance carried forward to next year	24,953

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

248

Number of questionnaires returned

54

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	59	41	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	52	44	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	54	6	2	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	41	43	7	2	7
The teaching is good.	69	30	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	50	41	7	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	22	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	37	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	56	39	6	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	67	33	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	59	35	2	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	43	6	2	22

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

- 58 Since the last inspection, the school has enhanced the quality of education it provides by including as part of the school the nursery that shared its site.
- 59 Taken overall, the provision for children aged three to five is good. The teaching ranges from good to excellent. Most children have had experiences of pre-school education before they start part-time at the nursery. Consequently, despite the good start to their learning in this well-run class, the children's overall attainment is consistently below average when they enter their reception year. In some instances, the year groups have had very low attainment when the children start compulsory schooling. The children begin full-time attendance the term in which they become five, and settle quickly into the routines of the school. They make good progress because the quality of the education they receive is consistently good, and the teaching of the early skills of literacy and mathematics is very good and sometimes excellent. Because of this high quality teaching the majority of the present reception year are likely to reach the Early Learning Goals in these aspects of the Foundation Stage curriculum by the end of this school year. Furthermore, a few of the higher-attaining children are already working towards Level 1 of the National Curriculum in English and mathematics.
- 60 All members of staff are strongly committed to improving the curriculum for these young children and work very well together. They have made a very positive start to their review of the Foundation Stage guidelines, despite the unfortunate long-term absence of a key member of staff. Progress is being made in the production of a combined foundation curriculum and in improvements to the assessment procedures across the nursery and the reception classes, but there is still a great deal of work to be done. At present, the very limited use of the outdoor environment is mainly centred on activities for the children's physical development. This is part of a **key issue for action**. The children with special educational needs are identified quickly and given support to help them meet their targets. Parents, grandparents and other visitors are welcomed and given opportunities to become involved with school, and this helps to promote and support the children's learning.

Personal, social and emotional development

- 61 The children enjoy school and arrive each day confident, happy and eager to learn. All members of staff have a very caring, sensitive approach to the children and their parents, and very good relationships are firmly established. As a result, the children make a very good start to their schooling. They are establishing friendships with other children and good relationships with the adults. When they first enter the nursery, the staff always give high priority to training the children to listen to what adults and other children have to say. This is because the listening skills are generally very low. The adults place a strong emphasis on helping the children to learn to share materials, take turns in their use and share items fairly, such as the play-dough and the tools in the sand tray. They are learning to behave in an appropriate way and to show respect for those about them. This is because the adults place a great emphasis on reinforcing socially acceptable behaviour. Any incidences of unacceptable behaviour are dealt with in a quiet, yet firm manner, and the children become very aware of what is right and what is wrong. As a result, they are developing an awareness of, and sensitivity to, the needs and feelings of others. Good examples of this occurred when the children spontaneously clapped a child who had sequenced his numbers correctly, and when after many efforts 'Peter the puppet' correctly said 40 comes after 39 instead of 39-10. The pace and rigour of the activities and the attentiveness of adults to the children's individual needs are notable features of the provision. As a result, the children's self-confidence and self-esteem are being well developed.
- 62 The children are in a calm, secure atmosphere that helps good learning to take place. The adults have a very good understanding of how young children's personal, social and emotional needs must be fostered in order to provide a secure basis for learning. This is **another outstanding feature** of the staff's teamwork. The adults foster the children's independence and encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning in a helpful manner. For example, when the children enter the nursery at the start of the session they self-register, and then 'Plan, do, and review' their own activities. In this way, they are learning to make

informed choices, and to develop things that they enjoy doing and sharing with others. This work is developed in the reception classes where the children are given greater opportunities to record their planning within a balanced programme of directed and self-chosen activities as part of a creative writing lesson. The staff's on-going assessment of each child's needs is good.

Communication, language and literacy

- 63 When the present children first started in the nursery, their spoken English and listening skills were very low. However, as a result of good teaching their performance has improved and by the end of the reception year the vast majority will have either reached or exceeded the Early Learning Goals in their listening skills. The adults place a strong emphasis on listening to stories, but when asked questions the children's response is very limited, both in terms of vocabulary and grammatical structures. To improve this, the staff makes every endeavour to provide good opportunities for spoken English through a range of role-play experiences and in the literacy sessions. This is **a key strength** of the Foundation curriculum. The staff encourages the children to speak slowly and clearly, extend their responses and correct the grammatical structure unobtrusively. This approach ensures that the children experience success and acquire a sense of pride in their ability to express their thoughts and feelings. However, despite this good teaching the children's spoken English is likely to remain below that expected nationally by the age of five. The children with special educational needs are well supported by the adults to ensure that they can fully participate in these sessions.
- 64 All the children enjoy books and reading. They find reading a source of pleasure, and have a growing understanding of the written word. A significant minority has already begun to read some words and in the nursery, for example, they know their initial letter sounds through rhymes, pictures and songs. The children join in these activities enthusiastically and the initial sound of a word beginning with 'b', for example, comes across very clearly, showing that they have really understood its phonics. All children know that we read from left to right and can point to words and letter sounds. A significant number recognise that a sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop. They understand the meaning of an author and illustrator. The parents make excellent contributions when sitting with their children looking at books before school and by attending the family literacy sessions. This makes a significant contribution to school's promotion of the importance of reading for pleasure.
- 65 In the nursery, the children have good opportunities to understand that written letters have sounds and words that convey meaning. For example, one child spent a considerable amount of time going around the room making notes on his message pad. Another child was busy taking a message down whilst on the telephone, and others with an adult were writing a story on the large whiteboard. These early attempts at writing are encouraged and a few children with adult support are beginning to write random letter shapes and their own names. In the reception classes, a significant number of the children can copy simple words using correctly formed upper and lower case letters. This is because high quality teaching ensures that right from the start the children are taught to hold the pencil correctly and form the letters accurately. The children make good progress because the activities are targeted at their individual needs. The introductions to new activities are clear and precise; the learning points are highlighted to ensure that all children understand the adult's explanation and thereby extend their knowledge.

Mathematical development

- 66 Imaginative, and often inspiring teaching is helping the children to make good progress in mathematics. They learn about number by matching, sorting and counting in a range of contexts. This is **a key strength** of the school. As a result, most children are on course to reach levels described in the Foundation Stage curriculum by the end of the reception year and a significant minority is already working within the early stages of the National Curriculum.
- 67 In the nursery, the children are beginning to count numbers in sequence to ten, but as yet, few can recognise individual numbers of more than five by their shape alone. A few children know the shape of a square, circle, and rectangle and use the mathematical vocabulary when describing everyday items that are packaged into those shapes such as a ball or a rectangular box. Much of the counting is done in song and the children enjoy other mathematical activities when matching shapes, threading beads. During the course of role-play activities, good questioning by the staff makes the children aware of mathematical language in

a natural context. For example, whilst playing at the water tray, the children decided if the containers had 'more' or 'less' water in them.

- 68 Most children in the reception classes can recognise and perform simple addition sums, for example 3+1, and identify the number between 4-5 or 9-7. A few higher attaining pupils are able to state the numbers that come after 11 and before 17. In a whole class activity and with the support of the teacher, the children are beginning to count in sequence to 100. Their responses in the well-paced, introductory sessions allow them to engage in their learning confidently and with real enjoyment. In one lesson for example, the children were really excited by the excellent delivery by the teacher. This lesson not only extended the children's understanding of mathematics by the use of puppets and the introduction of simple terms, such as 'a thinking guess', but also gave them the correct mathematical term 'estimate'. This enabled the children to give their answers quite freely. They were continually praised for their efforts even if it was the wrong answer so no child had any sense of failure. The children's behaviour was good in all the mathematics lessons that were observed. The school's increased focus on mathematical investigations has led to an appropriate range in activities in both the nursery and reception classes. For example, the children have collected information about pets and fruit and have translated this information into graphs and diagrams.
- 69 The good breadth of activities enables the children, including those with special educational needs, to make good and often very good progress in their understanding of number and other mathematical concepts. This is because the activities are specifically matched to the children's individual needs. It is a **key strength** of the teaching across the whole of the Foundation Stage. When their work is finished, both boys and girls tidy away well before going on to the next task. The good support of the adults ensures that there are no significant gender differences in the children's responses.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

- 70 The staff makes good provision to develop the children's knowledge and understanding of the world, and as a result they make good progress. In the nursery, the foundations of scientific enquiry, discovery and exploration are being laid through the suitable use of sand and water play, as well as walks around the school grounds. Construction toys are also used to a satisfactory standard to support the learning. During the course of a music session, the children were exploring the rhythmic pattern in words of one, two and three syllables. This was also linked to the initial sound of the week that the children were learning about in their literacy activities. The adult leading the session was also rehearsing the children's scientific knowledge by asking them to identify what was on the back of a card showing the letter 'b'. She described the life cycle from the egg to a caterpillar, the sprouting of two wings with beautiful bright colours, and the creature's ability to fly. The immediate response from most children was, 'It's a butterfly'. In computer technology, the adults are effectively developing the children's early keyboard skills and their control of the 'mouse'. In the reception classes, the teachers extend this work further. The children assist each other when using the computer programs to support their learning. They follow the instructions on the screen, and have begun to see how the computer can help them. A good emphasis is placed on the teaching of skills in order to allow the children full access to the function of a computer.
- 71 In other areas, the adults use questioning very sensitively to promote enquiry and discovery. As a result, the children can label the parts of a fish, but more importantly they talk enthusiastically about caring for fish if you have them in a tank at home. The children further extend their learning and acquire a greater understanding of the world around them by going out to study the local environment and by visiting places of interest, such as Ludlow Castle. After this visit, the children recorded statements such as 'The dungeon was dark and gloomy', 'The castle is made of stone', and 'I looked into the deep well.' They made sketches of the different features of the castle to help them to remember what they had seen.

Physical development

- 72 In both the nursery and the reception classes, the children's physical skills are being developed appropriately, and most of them, including those with special educational needs, are likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the reception year. The staff and children work well together to promote effective development of fine movement and mobility skills. They are using a suitable range of apparatus and equipment in the indoor environment. Tools and materials are handled safely and with good control. For instance, from an early age, the teaching focuses on the basic skills and ensures that children are taught to use scissors and hold a pencil correctly. Most pupils enjoy the challenge of cutting out and

persevere until they have successfully completed a task. They have a good sense of achievement and this raises their self-esteem because they take great pride in their efforts. This is particularly noticeable, for example, when they are forming their letters accurately in shape and size or when they use the 'mouse' on the computer programmes.

- 73 The development of the nursery's secure outdoor play area is on-going, and the parents and the staff are making considerable improvements to its aesthetic appearance. The staff use the outdoor space appropriately to enhance the children's large movement skills, but they need additional outdoor equipment in order to provide the full range of physical activities in the foundation curriculum. This is part of **a key issue for action**. At present, for example, there is no large fixed climbing apparatus for the younger children to use, but they are confident and competent when peddling wheeled toys. They are aware of the safety issues involved, but need more creative role-play situations when using the bicycles. This would both enhance their spoken English and extend their co-operative learning. The older children are competent and confident when climbing onto the apparatus in the main school playground. They take turns and co-operate well with each other.

Creative development

- 74 The children are making good progress in creative activities such as, art design technology and music. Through good teaching the basic skills are becoming firmly embedded from a very early age. **This is a key strength of the provision**. The success of the teaching lies in the way that the adults make tasks more progressively difficult, for instance, by encouraging the children to control a paint brush and mix their own paints to discover the tints and shades you can get within a primary colour. The older children mix their primary colours and experiment with more than one or two colours confidently and competently. The children have a wide range of art experiences that covers both two- and three- dimensional work, such as the use of clay, dough and collage. The adults ensure that the children work individually and intervene only where there is a need to develop the skill process. Some inspiring teaching was seen when the children were guided in their designing and making of a range of hats. The teacher's use of various hats and her open ended questioning skills stimulated the children's enthusiasm. No child felt unable to complete the task and tackled it with a quiet rigour; all showed a real sense of pride in their efforts as the work progressed.
- 75 The children enjoy their group musical experiences. They sing happily, remember words well and can keep a steady body pulse when performing action songs. They are learning to distinguish between fast and slow sounds. However, more opportunities for them to explore sound individually, to play the musical instruments, and to listen quietly to music during the course of their other activities would raise their learning to higher levels.
- 76 The teachers' use of structured play as a medium for learning is good overall, but could be extended to make fuller use of the outdoor learning environment. This is part of **a key issue for action**. The planning is really successful when it includes opportunities for the children to improve their skills of spoken English, reading and writing, and their knowledge and understanding of the world we live. For example, the children in the nursery use the telephone to book appointments to have their hair done, and put the hair rollers into your hair in front of a mirror in the manner of the hairdressers in Ludlow. In one reception class, the children currently have a 'doctors surgery' and after considerable negotiation they organise themselves as the receptionist, the doctor and the nurse. They carry out their tasks purposefully and constructively. They use equipment, such as the stethoscope and the thermometer, to make a diagnosis before they write out the prescription. They also use the eye charts and the medical records that they have made. This play links very closely to the development of their reading skills, and in most cases, the children can read the words such as, stethoscope, thermometer quite confidently. The staff participate sensitively, but unobtrusively, in the children's role-play, in order to extend their learning and keep them purposefully engaged.
- 77 To avoid further repetition it is important to state here that the school community is now more diverse than it was five years ago, and the children enter the school with lower levels of competence in English and mathematics than they did at the time of the previous inspection. The school's assessment records show that almost a third of the children in the current Year 2 started school with very low levels of attainment, and very few started with higher level skills. There are more pupils than usual within this cohort who have

special education needs. The spread of ability in the classes is very wide. It covers the levels expected of pupils from five to eight years of age, and presents challenges to the teachers, particularly in whole class sessions. Despite this wide range within the year group, the governors set ambitious targets for this year's cohort of Year 2 pupils. For example, their target of 79 percent at level 2 or above in reading, writing and mathematics is likely to be exceeded by about four percent, and their target of 21 percent at level 3 in reading, 23 percent in writing and 29 percent is on course to be met.

ENGLISH

- 78 At the end of Year 2, standards in reading and writing are currently slightly below the national average, but compare favourably with the results achieved by similar schools. Standards are in line with those reported at the last inspection. Although the children have made consistent and satisfactory progress during their time at school, they have not yet reached the expected level for their age. The average point scores this year show a slight improvement on last year's results, helped by the number of pupils who scored Level 3 in the recent tests. The reasons for this are similar to those found in mathematics and reported in the mathematics paragraph.
- 79 By the end of their time in the reception class, most children have skills in spoken English that are below those expected nationally. Their listening skills however, are good. They attend carefully to their teachers and respond appropriately to their questions. This good work in the Foundation Stage develops the children's abilities to speak clearly to each other, to small groups and to the whole class. They are encouraged to think, reason, explain and describe. For instance, in one lesson the reception pupils shared ideas about how to measure if one hand is stronger than the other, and began to construct their own theories about how to test this. The teaching in Years 1 and 2 builds on this good start because the teachers emphasise the importance of listening carefully and they give the children time to prepare answers to question and explain themselves. For example, in a science lesson the pupils had to design a key with which to sort animals by features, such as skin type and the number of legs. They then played twenty questions. This was successful because the activity not only reinforced their understanding of animal features, but also encouraged them to listen carefully and speak accurately. Other useful teaching methods to develop the children's speaking and listening skills include "Circle Time", role-play and "hot seating" in lessons. This was clearly evident, for instance, when the Year 1 pupils played at being in a surgery and talk about medicine and prescriptions in preparation for writing and in a history lesson when the teacher dressed as Queen Victoria and answered questions in this role.
- 80 Although the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in reading is below average, reading is well taught in literacy lessons and is also given an appropriately high profile at many other times of the day. The vast majority of the children are enthusiastic about books and love to read as a whole class in guided reading sessions, following the lead of the higher attaining readers. These more fluent readers read with expression and emphasis, and talk intelligently about the pictures and the characters in their books. For example, when a Year 2 class read the story 'Suddenly', the brighter pupils predicted accurately what would happen to the pig. In another class, discussions about the characters of the ugly sisters in "Cinderella" provided useful preparation for the pupils to write their own dialogue.
- 81 The parents are encouraged to come into school with their children and to help to select books and read with them. Books are sent home each day, and the school offers advice on how parents can read with and support their children at home. Literacy mornings offer the parents an opportunity to come in to the classrooms and work alongside the teachers with their own child in order to see how spelling, reading and writing are taught. It is clear that this is having a good effect on the children's progress and attitude to work because throughout the inspection the children made frequent reference to their work at home. **This is a key strength of the school.** The school has a range of books that is good in quality and quantity with displays in the classrooms, corridors and around the school. The library is well stocked and the books are helpfully catalogued and arranged by subject to support research work in the other subjects of the National Curriculum.
- 82 The teachers are making effective use of the guidance provided within the national strategy for the teaching of literacy. The many lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are provided with additional support that places appropriate emphasis upon learning the sounds of letters, helps them to recognise key common words in print and enables them to tackle unfamiliar words for

themselves. They are also taught to use dictionaries and reference books to assist them with their work in the other subjects of the National Curriculum.

- 83 Handwriting is taught thoroughly and by the end of Year 2 a few children have a mature and stylish joined script. They generally take pride in their work and most try hard to present it neatly. The best writing is seen when children are given the opportunity to write independently, for example, when writing stories, news, descriptions of visits and walks, information booklets linked to history or science, explanations about how to play a game or how make a puppet. Here the children use the skills taught in literacy lessons to good effect. Too often, however, worksheets that require the pupils simply to “fill in the gaps” in sentences predominate in lessons and limit the scope and content of the children’s writing. Consequently, although the pupils are taught the strategies for spelling and the teachers encourage them to use language adventurously in their speech, the children do not have sufficient opportunities to practice writing independently. This is part of **a key issue for action**.
- 84 Taken overall, the teaching of English is satisfactory with some good features. The teachers plan their work carefully and the lessons are thoroughly prepared in order that the objectives for learning are clear to the pupils. Effective questioning that encourages discussion and debate is improving the children’s speaking and listening, and the teaching of reading is secure. However, the quality of the teachers’ marking is inconsistent. In classes where there is effective feedback on the work and comments about how the writing can be improved, standards are higher. In other classes, the work is occasionally accepted that is of a lower standard than that which the child has previously produced, and this does not encourage good progress. This is part of **a key issue for action**.
- 85 The subject is generally soundly managed. The co-ordinator has taken a strong lead in developing the initiatives to support reading in the school and the involvement of the parents is a strong feature.
- 86 However, the teachers’ assessment of writing is not consistently accurate and the inspection findings show that there has been some over estimation of standards in writing in Years 1 and 2 that needs to be redressed.

MATHEMATICS

- 87 Standards are slightly below the expected levels, and are lower than those reported at the previous inspection when they exceeded the nationally expected levels. Despite the children’s low attainment on entry, the teaching in the reception class enables the pupils to make good progress and when they enter Year 1, their attainment has generally been just below expected levels.
- 88 Over the past four years, the results of the national tests have been below average, but the school’s concentrated efforts on this subject are now starting to raise standards. The average point scores this year show a slight improvement on last year’s scores, helped by the number of pupils who scored Level 3 in the recent tests. However, some of these abler pupils are not yet confident in many of the elements of this higher level, and their progress in many instances has not been as good as that of their classmates. This is also the case in English. A review of these pupils’ work showed that some of them had made reasonable progress over the course of the year, but the most able pupils amongst them under-performed. This is because they have not had enough work that challenged their numerical abilities and required them to apply their skills in a range of contexts. Discussions with these pupils revealed that they were capable of working with larger numbers and more complex challenges than the ones that they were being given. Over the course of the year, the work has not built systematically and rigorously on the pupils’ prior attainment, and this aspect of the subject is part of **a key issue for action**.
- 89 The pupils of average ability make sound progress over their time in the school. By Year 2, they can identify odd and even numbers, and find the missing number or missing sign in simple equations with a total of less than twenty. They approach simple number problems reasonably systematically, but some still lack the confidence to make a start without either adult help or the use of counting apparatus. Most of them have quick recall of number bonds to ten, but are not so good when working with larger numbers. The lesser able pupils make sound progress, and those with specific learning difficulties have made good progress, particularly in their understanding of the number system. The less able pupils often have the benefit of extra adult help as part of the school’s strongly inclusive culture. This is very effective in giving

them the confidence to try things out for themselves and to see the patterns and relationships between numbers. The teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the pupils' learning and their sensitive encouragement supports these pupils very well. The education of the pupils with special educational needs is **one of the school's key strengths**.

- 90 The headteacher and co-ordinator recognise the need to keep the subject under close scrutiny and have identified it as a priority within the most recent school development plan. This plan identifies accurately the need to improve the pupils' competence in the subject and to increase their confidence in using mathematical language and tackling problems. The plan sets out a range of suitable strategies to keep the profile of the subject high on the school's agenda, such as further staff training, expert consultancy and parental involvement. Although all the teaching in the subject was satisfactory, this is an appropriate course of action because it has the potential to be better.
- 91 The teachers are systematic and confident in their use of the guidance in the National Numeracy Strategy and choose materials and equipment well to match the task in hand. The learning targets for the lessons are usually explained well to the pupils so that they understand what they are doing. In one instance, the objectives were reviewed in the whole-class session at the end of the lesson to remind the pupils of what they had learned. This was very successful in rounding the lesson off effectively. Individual targets have been written, and in most instances are pertinent to the pupils, but those for the higher attaining pupils are in need of review.
- 92 Most lessons start well and the pupils are encouraged to explore a range of different ways of calculating simple sums and required to explain their methods. This is effective in helping all the pupils to learn different number strategies and in dealing with misunderstandings. The teachers demonstrate different methods well, but do not always ensure that their examples cover the wide spread of ability within their class, nor engage enough of the pupils in the question and answer sessions. As a result, some of the pupils become rather restless and on occasions resort to mischievous behaviour.
- 93 When the pupils move to their groups, they do so with little fuss and readily share the available equipment. During these group sessions, the pupils usually have to complete one or two worksheets to practise what has been taught. In some instances this works well, and is a useful consolidation of the learning. However, a review of pupils' work over the course of the year shows that they have had far too many worksheets to complete, and in some instances the same worksheets have been given to the pupils regardless of their widely differing abilities. In some cases the worksheets are not of good quality and do not help the pupils to organise, set out and present their work for themselves. The overuse of worksheets is having a detrimental effect on the pupils' progress and is part of **a key issue for action**.
- 94 Towards the end of the lessons, the teachers check the progress that their pupils have made. In some instances, they give them useful advice on what has worked well, which of their answers are correct and what they need to reconsider. This is very effective and helps the children to understand that checking their own answers is an important strategy in mathematics. On some occasions, however, the teachers give only general remarks, and a review of their marking shows that this has been the case over the year. In a few books, the marking has been rather careless and the pupils have not had enough constructive feedback to help them move forward rapidly. Improving the quality of marking and oral feedback to the pupils is part of **a key issue for action**.
- 95 Most parents are content with the way that the subject is taught, and they are encouraged to come into the school to see what their children are expected to learn. An excellent part of the provision is the regular opportunity that parents have to come in to the school to take part in mathematical games. This not only helps the pupils to see that mathematics can be fun, but also contributes to the strong parental partnership that has been developed. It is **one of the school's key strengths**.

SCIENCE

- 96 Standards are slightly below the nationally expected levels, and are lower than those reported at the previous inspection when they exceeded the expected levels. When comparing the results with those of similar schools, the proportion of pupils attaining at the expected level is about average. In the current Year 2 cohort, seventy-eight percent of the children have achieved a level 2 and a significant minority of children

are attaining well within level 3. This reflects well on the teaching and the progress made by the children, especially when taking into account the high number of pupils with special needs in the group. Nevertheless, the standards still remain slightly below the expected level when compared to the national average. There are no major differences between the achievements of boys and girls. Although standards fluctuate from year to year, they are rising at the higher level because the quality of the teaching has improved. There is a shared commitment to raising standards amongst all staff.

- 97 Taken overall, the quality of the teaching is satisfactory with some good features. The pupils' make sound progress in their lessons and over the course of time. They acquire an appropriate body of knowledge that covers the key areas of life processes and living things, materials and their properties and physical processes. They are able to sort foods into different categories. They use charts, tables and information computer technology well to record their findings. All pupils make sound progress in these areas because the teachers have clear learning objectives for each lesson. The introduction to these objectives at the beginning of each lesson has a sharp pace and a quiet rigour. The teachers' skilful questioning stimulates the pupils' interest and thirst for knowledge. Their spoken English is enhanced by the teachers' careful emphasis on subject specific vocabulary and the pupils listen and respond well to instruction. A major emphasis on investigation has promoted the pupils' enquiry and discovery skills very well. However, as the lessons progress, the pace often diminishes because the recording of the work is generally limited to the completion of a worksheet. A review of the pupil's work shows that very occasionally the pupils are given good opportunities to write independently their findings as a 'scientific report'. In these few isolated instances, their written work is of a much higher standard. It demonstrates clearly that they are capable of writing at least a page and shows far more their understanding of what they have learnt through the process of prediction and testing. More frequent opportunities like this will help the pupils to record independently their findings, develop their writing skills and thereby raise their ability levels. Furthermore, if constructive comments were to be added to the completed work by the teachers, it would help the pupils to become more self-evaluative and aware of how well they are doing. These aspects are part of **a key issue for action**.
- 99 The pupils have good attitudes in science lessons. They are keen, enthusiastic and work well in collaborative projects, for instance, when classifying animals. They have a sense of pride in their efforts and the presentation of their work on display is good. Generally, they behave well in science lessons because they are interested and enjoy the subject. The teaching assistants provide effective support and enhance the pupils' learning and achievements, especially those with special educational needs in the science lessons. This helps the lessons to proceed with minimal disruption and is **a key strength** of the school's work.
- 100 The leadership of the subject is sound. The co-ordinators' monitor the teachers' planning and provision for the subject and have a general overview of the achievements through the school. There are sound procedures for assessing the overall achievements of the pupils. Since the last inspection, considerable improvement has been made in tracking the progress of individual pupils, but the co-ordinators' recognise that this is an area for further development across the whole school. This is part of **a key issue for action**.

ART AND DESIGN AND DESIGN TECHNOLOGY

- 101 The school recognises the relevance of creative processes to the personal development of its pupils. Consequently, it sets great value on what its pupils can learn by reflecting on the work of well known artists and designers as they develop the confidence, skills and techniques to produce their own work. It was not possible to see many lessons being taught during the inspection. However, the pupils' lively and enthusiastic approach in discussions with the inspectors and the good examples of their work on display around the school indicate that standards at the age of seven are securely in line with the expected levels. They are similar to those found at the time of the last inspection.
- 102 There is a two-year programme for art and design that incorporates the work of a range of artists such as da Vinci, Monet, Van Gogh and Picasso. The pupils know a little about the work of these artists, and the teachers use this as a stimulus to develop the children's work. The teachers are also developing a valuable multicultural dimension by drawing upon the work of African artists and a project on Kenya. Artists from other cultures are also invited into school demonstrate their techniques and styles. As a result, the children produce lively paintings of animals, prints in bold colours, displays of fabrics and models. Good

use is made of contacts within the community. For instance, a local potter works with the children to produce their own clay work and colourful tiles. Art enables pupils of all ages and abilities to express themselves creatively, and plays an important role in raising self-esteem, increasing confidence and enhancing cultural awareness.

- 103 By the end of Year 2, the pupils produce sensitive and delicate pencil and charcoal sketches of natural objects, seascapes and portraits. These are then further developed through the use a range of techniques and different media, such as watercolour, acrylics, mixed pastel and paint, collage and tile printing. Throughout the school, there is a developing tradition for the use of computers in art and the pupils are increasingly competent in making effective use of the program "Paint." For instance, some pupils have drawn an impression of Ludlow Castle, and others have produced a repeating pattern of portraits in the style of Andy Warhol. Effective use is made of digital photography as a stimulus for work, for instance, to provide images of trees in blossom that the pupils subsequently used as a basis for their own paintings.
- 104 There are some effective links between the pupils' work in art and the other subjects of the National Curriculum. For example, in Year 1 the pupils' detailed paintings and pastel portraits of Queen Victoria show that they have looked carefully at contemporary images and made good use of them in producing their own versions.
- 105 A knowledgeable and experienced co-ordinator ensures that the art curriculum progressively develops the pupils' skills, knowledge and creative expression. The scheme of work ensures that all the pupils learn a wide range of skills including sketching, printing and three-dimensional work. As a result, the pupils use a variety of materials and techniques to respond to the natural and man-made environment and the work of other artists. They are encouraged to express themselves in art and to evaluate their own efforts. They are able to do this because the school allocated sufficient time to ensure that the work can be adequately researched, designed and completed.
- 106 The same co-ordinator has identified a clear curriculum programme in design and technology for Years 1 and 2. The two-year programme ensures coverage of a wide range of skills and techniques, which are appropriate and well planned. Throughout the school, from the Foundation Stage to Year 2, the pupils recognise the importance of thorough planning, careful construction and critical evaluation of their work. They strive to improve their products and respond with great enthusiasm to fresh ideas. For example, in the reception class the pupils discuss why sun hats are necessary, and they describe and classify their hats according to different design features. In Year 1, the children design a variety of fruit salads and evaluate the best against a set of agreed criteria, such as appearance, texture and taste. The carefully planned curriculum ensures a wide range of experiences that not only excite the children, but also develop the necessary skills for designing, making and developing their work.

HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

- 107 It was not possible to see many lessons taught in these subjects, but a review of the pupils' work and discussions with them indicate that standards are within the expected levels. The school has maintained the standards that were reported at the time of the previous inspection. The pupils in Year 2 have a growing awareness of how to find out about the past through using a range of sources such as photographs and artefacts. They are able to put objects, such as bicycles, in chronological order and justify their reasons for doing so. Their work on transport shows that they have an appropriate understanding of how life has changed since the advent of the steam engine, and they express their views competently about the effect that this invention has had on life today. The pupils express their views well about living in a town, and the benefits and drawbacks that they perceive that living in Ludlow has in comparison with a large city such as Manchester. They have made their own maps and have a rudimentary understanding of conventional maps and atlases.
- 108 The pupils make sound progress in their understanding of both subjects because the curriculum is broad and well balanced, the topics are revised appropriately and the teaching is satisfactory. The planning is based on the nationally recommended guidance and the teachers are skilled in bringing the subjects to life for their pupils. For example, the use of a soft toy in geography helped the pupils to understand more about different places, as "Speedy" the tortoise travelled to different parts of the world. The use of stories

also helps the pupils to understand, for instance, what life might be like on a Scottish island and how it might have been different in the past.

- 109 In both year groups, a strong feature of the teaching in history is the use of role-play. This good teaching has helped the pupils in Year 2, for example, to understand what it might feel like to be evacuated, and how frightening it might have been to sit in an Anderson Shelter during an air raid. Similarly, in Year 1, the pupils posed historical questions to their teacher, who had adopted the role of Queen Victoria. The use of role-play not only helps the pupils' skills of historical enquiry and understanding of events in the past, but also makes a strong contribution to their speaking and listening skills. A weaker element of the teaching, particularly in geography, is that it is not always adequately matched to the abilities of the pupils. This is part of **a key issue for action**. The work on Holland, for example, was much the same for the most able pupils as it was for the pupils of below average ability. There was little indication on the work to indicate what the pupils had mastered as a consequence of completing it, and in some instances it resulted in the pupils having a somewhat stereotypical view of Dutch people.
- 110 A good feature of the curriculum for both subjects is the fitting contribution that they make to the pupils' cultural development. In studying the art and music of Kenya and international celebrations such as fairs and carnivals, the pupils are starting to appreciate the richness and diversity of the world in which they live, and the cultures and traditions of the past. In both subjects, the school provides the pupils with the opportunity to explore not only their immediate locality, but also places further afield. Visits help them to make good progress in the practical applications of the subjects. The pupils enjoy their learning and the use of good quality artefacts and reference material helps them to understand more about people and places in the past and present times.
- 111 The school is successfully meeting the aims of a new history policy that has recently been agreed by the governing body. The policy clearly identifies the links that should be made between the curriculum for Foundation Stage and the work in Key Stage 1. In consequence, the children's transition to the programmes of study within the National Curriculum is more coherent. The school has made a start on assessing the pupils' historical development, but needs to ensure that a suitable system is also in place to record their progress in geography.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

- 112 Standards are below the expected levels in Year 2 and are lower than to those reported at the time of the previous inspection. This is mainly because of the greater percentage of pupils who have identified special educational needs. However, standards are also lower than they should be because the school does not afford the pupils the opportunity to save, retrieve and amend their work. This is part of **a key issue for action**. In contrast, standards in Year 1 are well up to, and in some cases higher than, the national expectation. This difference in attainment is accounted for by differences in the intellectual calibre of the two year-groups and recent improvements to the resources. The resources have improved considerably since the previous inspection, and significantly within the present academic year. For example, the class computers now run the same software as the computers in the suite, which enables the children to practise their skills independently following the lessons that they have had in the suite. The Year 1 pupils have had the benefit of these better resources for all of the time that they have been taught the subject and have therefore been able to make better progress.
- 113 The pupils in both year groups are confident in opening a program on the computer, and have age-appropriate skills when controlling the mouse and clicking on various icons. They can drop and drag icons round the screen and employ the available software to create their own pictures, using the spray and fill tools. Although the pupils have suitable skills in opening a program and controlling devices, their word-processing skills are slow. Many do not know how to edit their work, even in simple ways, and they are not taught to save their work. Consequently, they have very limited ability to retrieve, amend and improve their own work. The pupils gather information from various sources, such as CD-ROMs and the Internet, but are not yet proficient in storing information in a variety of forms.
- 114 The teaching is satisfactory and helps the pupils to make steady progress in most aspects of the subject. The teachers are more confident in their own use of information and communication technology since attending the recommended training, and this confidence is beginning to show through in their lessons.

Although the interactive whiteboard is not yet in use, the teachers use a central computer and standard monitor to demonstrate the skills that they wish their pupils to learn. This is reasonably effective, particularly when the teachers take control of the program in the suite of computers so that the pupils can see what is being taught by looking at their own monitor. It is less effective when the whole class watches one small screen. In these instances, some of the pupils either become mischievous or start to daydream. On the whole, however, the pupils concentrate well, apply themselves to the tasks and are obedient. They clearly enjoy the opportunity to control devices to make things happen on the screen, such as bursting balloons or picking apples. They have very positive attitudes to the subject and this is **one of the school's key strengths**.

- 115 The teachers' choice of software is good and helps the pupils to reinforce basic skills, such as counting and calculation. The teaching assistants are very well deployed in lessons, and those who support pupils with special educational needs are highly effective in their work, particularly in helping the pupils to navigate their way through the programs. Some of the teachers are very vigilant to ensure that the pupils have opened the program at the right level, but there were instances when the options given to the pupils were too demanding for their ability. As a result, the pupils did not learn as much as they could and became somewhat dejected. The weakest element of the teaching was that the lessons were not rounded off well enough in order to review the pupils' learning, suggest how they might tackle things differently next time and give the teachers an opportunity to assess their progress. The school does not have an adequate system for assessing and recording pupils' skills in the subject, and because the pupils do not have their own files or disks it is difficult to track their progress. The co-ordinator is aware of this weakness, which is part of a **key issue for action**.
- 116 The subject is linked well with others across the curriculum and this helps to consolidate the pupils' skills, particularly in English and mathematics. The range of software is broad and enables the pupils to practise basic skills, such as spelling and counting. The digital camera is used well and this too helps the pupils to enjoy their work and to record visits, such as an outing to the local woodland. The tape recorders are used well to help the pupils understand how to control devices, and are put to good use to extend their learning in music, for example in creating a "Sound Safari" round the school. The school's computer club is a useful extension to the work done within school hours, and it is very popular with the children.

MUSIC

- 117 Standards are within the expected level and are similar to those reported at the time of the previous inspection. The main elements of the music curriculum are singing as a regular collective activity, listening to music, including that of other cultures, and some sound exploration. **A key strength** is the children's positive attitude towards music, including those with special educational needs. The pupils are enthusiastic, behave well and clearly enjoy their musical experiences.
- 118 Where the pupils are making satisfactory progress in singing, they are able to maintain the pulse, discriminate and utilise variations in sound patterning well and are broadly in-tune. Their achievement is most evident when their skills, knowledge and understanding are suitably challenged by the teacher. This was the case in a Year 2 class where the teacher was able to improve the pupils listening skills by getting them to identify some similarities within four different pieces of music. A significant minority of higher attaining pupils were beginning to understand and recognise the differences between sounds that are either vocalised, played on solo instruments or electronically produced. Most of the pupils were beginning to be aware that these sounds appeal to different audiences. Most pupils respond well by using body action to demonstrate their understanding of specific rhythmic pattern, particularly when listening to the drums. A positive start has been made on the composition element of the curriculum, but the teachers recognise that the pupils need greater opportunities for more independent group work. **This is part of a key issue**.
- 119 Overall, the teaching of music is just satisfactory and helps the pupils to make steady progress in most aspects of the curriculum. This is because the teachers provide the pupils with plenty of opportunities to listen to music, compose using graphic scores, and to sing songs in lessons and assemblies. The use of a published scheme ensures that the teachers are able to provide a broad music curriculum. Moreover, it is enhancing the teachers' own skills and their ability to present the music curriculum much more confidently

and competently. Music is used well to support other areas of the curriculum, such as geography, and in the cultural development of the pupils. For example, they have experienced a 'live' performance of African drumming techniques and sung with children from other schools. As yet, there are no formal assessment procedures in this subject. The co-ordinator has made a positive contribution in supporting the work in music. However, because of the implementation of other national priorities music has yet to become a major focus for development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 120 Standards are at the expected level and are similar to those reported at the time of the previous inspection. The pupils in Year 2 demonstrate positive attitudes to the subject and clearly enjoy the opportunity to be physically active. In gymnastics, they travel across the floor using various pathways and levels and improve their performance with practice. They show agility in their movements, hold balanced positions for five seconds, and are still when requested. The pupils strive to improve their performance by watching others for short parts of the lessons, and the teachers' choice of those who should demonstrate occasionally includes pupils with special educational needs. This works very well; it gives the pupils self-confidence in their learning and contributes well to their self-esteem. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is one of **the school's key strengths**.
- 121 The pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons because they have regular opportunity to engage in a broad range of physical activities and they are soundly taught. They make better progress in dance lessons when they are taught directly by their teachers rather than simply following a pre-recorded tape. The teachers rightly stop the tape from time to time to demonstrate various actions, and the pupils concentrate well during these sessions. However, when the tape continues the pupils cannot always manage the intended movements, become dispirited with their performance and occasionally mess about.
- 122 The teachers prepare themselves well for their lessons by changing into appropriate clothing, and all of them emphasise to the pupils the benefits of keeping healthy. This helps the pupils to learn the importance of physical fitness and the effect that exercise has on their bodies. In a Year 1 lesson, for example, the teacher took sufficient time within the lesson to question the pupils about the importance of warming up, and the need to stretch muscles and loosen joints before engaging in exercise. This took just a short time without hampering the main lesson objectives, and helped them to understand the importance of suitable preparation. Safety issues are emphasised well, so that the pupils understand how to care for themselves and improve their performance. They understand, for example, the need to ensure that they have sufficient space before jumping and how to cushion their landings.
- 123 The characteristics of the work generally match the objectives of the lesson, with exuberant movements in lesson based on a Senegalese traditional dance, and more measured and controlled movements in a gymnastics lesson. The pupils' behaviour is satisfactory, but in some instances they become too high-spirited and do not listen well enough to instructions. Most teachers handle this well and use the school's behaviour policy to bring the pupils back to the task. In the better lessons, the teachers praise the pupils who are behaving and working very well and use them as exemplars for the rest of the class to emulate. In some lessons, the teachers give very effective feedback to their pupils. The children are told why they are receiving praise, and given constructive comments to help them to improve or refine their movements. However, in other cases the teachers give insufficient, evaluative feedback to the pupils and in consequence their learning is not as brisk. This is part of **a key issue for action**.
- 124 A good feature of the subject is that it is emphasised in displays around the school and linked well with the school's drive to educate the pupils in the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. Good links are made with other subjects, such as information and communication technology where the pupils have used a simple data-handling program to record their favourite games and sports, and in English where they have written instructions for skipping.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 125 Although it was not possible to see many lessons taught in religious education, a review of the pupils' work, discussions with both pupils and staff, and a scrutiny of planning indicates that standards are in line with the Locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education. They are similar to those reported at the time of the previous inspection. The school has a range of suitable resources to support teaching.
- 126 The children speak knowledgeably about the Bible and know a little of the stories they will find in the Old and New Testaments. They describe the life of Christ, the miracles, Bible stories and meaning of Christianity. They know about the significance of special symbols and places. The curriculum is supported by visits to the local church and a visitor who comes to talk in assemblies. The Year 2 pupils are

encouraged to explore their own ideas about God and create posters on themes such as “I think God is...” They write to God about life and the world and ask pertinent questions like, “How did you create the earth?” They are encouraged to reflect, ask questions and develop their own ideas about special places and their own lives.

- 127 The teaching of world religions is in the syllabus and pupils are able to describe some features of Sikhism and Islam. The teachers’ planning shows that the children use the Internet to support their knowledge and understanding of the different religions. The worksheets show that the pupils are developing a basic grasp of other faiths from around the world. However, the teachers would benefit from further guidance on how to develop a wider range of activities to ensure that the multi-cultural dimension within the religious education curriculum is adequately represented. This is essential if the pupils’ are to acquire a deeper understanding of the wider world and develop a lively and continuing interest in the subject. Religious education also makes a positive contribution to the programme for the pupils’ personal development. Links to lessons in religious education are made through the school assemblies, which contribute well to the children’s understanding of religion.