

INSPECTION REPORT

LYNCREST LOWER SCHOOL

Northampton

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 121922

Headteacher: Mrs Kay Gerrett

Reporting inspector: Neil McAllister
22220

Dates of inspection: 5 – 8 November 2001

Inspection number: 196628

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Lyncrest Avenue Northampton
Postcode:	NN5 5PE
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Jennifer Brooks
Date of previous inspection:	14 April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
22220	Neil McAllister	Registered inspector	English as an additional language Equal opportunities Science Information and communication technology	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
11041	Marvyn Moore	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
31914	Colette Gribble	Team inspector	Special educational needs English Music Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
30724	Delia Hiscock	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology Geography History	
2905	David Shepherd	Team inspector	Foundation stage Mathematics Religious education	How well is the school led and managed?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Lyncrest Lower is an average sized community lower school with 201 full-time pupils aged between four and nine and 52 three-year olds who attend part-time in the nursery. Most pupils are of white United Kingdom heritage although about 10 per cent are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The majority of admissions to the school live nearby but a growing proportion (about a third) come from the St. James area. The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language has risen recently to over six per cent, which is above average. Levels of pupil mobility are higher than average. Although the school is popular and oversubscribed, a substantial proportion of pupils leave between Year 2 and Year 4. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, at 11 per cent, is average. The number of pupils with special educational needs has been broadly average over recent years but has fallen in the current year to slightly below average. Two pupils - an average proportion - have a special needs statement. When children are admitted to the nursery, their attainment varies considerably. It is below average in communication, language and literacy and in aspects of physical development but broadly average in other areas of learning. Attainment on entry to the nursery is not as high now as it was at the time of the last inspection. At the time of the inspection, one of the assistant headteachers was on leave from the school and had been for much of the term. The class had been taught by two temporary teachers, with one of these teachers covering the class for the whole of the inspection week.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Lyncrest Lower is a good school. Children in the nursery and Reception classes are given a good start. Pupils are taught well in most subjects and achieve good standards. The school is led very well by the headteacher and staff and supported well by governors and parents. It provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in English are above average and writing is a particular strength.
- Pupils achieve good standards in science, art, music and physical education.
- Pupils develop excellent attitudes and relationships, supported by the school's excellent provision for their personal development and its very high levels of care and support.
- Pupils are taught well.
- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is supported well by staff and governors.
- The partnership with parents is very good and parents have an exceptionally high regard for the school.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs and for those with English as an additional language is good.

What could be improved

- Standards in mathematics, especially for the higher-attaining pupils.
- The effectiveness of the school's improvement plan as a mechanism for managing the school.
- Provision for pupils in the mixed Reception/Year 1 class.

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 April 1997. Since then it has made good progress in the main areas identified for improvement and in other key areas. Standards have risen in mathematics at a similar rate to the national trend and have risen more rapidly in English. Standards in science and design and technology have improved in Years 3 and 4; both were weaker subjects at that time. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved and is promoting good progress. Teaching is better and is supported by improved planning, good assessment of pupils' attainment and progress and much improved systems for monitoring and evaluating standards and provision. The balance of the headteacher's teaching and management role has improved although more work is needed to maximise the efficiency of some management systems. Subject co-ordinators have a clearer

and more effective role in managing their subjects and in contributing to the overall development of the school.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

'Similar schools' refers to schools with similar levels of Free School Meals

By the end of Year 2 in 2001, pupils achieved high standards in writing, as in the previous year, and inspection findings confirm that this aspect is a particular strength in the school. Results in reading and mathematics were lower in 2001 than in 2000, reflecting a year group that included a higher number of pupils with special educational needs. Results in writing were maintained due to particularly effective teaching. Inspection findings indicate that standards in Year 2 are above average in reading, well above average in writing and average in mathematics. Pupils continue to make good progress in reading and writing and sound progress in mathematics in Years 3 and 4. They achieve above average standards in reading and writing and average standards in mathematics by the time they leave the school in Year 4. Trends over time show that standards have improved in reading and writing at a more rapid rate than in mathematics.

Pupils achieve well in most subjects in all age groups. The children in the nursery and Reception classes make a good start and achieve well, particularly in their personal and social development. Science has developed as a strength and standards are above average for both age groups. Pupils achieve above average standards in ICT in Year 2 and are well placed to achieve at better than average levels by the end of Year 4. Throughout the school, standards in art and music are above average and pupils achieve very high standards in gymnastics, dance and games. In all other subjects, pupils in both age groups attain the levels expected nationally. In 2001 the school had varying levels of success in meeting its ambitious targets for pupils in Year 2 and Year 4. It continues to show a strong commitment to further improvement.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils show great enthusiasm for school and are very keen to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good in classrooms, around the school and on the playground.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils form excellent relationships and show outstanding levels of responsibility and respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Rates vary but are broadly in line with the national average.

The school functions exceptionally well as a harmonious community and this underpins its overall success.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory	Good

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

Teaching overall is good. In the lessons seen during the inspection it was better in the nursery and Reception and in classes in Years 3 and 4. Teaching in classes in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory overall and some very good and some excellent teaching was observed. Weaknesses, evident in a few lessons, relate mainly to a lack of clarity in what pupils are expected to learn, insufficient direct teaching and activities that did not match the needs of the highest or lowest attainers. The proportion of good and very good teaching is much higher for all age groups than at the time of the last inspection. Teaching and learning is good in the nursery and Reception classes and children receive a good start to their education although the mixture of Reception and Year 1 pupils in one class presents difficulties in matching the needs of both groups. English is taught well. Teaching in mathematics is satisfactory with good features in many classes, although some unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Activities for the highest attainers in mathematics are not always a great enough challenge. Science, art, music and physical education are taught well. The teaching of ICT in the computer suite is very good but teachers do not make enough use of ICT to support their teaching at other times. Teachers have clear objectives for their lessons and organise their classrooms well. The management of pupils' behaviour is a particular strength. Teachers cater well for pupils of different ages and abilities in the mixed-age Year 1/2 and Year 3/4 classes and for pupils with special educational needs or with English as an additional language.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. The required curriculum is planned well to meet the needs of mixed ages in Years 1 to 4 and is supplemented well by many extra activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils needs are identified early and individual education plans are effective.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. These pupils are supported well by their teachers and by specialist staff who identify and cater for their needs effectively.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent provision is made for pupil's social and moral development and this underpins the school's positive ethos. Spiritual and cultural development is promoted well through many aspects of the curriculum.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good. Systems for monitoring and promoting their academic progress and personal development are good

There are good programmes of assemblies and personal, social and health education. The school works very closely and effectively with parents and has established an excellent partnership which is having a significant impact on pupils' learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good management is underpinned by the headteacher's outstanding leadership. The two assistant headteachers and subject co-ordinators provide very good support in ensuring that the school's aims are met well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is well informed and very active. Governors are very supportive and ensure that legal requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school increasingly collects and analyses information on how it is doing both in terms of standards and in the quality of teaching.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Funds are controlled and managed well and are directed to areas of priority.

The headteacher is highly regarded and respected by staff and governors and has a clear vision for the school. The governors have a sound understanding of its strengths and are keen to improve provision and raise standards further. The principles of best value are applied satisfactorily although governors need to be more actively involved in this process and, in particular, in questioning what the school does and how it could be better. There are some weaknesses in the structure and use of the school improvement plan. The number of priorities is over ambitious and it lacks a structure for linking these to anticipated costs in terms of time and resources. The numbers of teaching and support staff are sufficient for the demands of the curriculum. The accommodation is welcoming and the outdoor environment is delightful but there are significant maintenance issues and a severe lack of space within the school, particularly in the bursar's office and headteacher's room.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children enjoy school and are helped to become mature and responsible. • The headteacher and staff are approachable. • Behaviour is good. • Children are expected to work hard and do their best. • The school is well led and managed. • Teaching is good and children are making good progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about how children are getting on. • The homework that is given. • The amount of extra activities available.

The inspection team broadly agrees with the parents' positive views. Inspectors judge that the quality of information about pupils' progress is good. Annual reports provided by the school are of a good standard although there are some inconsistencies. All parents who responded agree that the school is approachable and many confirm that it will always offer additional information if asked. The provision of homework is satisfactory and supports work in lessons appropriately. The team disagrees with the few parents who wanted more extra activities. The range of these is very good for a school with pupils of this age range.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

i) Standards in the Foundation Stage¹

1. Children are admitted to the nursery at the age of three. Their attainment on admission varies greatly but is, overall, below average in communication, language and literacy and in aspects of physical development; it is broadly average in other areas. They make good progress in all areas of learning in the nursery and Reception classes and nearly all children are likely to achieve average levels in most aspects of the Early Learning Goals by the time they reach the age of five. Some exceed these standards in a number of areas, especially in their personal, social and emotional development and in communication, language and literacy. Children in this age group achieve well as a result of skilful teaching and the very successful promotion of positive attitudes to learning. The high standards reported at the time of the last inspection for pupils aged three and four have been maintained.

ii) Standards in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT)

2. Compared with all schools and those with pupils from similar backgrounds, the results of statutory tests for seven-year-olds over the last two years were well above average in writing and this aspect of English has developed as a particular strength in the school. Results in reading were well above average in 2000 but fell slightly to average in 2001. This apparent fall in reading standards reflects a cohort with a larger proportion of lower-attaining boys with special educational needs. A few pupils fell short of the national standard for seven-year-olds in reading but achieved this in writing due to particularly effective teaching. In mathematics, the test results were above average in 2000 but, like reading, fell to average in 2001. Inspection findings confirm that standards of writing at the end of Year 2 are well above average and that standards in reading are above average. Standards in mathematics for this age group are average.
3. Boys have outperformed girls slightly, relative to the national picture over recent years and the school identified girls' attainment in mathematics as an area for improvement. The most recent tests indicate that girls are now achieving at similar levels to boys in mathematics. There was no evidence during the inspection of significant differences in the attainment of boys compared with girls.
4. By the age of nine, when pupils leave the school, inspection findings indicate that standards in reading and writing are above average and standards in mathematics are average. Results of non-statutory tests taken in Year 4 over recent years show an improvement, with the number of pupils achieving beyond the expected level increasing steadily in reading and mathematics. Evidence from pupils' writing indicates that improved provision and teaching have raised attainment in writing for this age group and that the pupils who achieved well in the statutory writing tests in Year 2 have continued to make good progress in Years 3 and 4 and are achieving well.
5. Pupils skills in speaking and listening are above average for both age groups. Although high standards of writing are achieved, the results of pupils' spelling tests were below average in the most recent tests. The school has implemented a spelling programme for Years 1 to 4 based on pupils working in setted groups. Indications are that this is promoting good progress and the

¹ The Foundation Stage begins when children reach the age of three in schools with a nursery and the last year of this stage is often described as the Reception year. During this period, children's learning is based on fostering, nurturing and developing their: personal, social and emotional well being; skills in communication, language and literacy; mathematical skills, particularly numeracy; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development and creative development. 'Stepping Stones' are national descriptions of the progress children are expected to make towards the 'Early Learning Goals' for all these areas of learning by the end of the Reception year.

school is on track to achieve better results in spelling tests at the end of the year. Handwriting is developed well and is of a good standard in all year groups. Pupils' good literacy skills are supporting work in many other subjects, notably in the quality of writing in science, history and geography. Numeracy skills are sound and used to support data-handling work in science and ICT.

6. Since the previous inspection, standards have improved in line with the national trend in mathematics but better than this in reading and have improved rapidly in writing. Overall, attainment in mathematics has not risen fast enough and the school is right to identify this as a priority for improvement. The school sets itself challenging targets for pupils each year in reading, writing and mathematics and works hard to achieve these. It exceeded its ambitious Year 2 targets for writing and fell just short of these in reading and mathematics; it exceeded its ambitious Year 4 targets in reading and mathematics and fell just short of the target for writing.
7. It is important to note that a substantial proportion (about a third) of pupils who took part in the national tests and teachers' assessments in Year 2 have since left the school. The majority of these were average or higher attainers and therefore this is likely to have an impact on the school's targets and subsequent results at the end of Year 4.
8. Pupils of all levels of ability and from all age groups make at least sound progress in these subjects. Pupils make good progress in reading and often make very good progress in writing. There are a number of reasons for the school's success in writing. This aspect is given a high profile from an early age and pupils are encouraged to write creatively and imaginatively for a range of purposes, particularly in poetry and descriptive writing and in other subjects. They are given opportunities to extend the content and use of vocabulary within their writing without being constrained in their efforts to write for a specific purpose. Progress in mathematics is sound but the higher attainers are not always challenged enough, particularly in investigational and problem-solving work. This reflects some weaknesses in the way teachers assess pupils on a day-to-day basis and in the subsequent match of future work to pupils' abilities.
9. In science, standards for both seven- and nine-year-olds are above average and this subject has developed as a particular strength due to good teaching and good leadership by the co-ordinator. Results of the statutory teachers' assessments for seven-year-olds were well above the national average in 2000 and above average in 2001. The percentages achieving the higher Level 3 grade have been steadily improving and were well above average in 2001. Both these year groups, now in Years 3 and 4, have continued to make good progress and their work is above average, notably in the experimental and investigational aspects of the subject. This represents a significant improvement compared with the below average standards observed at the time of the previous inspection.
10. In ICT, pupils' attainment has improved significantly. Standards are above average in Year 2 and, although broadly average in Year 4, pupils are well placed to achieve higher standards by the end of the year. Pupils make good overall progress due to effective planning, very good teaching and good use of the computer suite.
11. In general, pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are included well in all activities and make good progress in relation to their prior learning due to the focused support they receive where needed, and to carefully chosen activities which match their needs.

iii) Attainment in the foundation subjects and religious education

Subject	Attainment for seven-year-olds	Attainment for nine-year-olds
Art and design	above average	above average
Design and technology	average	average
Geography	average	average
History	average	average

Music	above average	above average
Physical Education	well above average	well above average
Religious Education	insufficient evidence	average

12. The oldest pupils in both key stages attain high levels in art and design, music and in the aspects of physical education which were observed during the inspection. This represent good improvement since the previous inspection. They attain the levels seen in most schools in all other foundation subjects of the National Curriculum. Religious Education is taught in accordance with the local Agreed Syllabus and standards in Years 3 and 4 are average. There was insufficient evidence to judge standards in this subject in Years 1 and 2. Standards in design and technology for nine-year-olds have improved since the last inspection.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. Pupils' attitudes to the school are excellent. This represents a further improvement on the already high standards in this aspect identified at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils love coming to school, display very good behaviour and have excellent relationships with their peer groups and with staff. They display tremendous enthusiasm for school and show a very high level of interest and involvement in the activities which the school provides. There have been no exclusions in recent years. The school is an extremely calm and caring community and pupils thrive as a result. This confirms parents' views of the school. All those who responded to the questionnaire agreed that their children liked school and that behaviour is good.
14. Pupils' behaviour in all age groups is very good. They develop caring attitudes towards each other and learn to relate easily and naturally to staff at the school and other adults. They show an increasingly high level of maturity and the ethos of the school - 'Care for Others' - is well demonstrated in their attitudes and behaviour in class, around the school and on the playground. There is a complete absence of oppressive behaviour and pupils of all ages integrate well together and have a mutual understanding of the needs of others. There is no evidence of bullying, sexism or racial harassment because, in the increasingly diverse school population, the clear and effective guidance from adults and well-established ethos secure harmonious work and play. Pupils' display maturity and common sense both in lessons and outside. For example, in a circle time observed during the inspection week, pupils in Reception and Year 1 were able to discuss in a very sensible and mature way, their feelings on the value of friendship. In an assembly, pupils in Key Stage 2 behaved impeccably and were able to describe and discuss the qualities of Abraham and Hagar and ask intelligent questions of the teacher.
15. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the impact of their actions on others. When pupils return to school after an illness, their peer group is extremely keen to welcome them back, tell them that they were missed and to give them friendship and support. Their response to being involved in making decisions about suitable sanctions to take against others is measured and thoughtful.
16. Pupils respond very well to the excellent opportunities to display initiative and personal responsibility. Pupils in Year 3 apply in writing for positions of responsibility within the school, such as 'birthday monitors', library assistants and assembly helpers and their applications are vetted and appointments made by Year 4 pupils. As a result, pupils develop a feeling of self worth and are able to understand, at an early age, the responsibilities which older pupils and adults have to take in life.
17. Pupils have a very good understanding of the care they must take of their own belongings, school property and other people's property. In a physical education lesson, pupils treated the equipment with care and respect and even the younger children were able to understand the concept of looking after other people's property.
18. Relationships in the school are of a very high standard. Pupils relate extremely well to both teaching and non-teaching staff, responding positively to the high standard of care shown to them

by all staff. Lunchtimes are very happy, social occasions, where pupils of all age groups mix well together and display very good manners and behaviour.

19. Attendance over recent years has varied but is, overall, broadly average, as at the time of the last inspection. The school has worked successfully, in partnership with the Educational Welfare Officer, to improve the level of attendance of pupils from the very few families who have had a poor attendance record. Attendance levels so far this term are above average. Pupils arrive in good time and registration is efficient, allowing a prompt start to lessons.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

20. The quality of teaching in the lessons seen was good in the Foundation Stage and in Years 3 and 4 and was satisfactory in Years 1 and 2. This promotes good progress overall in the nursery and Reception classes and in Years 3 and 4. Pupils make at least satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 but some weaknesses were identified in teaching for this age group. Of the 49 lessons seen, 65 per cent were good or better and these included a substantial proportion of very good lessons and two excellent lessons. Of the rest, 26 per cent were satisfactory and eight per cent were unsatisfactory. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection; at that time, the proportion of good or very good teaching was very low. Weaknesses relating to teachers' planning and assessment and to inconsistencies in the level of teachers' expectations have been addressed well and these aspects are now at least sound.
21. The teaching of the children in the Foundation Stage is good and the strengths identified in the previous report have been maintained. Teachers and support staff work very well together and provide a secure learning environment. Particular strengths include promoting personal, social and emotional development and in developing skills in communication, language and literacy, although more opportunities could be found to talk to children and extend their thinking as they are engaged in their activities. Staff plan a wide range of activities which are organised very well and provide good opportunities for structured and free play. Adults are knowledgeable about the children's individual needs and make regular on-going assessments of their progress.
22. Teaching and learning are at least satisfactory in all subjects throughout the school. Teaching is good in English, art and music and was very good in the physical education lessons seen. In religious education, teaching was good in Years 3 and 4 but there was insufficient evidence to make a judgement in Years 1 and 2. Science is taught well in Years 3 and 4. Weekly ICT lessons in the computer suite are taught very well and promote very good learning although limited access to ICT activities at other times means that learning overall is good rather than very good.
23. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs or with English as an additional language is good and enables them to make good progress in their learning. Individual education plans include suitable targets and activities which match their abilities and teachers take care to ensure that these pupils are aware of their learning objectives in lessons. The school's positive climate for learning and teachers' good use of praise and encouragement ensure that pupils with special needs feel good about their achievements. The additional support they sometimes receive outside the classroom is beneficial and teachers or support staff go over any work which may have been missed. Some pupils do, however, occasionally miss the same element of a lesson each week or miss assemblies and the school needs to review this. There are no specific arrangements for gifted and talented pupils. While most lessons cater well for the full range of pupil's attainments, the needs of the highest attainers are not always met in mathematics lessons and, to a lesser extent, in some literacy lessons.
24. Weaknesses in the few unsatisfactory lessons, observed in the Reception/Year 1 and Year 1/2 classes, related to different aspects of teaching. Two of these lessons were in mathematics and weaknesses included a lack of clarity in the intended learning outcome, insufficient direct teaching and activities that did not match the needs of the highest or lowest attainers. One lesson in religious education was judged unsatisfactory due to aspects of planning rather than any specific weakness in teaching. In a lesson in the mixed Reception/Year 1 class, pupils chose

from a range of activities and there was no clear objective or purpose to these, with the result that they made very little progress.

25. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally secure and there is particular expertise in art, music and aspects of physical education such as gymnastics and dance. The school gives a high priority to teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and has successfully adopted the methods of the national strategies in both areas. Other subjects, such as history, geography and science, contribute to the teaching of literacy but, as yet, not enough opportunities are taken to teach numeracy skills in subjects such as art, design and technology and geography.
26. Some teachers are less confident in the use of ICT but this is being addressed through a programme of training this term. Not enough use is made of ICT to support learning in lessons.
27. Teachers' day-to-day planning is good and underpins the good learning in most lessons. Objectives for lessons are clearly set out, often written for pupils to see and usually shared with them at a suitable level. Activities for different groups are organised effectively although in a few numeracy lessons these consist of further practice rather than challenges that extend pupils' thinking and problem-solving skills. Throughout the school, teachers have high expectations of what pupils will achieve in most lessons. Teachers' methods are effective. They give clear explanations which engage pupils' attention and encourage them to concentrate. Most teachers use question and answer techniques effectively although in a few lessons the use of too many closed questions did not encourage pupils to think deeply enough. The management of pupils is a particular strength in all age groups, reflecting teachers' high expectations of their behaviour, the encouragement of positive attitudes by consistent and effective use of positive praise and the general ethos for learning.
28. Most lessons develop at a good pace. Appropriate time is given to introductory activities and explanations. In a few lessons, too much time was spent on introductions and discussions about the work, leaving insufficient time for the activity itself and for a summary discussion at the end. In the best lessons, teachers maintained a brisk pace throughout, constantly keeping pupils aware of what they needed to achieve in the time. Support staff make an important contribution to pupils' learning and are effectively deployed by teachers and well briefed. Practical resources are used well and support learning.
29. Teachers assess pupils' ongoing progress well in Year 3 and 4. This aspect was satisfactory overall in Years 1 and 2, but lacked consistency and was weaker in a few lessons for this age group. For example, in some mathematics lessons, teachers did not do not provide enough guidance for pupils to help them improve. In most lessons, oral feedback is given regularly and encourages pupils to improve. A positive attitude to making mistakes is successfully promoted in all classes. Most teachers mark work regularly but the quality of written comments varies considerably. This was most noticeable in mathematics, where marking was not always up-to-date and included few comments identifying what pupils have to do to improve. Good practice was seen in English, science and history work, with useful annotations outlining strengths and, if appropriate, where pupils had gone wrong. Homework is used appropriately to support work in English and mathematics and increases in Years 3 and 4. Activities are appropriate and pupils respond positively, bringing in completed work on time and learning spellings.

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

30. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good and those aspects of the curriculum that have to be provided by law are fully in place. The curriculum meets the statutory requirements to teach all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education and there is an appropriate curriculum based on the recommended Early Learning Goals for the younger children in the Foundation Stage. The needs of all pupils including pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are well provided for. Weaknesses in the

provision for ICT and design and technology, identified at the time of the last inspection, have been addressed well and the overall curriculum is broad and appropriate for all age groups. The needs of pupils in mixed-age classes are met effectively by careful planning that ensures that pupils cover the required elements of the programmes of study for each subject over a two-year cycle. However, the mix of Reception and Year 1 pupils in one class does create some difficulties in providing a suitable balance of the requirements of the Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum. The school attempts to minimise this by providing additional teaching support which enables the Year 1 pupils to be taught separately for two afternoons each week but the high factor of special needs for this group of pupils places a heavy burden at other times and this is limiting the progress being made by the younger pupils.

31. Suitable schemes of work are in place for all subjects and include good provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship. Lessons for PSHE are integrated into the timetable and links between subjects are carefully considered to maximise learning opportunities. The requirements for sex education and relationships and for information regarding substance misuse are met and clearly defined in policies and procedures. The impact and effectiveness of the national strategies for teaching literacy are good and for numeracy are satisfactory. Good attention is given to investigational work in science and this is promoting good standards but evidence indicates that not enough time is given to this aspect in mathematics. Recent and rapid developments have taken place in the provision for teaching ICT skills and this is promoting the good progress that pupils make in all year groups. While the use of ICT does not yet support pupil's learning in other subjects, the school is well placed to improve this aspect.
32. The school's strong commitment to ensuring that all pupils are included fully in all aspects of school life is clearly evident. Its provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and reflected in careful planning and good co-ordination. There is good support provided by outside agencies and specialist support assistants who have undertaken appropriate training and work effectively to complement the work of teachers. Pupils with statements have them regularly reviewed and there is an efficient system of early identification, assessment and evaluation in place which provides good information for staff. The use of individual educational plans for pupils at stages 2 and 3 of the Code of Practice² is effective and work is adapted well to match pupils' abilities. Short periods of withdrawal from class for additional support are effective although in some cases, these are at the same time each week and pupils therefore regularly miss a specific part of a lesson. The school is looking at ways of varying these times in order to address this issue. There is a good level of awareness amongst all staff regarding the new Code of Practice due to be implemented next term and training for the new procedures is planned. Sessions of 'circle time' are used throughout the school to include pupils with additional needs and are particularly effective for those pupils with behavioural difficulties. The needs of pupils who have English as an additional language are identified early and these pupils are fully included in all aspects of the curriculum. The specialist support-teacher works closely with teachers to prepare individual plans and targets for each pupil for the term ahead.
33. The school has extended the range of additional activities for pupils during and after the school day and provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. Pupils have access to several clubs including football, recorders and dance clubs such as folk dancing, sword dancing and 'Dance Crazy', all of which are popular and greatly enjoyed by all who attend. In addition, there is a very good range of wider community links which include visits to outside organisations and representatives visiting the school to work with pupils. These greatly enhance pupils' learning opportunities in many subjects. Examples include carol singing for charity, the collection of Harvest parcels and Easter bonnet workshops which take place at a local centre for senior citizens. Visiting speakers attend and lead assemblies. Visits to a local archaeological site and a residential visit to Irthlingborough for pupils in Years 3 and 4 enhance learning in geography and history. Links with partner schools are very good and the active 'cluster' of local schools provides opportunities for teachers to meet together in subject liaison groups and for joint training. Older pupils from the middle and senior schools visit the school and help in some classes. Ex-pupils,

² Code of Practice – this provides advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs receive the most appropriate help to further their learning and personal development. This is a statutory duty under the 1996 Education Act.

now in the middle school band, perform with Lyncrest pupils in the school's musical production. Students from the senior school recently painted the nursery fence as part of their community work

34. The school makes excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Its aims, to create a climate in which all members of the school family can flourish, are complemented very well by this high quality provision.
35. Pupils' spiritual development is good and has improved significantly since the last inspection. Drama and dance opportunities create vibrant experiences through which pupils' grow in spirituality. Daily acts of worship fulfil the statutory requirements, provide opportunities to reflect on religious education themes and build a strong school consensus of how we work and play in the school family. Pupils contribute to this message by interpreting it in their classroom rules but, more significantly, by using it in their lessons and on the playground. Pupils eagerly volunteered to take a role in the Good Samaritan story and spontaneously thanked their assembly visitor. Staff contribute to this very positive ethos. During a wet playtime, pupils and the teacher on duty took part jointly in a delightful reading and role-playing of poetry and story, with animated, enthusiastic responses that pervaded the whole group.
36. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is outstanding because it is embedded in the way the school operates each day. The school has continued to build on the substantial strengths identified in the previous inspection report. In the Foundation Stage and both key stages, teachers provide exceptionally good opportunities for children to grow in confidence by recognizing and responding well to the needs of others. This reflects the school's very high expectations. Pupils reach up to these because they have opportunities to take on school responsibilities as well as having individual rights. A child, whatever their academic or personal needs, can apply for a whole-school role, such as library or birthday monitor. They write a job description and as a result, raise their own skills and awareness of social and moral responsibility in real ways. There are clear and firm rules by which pupils live and to which children aspire and, where sanctions are needed, they are involved in reflecting on the impact of their behaviour. They are given opportunities to develop a very clear understanding of right and wrong. A pupil in difficulty is provided with individual support to think through alternate ways of behaving with a sensitive and guided approach. This helps the child to understand the moral code and how to behave more appropriately. This is also extended into the provision for social development outside the school, through citizenship. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have been actively involved in the development of the outdoor environment to create improved playground facilities. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have contributed to the 'Township' work on new street-names. This indicates the school's commitment to matching provision to real purpose when children's work is planned.
37. The provision for pupil's cultural development has improved and is good. Drama and literature enrich pupils' lives. They enjoy a wide variety of visits, from craftspeople such as the potter and take part with visiting drama and poetry workshops. Pupils have gained in enthusiasm, knowledge and skills about their locality because the school has used archaeological sites and the changing town plans effectively to enhance local study. As a result, pupils are more closely attuned to the nature of a developing town and the impact of change as time and human needs move on.
38. There is a satisfactory range of multi-cultural resources, similar to those in most schools today. However, the school successfully uses them to highlight the differences and richness of cultural heritage, particularly through artwork displayed around the school and in music. In assemblies, African music was played and attention was drawn to the instruments so that pupils might reflect on the qualities and texture of the effect, with opportunity for a personal response. Pupils learn about world faiths in religious education and develop a growing awareness of how some of the festivals are an essential element of many different religions and cultures. In the nursery, children have the experience of painting Mehndi patterns on hands, forming a good start for children to reflect on the traditions and beliefs in the range of cultures represented in society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

39. The procedures that the school has for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are very good and the high level of pastoral care identified in the last inspection report has been maintained. Parents feel very strongly that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible and they put this down to its caring approach.
40. Staff are fully trained in child protection procedures and links with the relevant outside agencies are good. The school puts pupils' welfare and health as a high priority. The headteacher and staff know their pupils very well. Good teamwork among the staff ensures that pupils' day-to-day needs are met in full and that the time they spend in school is happy and enjoyable. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are cared for very well. Pupils' needs are identified early and they receive appropriate support. Statemented pupils receive additional support as outlined in their statutory assessments. Regular reviews take place, involving all relevant agencies where appropriate. Individual targets are set and monitored and the co-ordinator keeps accurate and consistent records.
41. The school has an adequate number of staff trained in first-aid, all of whom have received up-to-date training. Accident records are kept correctly, the fire alarm is tested regularly and the headteacher, together with a link governor, ensures that an annual Health & Safety audit is carried out and that any items identified as being of concern are immediately dealt with.
42. The school has simple but very effective procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. The behaviour and discipline policy comprising systems of rewards and sanctions is fully understood by staff, parents and pupils alike and is consistently used throughout the school. Pupils are rewarded with play and small gifts for good work and behaviour and they respond very well as a result. Poor behaviour is tackled by the school using sanctions such as: verbal admonishment, loss of privileges such as playtime, and in extreme cases of poor behaviour, pupils have to write a 'think sheet' giving their reasons for their poor behaviour and ways they can improve. This is good practice. The school concentrates on building self-esteem and the good use of circle time and informal observations by the headteacher and staff whether in class or at play, ensure that pupils' behaviour is of a consistently high standard.
43. The school has good procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development and this underpins the good progress they make in this area. Pupils relate very well indeed to their teachers, who keep good records of pupils that they have concerns about. Regular staff meetings, dissemination of information and good record keeping ensure that pupils' development is carefully tracked.
44. Good procedures are in place for monitoring and improving attendance. Attendance is recorded using an electronic system which enables quick and regular analysis of patterns of absence and parents are quickly contacted by the school bursar if their child is absent. Registers are marked correctly and comply fully with legislation.
45. There are very effective induction procedures for pupils being admitted to the nursery or directly into the Reception classes. All nursery parents have an opportunity to visit the school with their child on a pre-admission day and are invited to attend school with their child for up to two weeks prior to their official admission in the autumn. Parents of children coming directly into the Reception classes receive a welcome letter and are invited to attend the school with their child prior to them starting. In addition to the above arrangements, the school arranges home visits for both the nursery and Reception children. Very effective arrangements are in place for the transfer of pupils at Year 4 to their receiving Middle School. The school ensures that parents are made fully aware of their options when choosing the next school for their children.
46. The school has good systems for assessing pupils' attainment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and in many other subjects. In addition to the statutory national tests at the age of seven, good use is made of optional tests in reading, writing and mathematics and the school carefully tracks pupils' attainment year on year. The results of these and of the Key Stage 1 national tests are used effectively, for example, to monitor the progress of individuals and

classes, to set individual targets for pupils and to identify differences in the achievements of boys compared with girls. Detailed analyses of results over time have identified relative weaknesses, for example, in writing in Years 3 and 4, in mathematics in Years 1 and 2 and in aspects of science. Spelling assessments have led to the development of a programme of spelling lessons taught in ability groups.

47. In most subjects, the school makes use of a simple 'traffic-light' system for identifying and recording the relative strengths and weaknesses at the end of units of work. This is good practice and makes it possible for teachers to set tasks which are appropriate to the pupils' needs and build on what they already know or can do when planning the next stage. In practice, however, this process is not yet established fully throughout the school; plans do not take account of those pupils who achieved beyond the expectation of the previous unit or who did not achieve the expected level. This is particularly important in the assessment of investigational and problem-solving skills in mathematics and science where the needs of the higher attainers could be more clearly established and addressed when planning the next stage of their work. Systems for assessing pupils' attainment in ICT are at an early stage of development but the school is well placed to build these into its schemes of work.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

48. The last inspection found that parents were very closely involved with the life of the school and this continues to be the case. The school sees a close partnership with parents as fundamental to its work and is keen to involve them as much as possible. It has worked very hard to ensure that parents are kept fully informed of all aspects of school life and actively seeks their views. Parents' views of the school are extremely positive. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire confirmed that the school works closely with parents. Parents feel they are kept well informed and would feel comfortable about approaching the school with a question or problems. The inspection findings confirm all of these views. The school elected to take part in a local authority survey whereby a questionnaire was sent to all parents to ask their views about the school. The analysis of their responses is further confirmation of the effectiveness of the partnership.
49. The headteacher maintains a very visible presence by greeting parents and their children on their arrival at school each day and is available to see them without appointment if they have any areas of concern or matters that they wish to discuss. Parents appreciate this greatly. They fully subscribe to a home-school agreement and there is good liaison between the school and parents regarding pupils' homework and the paired reading scheme. Parents of children with special educational needs are fully involved. They are invited to annual reviews and contribute to evaluations of progress made by their children and in setting future targets.
50. The school provides high quality information for parents. The annual governors' report is clearly set out with all the required elements. It includes samples of pupils' work and useful additional detail, for example, about the work of learning support assistants and about the school's budget. The school prospectus is a well-produced document, prepared in a parent-friendly fashion and contains all information parents require regarding its ethos, school rules and details about the curriculum. In addition, a separate information booklet is prepared for parents of pupils in the nursery and Reception classes, and for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. These provide detailed information about school procedures, activities and the curriculum that pupils will be following, along with an updated home-school agreement. This is good practice and ensures that parents are fully informed and closely involved at each stage of their child's education. These booklets are updated annually and are much appreciated by parents. In addition, the school produces a newsletter each half term, much of which is contributed to by the pupils themselves. These contain a variety of interesting information about curriculum matters and forthcoming social events.
51. A few parents felt that they did not receive enough information about their children's progress although parents agree that the school is approachable and will always offer this information if

asked. Inspectors judge that annual reports provided by the school are of a good standard although there are some inconsistencies. They usually describe pupils' attainment and progress well but not all reports outline areas for further development or give clear targets for improvement. The school holds parents' evenings termly which are very well attended and parents have the opportunity to comment on their children's progress either at that time or by appointment if they are unable to attend.

52. Parents are very supportive of the school. The Parent-Teacher Association is an extremely active body which raises considerable sums for school funds by organising social events. In the previous year it made a large donation to the school of over £8,000, much of which was used to purchase playground equipment. Their participation and help is much appreciated by the school.
53. Parents are actively encouraged by the school to help and do so in a variety of ways. The Parent-Teacher Association has put on a pantomime for pupils; parents actively help in school workshops, painting, poetry recitals, reading, cooking and sewing. Some parents come into school to talk to pupils about their professions and others offer their skills and enthusiasm; For example, by leading music lessons and painting the wonderful mural outside the nursery. The very pro-active stance taken by the school on encouraging parental involvement and the large number of ways that parents help in school are having a significant impact on pupils' attitudes and their achievements.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

54. The leadership and management of the headteacher are outstanding. She sets a very good example in her teaching, greets the children and their parents in the playground each morning and creates strong and effective teamwork amongst the staff. She is supported very well by the two assistant headteachers and subject co-ordinators. Together they provide very good leadership and direction for the school with a clear focus on raising standards, particularly in English, mathematics and ICT. There is a shared commitment to succeed and significant capacity amongst the staff and school community to improve. There is satisfactory attention to the principles of best value in terms of the school comparing itself with other schools, consulting widely about its effectiveness and ensuring that funds are allocated in the most effective way, although the role of governors in this process needs developing.
55. The school has established good systems for monitoring and evaluating its work. There is a good policy for monitoring and evaluation which is supported by a clear framework for carrying this out. After training provided by the local education authority, the headteacher and assistant headteachers have observed all teachers teaching literacy and numeracy. This has identified strengths and weaknesses in the standards and teaching in these areas. The weaknesses have then been included, quite rightly, in the school's improvement plan. Improvement has been noted in pupils' writing, but standards in mathematics, although rising, are not yet rising fast enough. This method of identifying weaknesses and taking effective action to improve is good practice, and one that the school intends to adopt more extensively, with the help of subject co-ordinators, in other subjects.
56. The school's aims and values have been recently reviewed and they provide a very good steer for the work and conduct of the school. They focus on pupils achieving their potential in academic and personal development terms. They are strongly supported by staff, governors and parents. The governors are clear that the aims of the school are being implemented effectively, and they continue to seek to implement them better through the school improvement plan.
57. The school's improvement plan is very comprehensive and includes initiatives from all subjects and many other aspects of school life. This is over-ambitious. The high number of initiatives makes it very difficult for the staff and governors to know what are the main priorities for development. The success criteria for each priority do not always relate to the targets set and they are not quantified often enough in terms of improvement. Many initiatives are not costed in resources or staffing terms. Because of this, the school does not know how much time or finance

it will take to carry out the priorities in any one year. In spite of this, however, the school has identified priorities in its improvement plan that need to be achieved in order to improve standards and teaching. These priorities take account of achievement over the previous year, information from analyses of its performance in national tests and of local and national initiatives. Performance management practices are becoming established appropriately. They include objectives for the headteacher which are linked to those of the staff and these, in turn, are linked to the school's improvement plan.

58. Classes are organised in mixed year groups, Years 1 and 2 and Years 3 and 4. Pupils remain in these classes for all of the curriculum except mathematics. In mathematics, pupils are allocated into one of three teaching groups by ability. In practice, this corresponds to allocating pupils to groups by age. This works well in mathematics, and pupils benefit from being taught in this way. The inspection team did not find any evidence in other subjects to suggest that organising classes in mixed year groups was better or worse than any other form of organisation. The one exception to this was where the mixed age class crossed a key stage. The inspection team noted that it was very difficult for the teacher to teach Reception and Year 1 pupils in the same class, particularly in view of the high factor of special needs evident for the group of Year 1 pupils. The demands on classroom organisation and management in this class are significant, and the education of the pupils in both year groups in this class suffers as a consequence.
59. The school places a strong emphasis on educational inclusion. The head teacher and assistant head teacher jointly carry out co-ordination and management for pupils with special educational needs and are supported by an enthusiastic governor. This is effective and works well. The school has adopted a good system for the early identification of pupils' needs. This approach has successfully enabled pupils with more complex needs to stay in the school and make good progress. However, it is important that outside agency support is requested for very specialist advice, when required, so that pupils are fully supported or considered for further assessment. Procedures for managing provision for pupils with English as an additional language are good and support from the visiting specialist teacher is directed well.
60. The governing body make a sound contribution to the school. Governors play an important role in establishing and reviewing the school's aims. They are significantly involved in developing the school's priorities for improvement. They meet with the staff during the early stages of producing the school improvement plan and work in small groups with teachers in establishing priorities. They receive reports from the headteacher following the monitoring and evaluation that have taken place in school. In this way, they gain a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities in respect of the school. Quite understandably and deservedly, governors have every confidence in their headteacher. However, the headteacher would benefit from further questioning and probing about aspects of the school. Questions such as, '*How could we do better than we are doing?*' are important to challenge the school's thinking and effect further improvements.
61. The day-to-day administration of the school is efficient. Its smooth running is supported very well by the bursar and her part-time assistant. ICT is used increasingly to provide efficient systems of recording and monitoring information about pupils and administration. The headteacher copes well with the bureaucratic demands on her time but she reports concern about the need to produce similar information several times over for local and national authorities. She feels that the school has benefited substantially from national initiatives such as the literacy and numeracy strategies and the revised guidance for the Foundation Stage.
62. Satisfactory financial planning ensures that educational priorities are suitably supported. The headteacher and Chair of Governors maintain a satisfactory view of financial issues in the short term. The impact on the budget of forecasted changes in numbers of pupils is considered and the improvement plan includes priorities for up to three years ahead but there is no outline financial plan to provide a shared overview of the likely financial position beyond the current year. A suitable structure is needed in order to help with future decisions about alternative strategies for using funds. The need for links with the school's Asset Management Plan are of particular importance in view of the accommodation issues.

63. The budget is monitored very well by the bursar, who provides regular information for the headteacher and governors. The last audit report concluded that the financial records were well ordered and its minor recommendations have been carried out appropriately. Resources are allocated according to priorities identified in the school improvement plan. Specific grants received by the school, such as funding for school improvement, special educational needs and specific initiatives such as ICT infrastructure and training, are being used effectively for the required purpose. The large budget carry-forward in the last year reflected additional funds to be used in the current year; for example, to increase staffing levels and to support spending on ICT. The amount for contingencies was suitably prudent. An explanation of how the surplus would be allocated was made clear to parents in the last annual governors' report. The relatively high level of income and expenditure per pupil reflects considerable donations from fund raising used to pay for the extensive playground improvements and additional government funding received during the year.
64. The overall ratio of teachers to pupils is broadly average and the level of provision of support staff is similar to that in most schools with pupils of this age group. Most teachers have the expertise and knowledge to teach the full range of National Curriculum subjects for this age group. Some are less confident in teaching ICT but this is being addressed through a programme of training. The school makes good use of the specialist expertise of some teachers and support staff, for example in ICT, physical education and music. Systems for the appraisal and professional development of staff are good. They are thorough and effective and incorporate appropriate procedures for the performance management of teachers and for the training and development of other staff. The induction programme for newly qualified teachers is good and the school has an established programme for providing training for student teachers. The school is adopting the principles of the 'Investors in People' scheme and is working towards a subsequent application for its award.
65. The accommodation is attractive, welcoming and kept very clean by the caretaker and his assistants. The playground has been enhanced with climbing apparatus, tables and planted areas to provide a delightful play area but there is no playing field. The outdoor play area for pupils in the Foundation Stage is secure and the additional covered play area enables the school to provide high quality facilities for children to develop their physical skills in all weathers. There are, however, several issues regarding space and maintenance that are unsatisfactory. The new classroom does not have toilets, and pupils from this class wishing to use the toilet have to disturb adjoining classes. The flat roof constantly leaks and requires major repair. The mobile classroom is in poor condition and has reached the end of its useful life. While the school copes very well with these and other constraints, using every available space well and ensuring that there are no serious barriers to pupils' learning, they do create great difficulties. The headteacher's office is extremely small and does not enable her to conduct private meetings and interviews in a comfortable way. The office area is cramped and too small for the two staff to work in at the same time. A new computer suite provides access for large groups of pupils and this is having a major impact on standards in ICT although it doubles as the library and this places limitations on its use during the day. Its narrow shape creates difficulties in observing pupils' work and gaining their attention during lessons but good behaviour and relationships, along with careful planning and the effective use of support staff, minimise the impact of this.
66. Resources for learning are at least satisfactory for all subjects and age groups. They are used effectively to support learning in all subjects. Resources for English, history, art and music are good and the range of games equipment and other apparatus for physical education is very good. Resources for the study of local history and geography are of high quality and used well to enhance learning in these subjects. The resources for ICT in the computer suite are good; a wide range of appropriate computer software is available but there are too few computers in classes for pupils to consolidate and make use of their rapidly developing ICT skills.
67. Overall, aspects of leadership and management have improved since the last inspection. The balance of the headteacher's teaching and management time has improved, the roles of the assistant headteachers are clear and the school's procedures for monitoring and evaluation have

improved significantly. The strong teamwork, happy environment and supportive governors noted at the last inspection are still apparent. However, as last time, further work needs to be done on the school's improvement plan in order to make it an efficient and effective mechanism for managing development.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

68. To build on the school's strengths and raise standards further, the headteacher, staff and the governing body should:

(1) raise standards in mathematics by:

- creating more opportunities for pupils to develop their investigational and problem-solving skills and their data-handling skills; *(paragraphs 97, 100)*
- ensuring that the highest attaining pupils are suitably challenged in all numeracy lessons; *(paragraphs 23, 97, 99)*
- improving teachers' on-going assessments and the consistency of the marking of pupils' work; *(paragraphs 99, 100)*
- building on the good practice evident in some classes. *(paragraphs 97 - 101)*

(2) improve the effectiveness of the school improvement plan by:

- ensuring that the number of priorities is manageable and that there is a shared overview of how these will be addressed over a suitable period; *(paragraph 57)*
- linking priorities more carefully to their anticipated costs in terms of staff time as well as resources; *(paragraphs 57, 62)*
- establishing clear success criteria that can be judged objectively in terms of improvement. *(paragraph 57)*

(3) ensure that the needs of all pupils are met more effectively in the mixed-age Reception/Year 1 class. *(paragraphs 24, 30, 58, 84)*

It is acknowledged that some of the areas for improvement have been identified by the school and already feature as priorities for improvement.

(4) Other issues which should be considered by the school:

- The use of information from assessments of pupils' attainment at the end of units of work. *(paragraphs 47, 100, 147)*
- The use of ICT in lessons across the curriculum and the assessment of pupils' progress in ICT. *(paragraphs 31, 66, 101, 107, 132, 133)*
- Access to computers in the Foundation Stage and the use of the computer suite by teachers in other year groups for lessons other than skills-based ICT lessons. *(paragraphs 76, 133)*
- A long term view of financial priorities with appropriate links to the school's Asset Management Plan and the school's accommodation issues. *(paragraphs 62, 65)*
- The role of governors in questioning what the school does and how it could be better. *(paragraphs 54, 60)*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	49
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	53

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	17	13	13	4	0	0
Percentage	4	35	26	26	8	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	26	201
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	21

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	36

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	13

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	26

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.1*
National comparative data	5.2

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.

*The figure for authorised absence for the current school year so far is significantly less, at 4.8%.

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	23	15	38

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	18	21	21
	Girls	14	15	14
	Total	32	36	35
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	84 (90)	95 (90)	92 (93)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	21	21	23
	Girls	15	14	14
	Total	36	35	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	95 (90)	92 (98)	97 (100)
	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	7
Indian	7
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	5
Chinese	1
White	180
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		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White		
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Average class size	25

Education support staff: YR– Y4

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	129

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	33
Number of pupils per FTE adult	13

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	498,861
Total expenditure	505,684
Expenditure per pupil	2,218
Balance brought forward from previous year	50,220
Balance carried forward to next year	43,397

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	256
Number of questionnaires returned	74

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	26	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	51	42	0	0	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	58	37	0	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	42	4	3	15
The teaching is good.	61	34	0	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	41	9	0	9
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	24	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	35	0	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	47	45	1	1	5
The school is well led and managed.	72	24	0	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	60	39	0	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	46	32	4	0	18

Other issues raised by parents

- Concerns were raised by two parents about the progress made by pupils in mixed-age classes.

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

69. At the time of the inspection there were 93 children in the Foundation Stage; 52 attend part-time during the year of which there are four in the nursery and 41 attend full-time during the year of which there are five in two Reception classes. According to the school's assessment procedure carried out at the beginning of the nursery and inspection findings, children's attainment on entry is below average in communication, language and literacy and aspects of physical development. In all other areas, standards are average. By the end of the Foundation Stage, nearly all children are likely to achieve average levels in most aspects of the Early Learning Goals, and some exceed these standards in a number of areas, especially in their personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy. The overall good, and sometimes, very good teaching and high quality adult support from the nursery nurse and support assistants, are having a positive impact on pupils' learning. In personal, social and emotional development and in communication, language and literacy, the teaching is often very good. The high standards reported at the time of the last inspection for pupils aged three and four have been maintained. Attainment on entry to the nursery is not as high now as it was four years ago.

Personal, social and emotional development

70. Right from the time the children enter the nursery, their personal, social and emotional development are given high priority. Children's attainment in this area is average when they enter the nursery and above average by the end of the Reception year. Many are achieving, and a significant number exceeding each aspect of the Early Learning Goals in this area. This illustrates good achievement and reflects the skilful teaching in the nursery and Reception year. In these classes, children are encouraged to get on with their peers and adults, to feel confident in what they can achieve and to work independently.
71. In both year groups, children play and work together well. They show consideration for each other and wait their turn to be seen by their teacher or other adult. They work with interest and enthusiasm, for instance in their role-play about a birthday party in the nursery or when working on the computer in one of the Reception classes.
72. Adults provide very good role models for the children, always treating each other and the children with courtesy and respect. In this way, trust between the children and adults grows and the children feel they can learn in a secure and safe environment. For instance, in both year groups, children learn to wait and listen carefully to each other and their teachers during whole-class sessions.
73. Classrooms are well prepared with indoor and outdoor equipment ready to hand. They learn quickly to place their own picture 'ID' cards in the correct tray, for example, to show that they are staying in to have their snack. These help the children to become independent and use their initiative during their activities.

Communication, language and literacy

74. In both the nursery and Reception classes, the children enjoy listening to stories. For instance, the children in the Reception classes were captivated by the story of "The Three Billy Goats Gruff". They enjoyed acting out this story in play activities using sand and blocks to build bridges across the river for the goats. In one Reception class, the children enjoyed listening to a taped story. All the adults talk to the children to good effect and listen with patience to what the children have to say.
75. By the end of the Reception year, nearly all children achieve all aspects of the Early Learning Goals. Some pupils exceed these standards in a number of aspects of these goals. In the

Reception classes, the children are learning the names and sounds letters make using a variety of play and other activities. For instance, in one Reception class, a group of four-year-old children discussed the best way to choose letters of the alphabet and hang them on a line in order. Children learn to write their names and sound out the letters regularly during the Reception year. This provides a sound foundation in the use of phonics for reading.

76. In both year groups, teaching is good. Staff encourage the children to think of themselves as readers and writers whatever their stage of development. For instance, children were encouraged to make marks on paper to signify a birthday card message. Supplies of crayons, pencils, paper and books are all to hand and pupils use them freely. When teachers read stories, they provide good, expressive models for children and ask them well-focused questions to ensure they are beginning to use pictures, sound and known words to understand the text. ICT is used well in one Reception class, for example, to practise picture-matching skills but overall access to suitable computers in the Foundation Stage is unsatisfactory. There was no computer available in the nursery for the current term although plans indicate that the children will have opportunities to develop early ICT skills from the start of the spring term.

Mathematical development

77. Children enter the nursery with average levels of attainment and they leave the Reception classes with average attainment in nearly all aspects of the Early Learning Goals. A few children achieve higher levels than this in a number of aspects of the goals. This is due to good teaching in both the nursery and Reception classes. Almost all pupils in the Reception classes can count to ten, and many up to 25 and beyond. Children use mathematical language appropriately, for instance, when adding one more or less to a number.
78. The nursery and Reception classes provide a good range of activities to promote mathematical understanding. Children learn to use mathematical ideas and skills when putting interlocking blocks together to form long or short lengths or when counting candles on a cake in Reception or when counting out five crisps at snack time in the nursery. They have opportunities to compare, match, sort, sequence and count using a range of games, routines and activities. Number lines are used in Reception to develop an understanding of order and position. One of the Reception teachers effectively uses objects to help with counting and sensitively helps children who need to think a little more to be accurate.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

79. Children enter the nursery with a basic general knowledge. They build upon this knowledge to help them understand more about the place in which they live. Due to good teaching, they leave the Reception class having achieved most of the Early Learning Goals in this area.
80. Children in the nursery are given opportunities to be curious and play with objects, such as cars, construction blocks, cooking implements, containers for water and plates and plastic cakes for role-play. They learn their colours well through a discussion about the Mr Men. In one of the Reception classes during the inspection, children were using a computer independently and were able to control the mouse and follow the program skilfully.
81. Adults support children well in discovering things. For example, in Reception, they encouraged children to think about the strength of the bridges that they were making for the three billy goats. In both year groups, children select resources and tools safely to help them in their learning.

Physical development

82. The imaginative development of the outdoor play area and the availability of a covered space with climbing apparatus are major factors in helping children develop their physical skills. On entry to the nursery, many children are unable to control large apparatus such as cars and bikes safely without bumping into each other and other play equipment. By the time they leave the Reception

classes, the physical skills of most children have improved significantly and are up to the standards set in the Early Learning Goals. Children are able to play safely with due regard and consideration for others. Children in the Reception classes are encouraged to use scissors and other cutters and to glue and stick together paper and other decorations. They use pencils and crayons regularly. All this helps the children to develop their fine motor skills, and these too are at average levels by the time children leave the Reception classes. This aspect is taught well.

Creative development

83. Most children enter the nursery with average levels of attainment in this area. Good teaching ensures that they leave the Reception classes having achieved most aspects of the Early Learning Goals. In the Reception classes, children enjoy creating interesting collages using a variety of well-chosen resources, including, glitter, gummed paper, egg boxes, sequins and the like. These are to illustrate their work on Bonfire Night or 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff'. In the Reception class, they enjoy singing songs with their teacher. They enjoy role-play about a birthday party in the nursery and imaginative play from the class story in Reception. They make good use of the props and other equipment available. Many children can use their imaginations well, largely due to the ways in which adults support them during these activities. They enjoy painting using strong colours in the nursery.
84. There are two aspects of the work in the Foundation Stage that merit further thought. First, although the adults in the nursery talk to children very effectively, more opportunities might be found to talk with the children and extend their thinking as they are engaged in their activities. Second, the mixed Reception/Year 1 makes it very difficult to teach the foundation curriculum and the Year 1 curriculum at the same time.

ENGLISH

85. Results of statutory tests for seven year olds over the last two years were well above average in writing and this aspect of English has developed as a particular strength in the school. Results in reading were well above average in 2000 but fell slightly to average in 2001. This apparent fall in reading standards reflects a cohort with a larger proportion of lower-attaining boys with special educational needs. A few pupils fell short of the national standard for seven year olds in reading but achieved this in writing due to particularly effective teaching. Standards in reading in Key Stage 1 have improved in line with the national trend since the previous inspection but writing has improved more rapidly. Inspection findings confirm that standards of writing in Year 2 are well above average and standards in reading are above average. Pupils with special educational needs or with English as an additional language make good progress.
86. In Years 3 and 4, attainment in writing has been weaker than in reading over recent years. Results in non-statutory tests have been broadly average overall but with relatively few pupils achieving the higher levels in writing. This was identified by the school and improving standards of writing has been a key focus in these year groups. This is proving successful and inspection findings indicate that standards in both reading and writing are now above average in Year 4.
87. The use of the National Literacy Strategy is well established and is used flexibly throughout both key stages to enhance pupils' literacy skills. The school extends pupils' vocabulary and their reading and writing skills by linking lessons in other subjects, such as science, geography and history, to work in literacy. There is good evidence in lessons across the curriculum of pupils using sophisticated levels of grammar. In a history lesson in Year 4, when writing about the Romans, pupils wrote in appropriate styles using paragraphs and accurate punctuation and still managed to extend their writing creatively and imaginatively. In Year 1, pupils were given good opportunities to describe the possible feelings and anxieties of 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff' before planning how to accompany the story appropriately using percussion instruments.

88. Speaking and listening skills are good in both key stages. Throughout the school, pupils speak confidently, articulately and clearly. Staff provide good role models and this is reflected in the exchanges between pupils and staff and subsequently between pupils themselves and in their dialogue with visitors. Pupils in Year 1, for example, were given opportunities to express their views and feelings and discuss the lesson objectives in a lesson about 'The Toy Story'. This extended into listening to each other's ideas about a special party to be held later in the day. Their interest and excitement at the prospect of a party did not hamper their clarity in speaking and listening together. Most pupils in Year 4 understand the main points in discussion and, when listening to each other; they use good eye contact and positive, relaxed body language. There are, however, few opportunities for higher attaining pupils to extend their skills through individual presentations such as drama and poetry readings, despite much evidence of pupils' high quality written work worthy of performance and presentation. Pupils with special educational needs are included well in lessons and those who are more reluctant to speak or listen are encouraged to take a full and active part in discussions.
89. In reading, pupils in Years 1 and 2 generally make good progress. Pupils read confidently together from 'Big Books' in literacy lessons. Most pupils recognise simple, frequently used words and are developing a range of appropriate strategies to understand unfamiliar words. They use illustrations to get clues, break down and build up words from letter sounds and attempt whole words in context, all with growing confidence. Pupils who are more reluctant readers develop skills in recognising letter blends and whole words when reading their own books from recognised schemes. Pupils enjoy books and choose widely from local libraries or from the school's own well-stocked library. They are given good guidance where appropriate by teachers and support staff. There are opportunities provided in other subjects for pupils to become familiar with a range of reading material and they all have reading bags and home/school record books which they carry home daily with pride and responsibility. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of books and speak confidently about authors and how to use contents and index pages.
90. Pupils continue to make at least satisfactory progress in reading in Years 3 and 4. They benefit from carefully chosen texts in literacy lessons. Most pupils read accurately with good pace, increasing accuracy and a high level of understanding. The majority of pupils read for pleasure and have favourite authors and can relate with clarity why they choose particular books. Average and high average attainers read fluently and with good expression although their use of higher-order skills such as using inference and deduction is less well developed. The school has recognised this as an area for improvement. More reluctant readers enjoy books and will try to read with good expression even when hesitant.
91. There are a number of factors which seem to have contributed to the good quality of pupils' writing. Pupils are given a good start in the Foundation Stage through regular opportunities for simple writing activities. There is a strong emphasis throughout the school on developing and encouraging pupils' creativity, particularly in poetry and descriptive writing. They are given every opportunity to extend their ideas within their writing and develop imaginative responses without being constrained, artificially, in their efforts to write for a specific purpose. The emphasis on content within pupils' extended writing and the development of a wide range of vocabulary are priorities. In comparison, there has been less emphasis on spelling. This is relatively weaker in both key stages, as evident in spelling tests in Year 2 and Year 4, although the recently introduced spelling programmes are now promoting good progress and the school is on track to achieve better results in spelling tests at the end of the year. Evidence in pupils' written work is already showing improvements in spelling. The spelling programme includes setting pupils in different teaching groups according to their ability. This caters well for their varying needs although those with more specific spelling difficulties would benefit from a wider range of approaches including, for example, the use of computer-based spelling activities.
92. Pupils in Key Stage 1 practise writing in logical sequences and the majority can apply their knowledge of letter sounds when writing. By seven, most pupils write in structured sentences, using capital letters and full stops, with some pupils using speech and question marks confidently and accurately. They write about factual events and imaginative stories using well-chosen

connectives to make their writing flow. Pupils in years 3 and 4 write thoughtful and lively pieces which show imagination and they are not afraid to use new techniques which have been shown to them. Pupils particularly enjoy and respond to poetry. Most pupils have a secure understanding of punctuation and grammar and extend their writing to add more detail and interest.

93. Handwriting across the school is of a good standard and reflects systematic teaching of good practice. Pupils enjoy lessons where posture, seating arrangements and appropriate pencil control are emphasised before they join in lessons on new letter formations. There is good attention given to the individual needs and attainment levels of pupils. This is evident in the good rate of progress noted in the books of pupils representing all ability levels. In both key stages, pupils take pride in the presentation of work. In particular, pupils with special educational needs are guided skilfully in their written work to ensure that they experience success. They show great pride when showing visitors their efforts. There are individual targets for pupils and flexible, appropriate support is directed to help specific pupils when needed.
94. The quality of teaching is generally good. There is good subject knowledge and teachers use elements of the literacy strategy appropriately. The use of an introductory 'starter' session to practise and extend spelling skills was a good feature of a lesson in a Year 3/4 class. Lessons are planned with a suitable structure and pupils are managed well through the different elements of the literacy hour. In most lessons, teachers have suitably high expectations of what pupils should achieve. In the better lessons, higher attaining pupils are given more challenging work but, in other lessons, these pupils are not always provided with enough challenge in terms of specific tasks which focus on higher-order skills. This is recognised as an area for further development. There is good ongoing assessment of pupils during lessons and most teachers make appropriate use of a plenary session at the end to discuss what has been achieved. Teachers mark work regularly and there is good evidence of their comments improving pupils' efforts. Occasionally, marking is not extended to include guidance for future work but comments are positive and encouraging. Time is generally used well although, occasionally, lessons are rushed at the end and this means that pupils do not complete their written work nor have time to reflect on what they have learned. Pupils are given opportunities to develop a good range of relevant vocabulary and to use their literacy skills in other subjects such as science, religious education, history, music, physical education. ICT lessons in the computer suite give pupils the chance to develop and practise their drafting and editing skills but too little use of ICT is made by teachers during their lessons. This reflects limited access in some classes to a computer. The school needs to encourage teachers to make more use of the computer suite during literacy lessons. Homework supports spelling, reading and, sometimes, writing. Books which have been sent home include comments which indicate that parents are given opportunities to share in the teaching and learning process. Parents also contribute effectively to their children's reading by completing the home-school reading diary and maintaining an ongoing dialogue with teachers.
95. The subject is led and managed well. The co-ordinator has monitored teaching and learning in all classes and provides a good role model in her teaching. Analyses of pupils' results in tests have identified areas of relative weakness, such as spelling, and these are being addressed successfully. The demands on her time are great but she has risen to the challenge of continuing improvement in English and has attended a number of useful training courses which have led to improvements in the way literacy is being taught through the school. Resources are good and books and learning materials are easily accessible around the school. The range and supply of books to stimulate pupils' interests and individual needs are good. Pupils have the benefit of regular access to the good library facilities.

MATHEMATICS

96. Standards in the National Curriculum tests for seven year-olds in 2000 were above national averages when compared with the results of all schools and similar schools. The proportion of these pupils reaching the higher level was average. The boys attained significantly better than the girls and attained slightly better than their peers nationally. On the other hand, the girls attained

much lower levels than their peers nationally. In the 2001 national tests, the proportion of pupils attaining the nationally expected level fell and was average when compared to all schools and schools in similar contexts. The number of pupils reaching the higher level remained average when compared with other schools. In contrast to the previous year, boys achieved less well, reflecting a cohort with more lower attaining boys, including a significant number with special educational needs. Overall, test results for the past six years show a trend of improvement for seven-year olds similar to that nationally. The results in the non-statutory tests for nine year-old pupils show consistent improvement over the past six years, particularly in the numbers attaining the higher level. Comparison of the same pupils' results at the ages of seven and nine shows that the progress they have made during Key Stage 2 is satisfactory. Non-statutory targets in mathematics based on prior attainment are set for all year groups. In the national tests for seven-year-olds in 2001, the school fell just short of its ambitious overall target set for pupils attaining the nationally expected level, but exceeded that for pupils attaining the higher level.

97. During the inspection, most seven- and nine-year-old pupils attained standards that were similar to nationally expected levels and made satisfactory progress in mathematics. There were no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls overall, but a greater proportion of higher attaining boys were noted. By the end of Year 2, higher attaining pupils add and subtract two digit numbers, understand hundreds, tens and units, multiply by 4, 5 and 10, and know the properties of simple two-dimensional shapes and line symmetry. Average and low attaining pupils understand aspects of this work but do not reach the same standards as higher attaining pupils. By the end of Year 4, many pupils work in thousands, add, subtract, multiply and divide in decimals, including pounds and pence, and understand the properties of more complex shapes in both two and three dimensions. They interpret data from graphs, calculate the area and perimeter of shapes and work in simple fractions. Their skills in mental work are satisfactory overall. Some find word problems hard to work out. Throughout the school, the highest attaining pupils are not challenged enough in their work, and they could make more progress than they do. In particular, they are given too many tasks at the same level and not encouraged to think enough and solve mathematical problems. Pupils' skills in numeracy are sound.
98. The quality of teaching is generally satisfactory. Lessons are well prepared with equipment and materials to hand. Lesson planning is effective and includes a clear emphasis on what pupils are to learn. In best practice during the inspection, this information was shared with the pupils. This helped to give a clear focus to the lesson. For instance, in a Year 1 lesson on 'teen' numbers, the teacher shared the objective with the pupils at the beginning of the lesson and reviewed it with them during the plenary session. In the most effective lessons, work is set at the appropriate level for pupils' abilities and interests. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' learning and encourage them to complete their work in a set time. This provides good levels of challenge for pupils and they tackle their work with eagerness and relish. Pupils make good progress when the teaching is as good as this.
99. Mental and oral work provides a clear and brisk start to lessons. This is followed by significant periods of direct and purposeful whole-class teaching during which ideas are developed well and useful mathematical strategies are demonstrated. In these parts of lessons, resources and equipment are often used well to demonstrate learning. Pupils are involved well during these sessions. This was observed in a Year 2 lesson where pupils used their individual white boards to play a bingo game. Pupils then settle to work individually or in small groups on mathematical tasks. These are usually well-matched to the pupils' needs although, in some cases, written work is not sufficiently linked to mental methods and the most able, in particular, are not always challenged enough. In the best lessons, teachers and support assistants use this time to work with pupils, supporting and challenging their learning. However, in too many cases, teachers do not assess pupils' work carefully enough during these sessions and do not provide enough guidance for pupils to help them improve. As a consequence, some pupils, especially the most able, do not make the progress they should. For instance, when the most able finish their work, they are often provided with more work at the same level, instead of being provided with more opportunities to extend their thinking and problem-solving skills.

100. The school is implementing the National Numeracy Strategy systematically. This is helping teachers to plan their work well. Standards of attainment are rising as a consequence at a similar rate to those in other schools. There is evidence from the school's data that all aspects of mathematics are being taught. However, evidence from pupils' books indicates that not enough time is currently being allocated to investigations and problem-solving activities and to the handling of data. These elements of mathematics help in the developing of thinking skills which, in turn, help to provide greater levels of challenge and stimulation, especially for the highest attaining pupils. Suitable learning targets are set for all pupils in mathematics and these are shared with parents. This is helping to provide a greater focus for the teaching and pupils' learning. Assessment and recording procedures to track pupils' progress through the school are good. However, the day-to-day assessment of pupils' learning is not well developed. A simple system is in place for assessing which pupils have not achieved, achieved or exceeded the key numeracy objectives at the end of each unit of work but this information is not always used when planning the next stage of learning. Marking is not always up-to-date and does not inform pupils what they have to do to improve. The support for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language is satisfactory and these pupils make sound progress. The organisation of pupils by ability for mathematics is appropriate. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating standards and teaching in mathematics are very good.
101. There is evidence from pupils' work that computers are used to help pupils in mathematics. For instance, Year 2 pupils have produced a graph from a traffic survey and Year 4 pupils have compiled and analysed a database on birthdays. This good practice needs to be developed further throughout the mathematics curriculum. There is some evidence that numeracy skills are being consolidated in other subjects but, as yet, not enough opportunities are taken to teach these skills in subjects such as art, design and technology and geography.
102. Standards in mathematics and the quality of teaching are about the same as they were at the last inspection. Pupils' attitudes are just as positive as they were four years ago. The school is right to have included improving standards in mathematics as a priority in its current school improvement plan. Further work is still required if standards are to rise further, especially for the highest attaining pupils. The co-ordinator has a secure overview and the school is well placed to achieve this.

SCIENCE

103. Since the last inspection, the school has made very good improvements and science has developed as a particular strength. At that time, standards were average for seven-year-olds and below average for nine-year-olds. Standards for both age groups are now above average. Results of the statutory teachers' assessments for seven-year-olds were well above the national average in 2000 and above average in 2001. The percentages achieving the higher Level 3 grade have been steadily improving and were well above average in 2001. Both these year groups, now in Years 3 and 4, have continued to make good progress and their work is above average, notably in the experimental and investigational aspects of the subject. Pupils show a good knowledge and understanding of the different types of human teeth, using the correct names and describing their use. The average and higher attainers give thoughtful and well-considered explanations of how animals' teeth are adapted to their use. Work in pupils' books shows that pupils throughout the ability range are developing an understanding of forces and how they act in different directions and are improving their skills in observing, recording and interpreting their work.
104. The good level of achievement reflects good teaching across the three classes in Years 3 and 4 and good leadership and management of the subject. While only one lesson was observed for this age group during the inspection, good teaching is evident in the consistency of the standard of work in pupil's science books in all classes and in samples of work from the previous year. Strengths in the lesson observed included clear objectives for the lesson, based on what pupils had learned previously; these were shared with pupils to ensure they knew what they should be learning. Expectations for higher attaining pupils to record in a more systematic way were

appropriate. Confident subject knowledge allowed clear and effective explanations and answers to pupils' questions, backed up by simple demonstrations with models or mirrors of how both sets of teeth work together in the jaw to hold, grind and chew food.

105. The good attention paid to investigational and experimental work is encouraging pupils to think scientifically and develop positive attitudes to planning and carrying out tests. This is evident in the confidence and enthusiasm they show when talking about how they would keep a test fair by controlling all variables and changing only one variable at a time.
106. In Year 2, pupils are achieving above expectations although the very high standards evident in the previous years are not yet apparent in their work so far this year. Pupils recognise and name a range of sounds they hear and their sources; the higher attainers offer descriptions about the quality and intensity of these and some describe how sound gets fainter as it gets further away from a source. Pupils' written work includes work at appropriate levels on the life cycle of the butterfly. Good progress is evident in the more sophisticated recording of frog life-cycles. The teaching observed for this age group was generally satisfactory with some good features; evidence of teachers' plans and pupils' work indicate that there is much good teaching in Years 1 and 2. There is good consistency in the content and level of recorded work and in teachers' expectations of how the work should be presented by pupils of different levels of ability. The work shows very good on-going assessments that identify clearly what pupils know and can or can't do. Objectives for lessons are usually clear and specific although, in the lessons observed, were not always shared sufficiently with the pupils and in one case described what pupils would do in the lesson rather than what they would learn. Teachers approached their 'sound-walk' in different ways and with varying levels of success due to the different sizes of the groups and levels of support from other adults. The large size of the group in one lesson presented difficulties for the teacher to encourage pupils to listen and make their own conclusions about where sounds were coming from and why some were different. This was much more effective in other lessons where the size of the group was small or where extra support enabled groups to be split. Older and higher-attaining pupils are given more challenging recording tasks, such as devising their own method of recording their observations from the sound walk. This is appropriate in developing more scientific recording and interpretation skills although pupils in one lesson needed greater guidance in this. Simple displays of materials to stimulate pupils' thinking about how sounds are made provide a useful focus in two classes in Years 1 and 2. The needs of the small group of Year 1 pupils in the mixed Reception/Year 1 class are met well in science due to additional support which enables them to be taught separately and follow the same programme of work as the Year 1 pupils in the mixed Year 1/2 classes. Pupils with special needs are supported well and make good progress.
107. A significant factor in the improvements in provision and in the good standards achieved has been the effective leadership and management of the subject. The co-ordinator is a good role model in her teaching, has a good overview of standards through the school, based on regular monitoring of pupils' work and has developed a system for interviewing groups of pupils and questioning them about their work. This is good practice. An analysis by the school of the results of teachers' assessments identified a relative weakness in pupils' knowledge of physical processes and this became a subsequent priority for improvement this term and a focus for the co-ordinator's monitoring. A good scheme of work provides a clear structure for progression in skills, knowledge and understanding in all elements of the subject and caters appropriately for pupils in mixed-age classes through a carefully planned two-year cycle. Good systems for assessing pupils' attainment have been developed and include twice-termly tests of investigational and experimental skills as well as regular checks of knowledge and understanding at the end of units of work. This is linked to a simple recording system although the important information gained is not yet used effectively to inform teachers' plans for the next stage of work. Pupils' progress is tracked from Year 2 to Year 4. This could be usefully extended to include individual and year-group targets to achieve by the time pupils leave the school. The use of ICT to support work in science is at an early stage of development. The co-ordinator has produced a useful overview of available CD-ROM software to support units of work and has identified links between science plans and units from the ICT scheme of work. This is a good start and the school is well placed to develop this aspect rapidly.

ART AND DESIGN

108. Standards are above average in Years 2 and 4 and have been maintained well since the previous inspection. Where standards are particularly high, as in observational drawing, the school modifies planned activities to accommodate a higher level of challenge and enjoyment. This reflects high expectations by teachers and the subject co-ordinator. Seven-year-olds in Year 2 are skilled in the use of pencil drawing because they have regular opportunities to explore mark-making and sketching through direct observation. Computer technology is now beginning to widen the opportunities in art. Year 2 pupils have used painting software to create pictures in the style of the artist Mondrian, exploring linear effects well, using colour and fill tools. Pupils in Year 4 are skilled in selecting appropriate pencils graded to match the effect they wish to create. This develops their capacity to improve their designs and sketches through personal decisions based on their aesthetic response to line, tone, texture and pattern. This is evident in their fluid and detailed representational sketches of town buildings and architecture sketched during visits around the town.
109. The standard of detail is particularly striking in pupils' sketchbooks, where they produce very finely detailed drawings and watercolours based on the work of the Victorian watercolourist, Edith Holden. The pictures of flowers such as geranium, veronica and lupins are fragile and meticulously drawn, to a high standard for Year 4 pupils. The sensitive compilations of personal work are a reflection of good teaching, notably teachers' high expectations of pupils' work and presentation but particularly, the effective build-up of skills. Pupils are used to drawing from observation in a range of media such as charcoal, crayon, pastel and the use of mixed media. Teachers make good use of the work of a range of artists to focus on style and technique and effectively draw on these for pupils to experiment, as in pupils' pictures like those of the artist, Monet.
110. Pupils achieve very well in both key stages because the subject leadership has developed activities matched well to increasing skills of sketching and painting. These build effectively on work in the Foundation Stage. Pupils' early marks and pictures are valued and this leads to confidence as they move through the school. Year 3 pupils look back at their sketchbooks and revisit ideas, building on their repertoire of tone, line and shade when they begin a new drawing of a still life object such as seedpods or an African bead necklet.
111. The good teaching seen is particularly effective in getting pupils to refine their own work by continually supporting them as individual artists, growing in skill with the teacher's guidance. There is a good balance between the teaching of skills and the exploration of techniques. The mixed aged classes have appropriately planned work that ensures that pupils achieve well. Year 4 pupils use clay to design and make shoes in response to their local history visit to the Northampton Shoe museum, where they sketched on site. Year 3 pupils build on their drawing skills by the challenges of form and shade in the objects selected. They explain the effect they are striving to create with the soft or hard lines. Pupils with special educational needs are absorbed into lessons and achieve well.
112. The subject is given a high profile in the school and time spent on art lessons is higher than average. Subject leadership is very good with high standards maintained because pupils are expected to examine and evaluate their work as they develop it. This is a result of the way the subject leader has valued pupils' work and pursued detailed and reflective responses. To build on this success, it would be valuable for pupils to have more opportunities to use more challenging language and terminology when evaluating their work. The school uses the visual arts well to convey the school aims. The welcoming ceramic faces, at the entrance to the school, demonstrate this admirably.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

113. Standards at the age of seven and nine are average. This represents satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection when standards for the oldest pupils were below average. Requirements of the national curriculum are now met and adequate provision is in place to develop pupils' skills and understanding of the nature of the design process and making products. This is a result of the school's adoption of a scheme of work which combines national guidance and a locally agreed programme of activities. This contributes to a coherent sequence of skills development across both key stages but is dependent on the number of units planned into the curriculum by the school and when they occur during the year. This is currently at a minimum allocation and the overall amount of time spent on the subject is lower than average.
114. In Year 2, pupils understand the need to design a product for use and explain their bookmark designs to a satisfactory degree. However, whilst they relate their products to the real world, they have few opportunities to select materials in relation to the properties needed because they are provided with felt only. This supports the design process but limits possibilities of pupils drawing up their own individual designs based on a range of sources and examples. With prompts, one boy considered that using a material such as leather would be better because *'it would be more stiff'*. Pupils are not used to evaluating their designs with others. However, where experiences are good, they begin to understand design elements well, such as front and side views when designing lorries in earlier work in Year 2. Year 4 pupils' understanding of movable parts, when designing and making greetings cards is satisfactory because they have been taught and understand the mechanics of simple moving parts using hinges, sliders, pop-ups and pivots. The designs they create are self-generated and effective. Achievement in both key stages is satisfactory. A particularly successful piece of work was a puppet theatre, designed by Year 2 pupils. They made characters from 'Jack and the Beanstalk', attaching straws to allow a sideways movement and they worked well with little adult support.
115. A limited amount of teaching was seen during the inspection. No lessons were planned in Years 3 and 4 until later in the term. However, the quality of teaching is judged to be satisfactory, taking into account the range of pupils' work and evidence from discussions with pupils. Relationships are good and this contributes well to the provision in lessons. However, in Years 1 and 2, pupils are not encouraged enough to consider how they might improve their work.
116. Subject leadership is satisfactory. Resources have improved to match the needs of the curriculum and tools are adequately housed and accessible. The co-ordinator has worked alongside colleagues to support pupils' work and this has helped to raise achievement in Years 3 and 4. More work is needed in linking units of work to other subjects. For example, there are no clearly linked plans between the science and PSHE work on Healthy Eating to that of Food Technology and Eating in design and technology. The subject leader has sought to ensure coherent planning over the two-year cycle but more attention is needed in order to ensure that pupils have the appropriate level of basic skills and knowledge needed before starting a unit of work. For example, a unit on 'moving cards' is one of the projects undertaken in Years 3 and 4 but skills in evaluating the function and appeal of designs have not been experienced and there is no clear link with the development of the basic craft skills needed for this work.

GEOGRAPHY

117. Standards are average in Years 2 and 4. The school is successful in using the local area, particularly the changing nature of the town and the environment of the school. However, pupils' knowledge of environmental change does not link into their understanding of the effect on their lives. As a result, Year 4 pupils are not able to explain what would make a place good to live in. No lessons were seen during the inspection week because the geography topics were taught in the previous half-term. However, pupils' knowledge about the world is better than that typical of Year 4 pupils because the school makes good use of map resources in other subjects, assemblies and through incidental learning. Pupils use the world and United Kingdom maps very well, to locate London, Northampton and areas known to them. Their knowledge and skills in understanding maps is enhanced in their local study topics, where maps form a key element.

118. There have been some improvements in the provision since the previous inspection. The school has made good use of national guidance through units of work about 'Barnaby Bear' in Years 1 and 2. This has extended pupils' understanding of places and routes. This is effective also for pupils in Years 3 and 4 who have special educational needs, as they re-visit to communicate with the bear.
119. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. In the previous school year, pupils were involved in planning the outdoor environment of the school to enhance the play facilities. In Year 3 and 4, pupils were involved in the local council's initiative to name new streets. The study of the local changes to the town have been particularly beneficial to pupils' understanding of change and have linked well into other subjects such as art, when pupils sketched features of the town. Parents have been involved well in this work and helped to inspire their children. The visits to the town have particularly enhanced pupils' perception and knowledge about the local area. Pupils achieve well in mapping and enquiry skills when using atlases. Maps around the school promote this well. Higher achieving pupils in Year 4 use 6-figure map references to draw and locate features on a map of a Mystery Island. In their comparative study of Britain and a village in Kenya, pupils are expected to locate specific places and features and to estimate distances. This shows effective teaching by the knowledgeable subject leader.
120. Leadership is satisfactory with good features such as the networks with other schools and the development of local agreements about curriculum content. The co-ordinator has a good knowledge of the subject, monitors planning to ensure progression in pupils' knowledge and understanding and ensures resources are in place.

HISTORY

121. Standards at the age of seven and nine are average. Writing about aspects of history is a particular strength of the older pupils in Years 3 and 4. Their response to historical artefacts is evident in the empathy and quality of reflection in their writing. This is a result of the opportunities to engage directly in historical enquiry through museum visits and the use of local archaeological sites. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection though standards overall remain similar. Planning is supported by an appropriate scheme of work but in practice it is not interpreted with sufficient precision to ensure progress in learning historical skills and knowledge for all children, especially in Years 1 and 2. For example, whilst the level of pupils' achievement at the age of seven is satisfactory, activities planned for pupils do not always develop learning in history at a sufficiently challenging level. At age 7, pupils' knowledge of chronology is similar to that typical of pupils in most schools.
122. Pupils' achievement in Years 3 and 4 is satisfactory with some better features in the local history work, particularly since the exciting discoveries in the town during excavations to develop local amenities. The school visit by the archaeologist drew enthusiasm and interest from the school community, including parents. This inspired pupils and some have maintained this interest as a result. One boy in Year 4 regularly takes home an encyclopaedia to read about stories in history.
123. In Years 1 and 2, pupils learn about the Gunpowder plot by listening to the story and browsing through the topic books. The opportunities for role-play add to the quality of pupils' understanding of events and they are able to ask questions about Guy Fawkes which show they are developing empathy. Teachers plan to use these situations to assess pupil's knowledge. However, while the activities planned in the lesson observed promoted satisfactory progress for pupils in Year 2, the Year 1 pupils made firework pictures and thus made little progress in learning about history. Teaching is, nevertheless, satisfactory overall.
124. Year 3 and 4 pupils make good observational sketches of Roman artefacts and compose good recounts of their visit to the museum. Pupils wrote:
"I learnt that shoes that King Henry VIII wore have come back in fashion!" and

"I like the medieval shoes. They were pointed at the front and must have been very uncomfortable to wear."

The opportunity to examine historical artefacts at first hand pays off well in developing knowledge and understanding. No teaching in Years 3 and 4 was seen during the inspection but pupils indicated their delight in their recent work when asked about their sketches - *"It was fantastic!"*. These included the range of shoes and boots from the time of the British Empire in India and Queen Victoria's wedding shoes. In their detailed reports of their visit, pupils drew out interesting differences in society by noting the differences between silk shoes for the rich and clogs for the poor, demonstrating good achievement in this particular topic. It would be valuable to develop pupils' understanding of the reasons for changes as a result of historical events and thus maximise the enthusiasm they show and to develop other aspects of historical enquiry, particularly the different ways in which the past is represented.

125. Leadership is satisfactory. The school meets the requirements of the national curriculum in history. Resources have improved, particularly through the use of first-hand sources available locally. Cross-curricular links built into history plans effectively enrich literacy provision in the school and link well into the local studies for different year groups.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

126. Standards have improved significantly since the last inspection. In Year 2, pupils' attainment is above average and, while attainment in Year 4 is broadly average, pupils have developed a wide range of skills and are well placed to achieve better than this in the near future. This positive picture reflects improvements in provision, including a well-equipped computer suite and very good teaching which emphasises the progressive development of skills, knowledge and understanding. Some weaknesses remain in pupils' access to computers outside their timetabled sessions in the computer suite and in their use of ICT in other subjects. These are important areas that need developing.
127. By the end of Year 2, pupils explain confidently a range of uses of computers and how different software can be used. They are secure in most of the basic routines of loading, saving and printing their work. They use a range of 'painting' tools to create firework pictures and add text boxes to create titles. Their knowledge of how to edit word-processed work is good for their age and they describe how they can add pictures to enhance their work. The higher attainers explain how to give a sequence of instructions to make a programmable robot or an on-screen 'turtle' follow a specific course. Pupils make good progress through Key Stage 1, consolidating and extending their skills and developing a positive approach to new work.
128. In Year 4, pupils produce well presented cinquain poetry, changing text style, colour and position and adding picture images. They show confidence in using the mouse and cursor to find their way around the text, cutting and pasting sections and making alterations quickly and efficiently. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have access to a wide range of experiences covering all aspects of the programmes of study and make good all-round progress. Pupils' work so far this term shows noticeable improvement compared with work from the previous year and progress so far this term is very good.
129. Teaching is very good. Most of the lessons in the computer suite are planned and taught by the headteacher as co-ordinator. Lessons are purposeful with a strong emphasis on the systematic teaching of skills using different software. Pupils are made aware of the intended learning outcome, tasks are explained clearly and there are high expectations of the pace of the lesson and what pupils should achieve. This reflects good subject knowledge and a commitment to promoting high levels of independence. Extension tasks provide high attainers with additional challenges and opportunities to make use of skills learned in previous lessons. Pupils with special needs are supported well but, at the same time, given a suitable level of challenge that extends their skills. Learning is good overall. While pupils often make very good progress in weekly lessons there are limited opportunities to extend and consolidate this work during the week. The school is fortunate in having an experienced and very knowledgeable teaching assistant who is timetabled to work with teachers in the computer suite. She provides high quality support in lessons and teaches groups of children. This is having a significant impact on the standards that pupils are achieving.
130. The subject is managed well by the headteacher as co-ordinator. Meticulous planning of her own lessons provides an exemplar of good practice for staff. In Years 1 and 2, class teachers provide support in lessons and this is preparing them for teaching their own lessons in the near future, although timetabling in Years 3 and 4 means that teachers have limited opportunities to teach the subject themselves. Teachers are undergoing training as part of a nationally funded programme and this is improving their levels of expertise and their confidence.
131. The school is making good use of national guidance in its planning and is developing a scheme of work based on this. Formal systems for assessing pupils' attainment and progress at the end of each unit of work are not yet in place but the headteacher, as co-ordinator, has a very good overview of standards and is working towards developing a manageable system.
132. The suite of computers in the library comprises a high quality resource and is enabling whole classes to receive focused skills teaching. The sharing of the room as a library places

constraints on access during the day but the school needs to ensure that class teachers make more use of this excellent facility. Access to computers in classrooms is poor with the few computers available being shared. This limits opportunities for pupils to use their skills more widely, an important element of the ICT programmes of study. The range of software is adequate to support the use of ICT in other subjects. Pupils' writing, and in particular, their drafting skills are being enhanced through word-processing lessons in the computer suite and work on graphs and programmable robots is beginning to support work in mathematics. Co-ordinators of other subjects are beginning to integrate ICT into their planning but this aspect needs considerable development.

MUSIC

133. Standards in music throughout the school are good and have improved since the last inspection. The subject is led well and the quality of teaching is good. Pupils show great enthusiasm in their music lessons and are particularly exuberant when performing musical pieces. They demonstrate tuneful singing in lessons and during extra-curricular activities and make good progress in their knowledge and understanding.
134. Pupils with special educational needs particularly enjoy musical activities and gain great esteem from opportunities provided to demonstrate their skills in whole class lessons. In a lesson for pupils in Years 1 and 2, there was an excellent response to lively and interesting activities provided by a voluntary helper. Every pupil was given an opportunity to widen their knowledge of musical instruments and vocabulary through performance and drama involving 'Moley', a glove puppet used as an able assistant! The excellent skills of the visitor in performance and singing did not stifle the inclusion of all pupils in the singing and playing, using a 'family' of stringed instruments. The very good subject knowledge and high expectations were evident in the in-depth description of each instrument and how they are made and played. Pupils made very good progress in this lesson in understanding 'vibrato' and how music has changed over time.
135. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 learned how to understand and follow graphic scores in a very good music lesson on using sounds and structure to create music. They completed a musical score in groups and showed very good musical knowledge of notation and composition, with every pupil contributing and making music. Teaching in this lesson was very effective as pupils' skills were extended by clear explanations at every stage. Good use was made of appropriate praise and encouragement without stifling the creativity of the pupils. All pupils were given an opportunity to discuss their reasons for choosing certain rhythms and instruments and assess their own performances.
136. As a result of these well-taught lessons, pupils throughout the school are learning how to read and write music and also to appreciate the history of music making. Music in the school is enhanced with additional lessons for flute, recorder and violin for individual pupils.
137. The subject is co-ordinated well by an efficient and enthusiastic co-ordinator and the provision of resources is good. The current policy has been revised by a small group of staff and effective use is made of national guidance and a published scheme of work. The co-ordinator collaborates whenever possible with staff in Years 1 and 2 and monitors their planning. Her use as a specialist music teacher in Years 3 and 4 is particularly effective. Simple and effective systems for assessment enable pupils' progress to be monitored. Music is a highly valued subject within the school and makes a positive and rich contribution to the cultural experiences of the pupils.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

138. Physical education has become a particular strength in the school's curriculum. Pupils in both key stages are achieving very good standards in gymnastics, dance and swimming and achieve

well in games. They make very good progress throughout the school. This represents very good improvement since the last inspection.

139. Swimming, in particular, is a strength with pupils demonstrating well-developed skills which are above expectations for their age. Pupils make rapid progress in achieving awards and show great pride in their achievements. The very good support given in swimming lessons is enhanced further through competitions. The pupils' successes are contributing to their overall high level of physical fitness and stamina, their very positive attitudes to healthy living and their poise and confidence in dance, gymnastics, games and movement generally.
140. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 showed excellent skills and tactics when thinking about how to use their bodies and expressing their different interpretations of the sea in a dance lesson. The very effective introduction gave every pupil in the group time to consider their individual physical responses and demonstrate their skills in movement, agility and control as they moved around the hall, using every available space. This opportunity to reflect and then perform produced excellent interpretations. One pupil was totally absorbed, as he 'became' a dolphin, sliding and gliding, swooping and swishing around the room. Following further thought and practice, he later extended his movements to join in with the whole group. Excellent teaching ensured all pupils were able to demonstrate a high level of skill in their chosen reflections and performances. The choice of music and the use of scarves and floating blue sheets contributed to the overall spectacle of a very high quality lesson. The atmosphere created in this lesson was magical and its quiet and calm ending enabled the pupils to reflect on their performances and make their own evaluations of how much they had improved their physical skills.
141. In gymnastics, pupils in Years 3 and 4 demonstrate very good skills in receiving their body weight in different ways. They use the whole hall area well and every pupil attempts movement around and over a range of apparatus. Less supple pupils still maintain a positive approach as they think and plan how to move. Other pupils and staff praise their efforts. This atmosphere of encouragement and praise for pupils whatever their level of fitness or agility produces very good results.
142. In all lessons observed, pupils behave very well, enjoy their work and give their very best effort to each task. This reflects the very good quality of teaching. Relationships are very good and teachers build very effectively on what pupils know and can do. The very good planning and organisation of lessons, and the clear instructions and explanations ensure that very good progress is made. Pupils' success in physical education is helping them to become independent and confident, healthy and aware.
143. The hall and playground are used very well. The school has no playing field but the use of other local facilities enhances the provision. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and energetic and leads the subject well. She has undergone extensive training and other staff have benefited from her knowledge and experiences.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

144. From the limited evidence available, standards in religious education in Years 3 and 4 are similar to those established in the locally Agreed Syllabus and pupils in these year groups make satisfactory progress in the subject. This is similar to the standards achieved at the previous inspection. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 know about some key features of the life of Jesus and Mother Teresa. They know about aspects of the early church, Judaism and Islam. There was not enough evidence to form a judgement about standards in Years 1 and 2. Pupils in these year groups learn about special books and special friends, the story of David and harvest festival.
145. During the inspection, the teaching in Years 3 and 4 was good. This is an improvement from that at the last inspection. There was not enough evidence to judge the teaching in Years 1 and 2. Strengths in the teaching in Years 3 and 4 include detailed planning linked closely to the Agreed

Syllabus, purposeful and pacy teaching and good management of pupils' behaviour. In addition, activities were planned that related to pupils' prior learning, interested the pupils and which were pitched at their different levels of ability. This is good practice. Teachers questioned the pupils effectively showing a sensitivity towards their feelings and different beliefs. These features in the teaching contribute to capturing pupils' interests, sustaining their concentration and ensuring they make sound progress. Pupils enjoy religious education lessons. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are encouraged to write accounts, but more could be done to help them improve their literacy skills during lessons. This would also help to improve their understanding and skills in religious education. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not write enough in religious education lessons. This is a weakness as it prevents pupils from consolidating their thinking in aspects of religious education.

146. The co-ordinator provides clear and effective leadership. The school is currently revising its scheme of work as different ways of implementing the statutory Agreed Syllabus are devised. This is good practice. In doing so, the school needs to review units of work that do not explicitly teach knowledge, understanding and skills. This is a priority to ensure that all the teaching is satisfactory and pupils make at least sound progress in the subject. Joint planning of lessons between the Year 3/4 classes and those in Years 1/2 is a strength of the provision. This would be further strengthened if the co-ordinator were to provide more support for the Year 1/2 lesson planning. The procedures for assessing the units of work that are being devised at present are good and should provide over time a useful record of pupils' attainment. Procedures for monitoring standards of attainment and the quality of teaching are beginning well, but need to be developed further in the same ways as those for the core subjects. Resources for teaching the Agreed Syllabus are adequate, but more artefacts and videos from the religions taught and bibles would provide pupils with a greater range of experiences in learning about religious practices and customs.