

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARY'S CE AIDED PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mucklestone

Market Drayton

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124342

Headteacher: Mr P Cockcroft

Reporting inspector: Mr P H Cole
2616

Dates of inspection: 11th – 14th March 2002

Inspection number: 196967

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 4 –11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Mucklestone
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Rev D J Williams

Date of previous inspection: December 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2616	Mr P H Cole	Registered inspector	Foundation Stage Equal opportunities Mathematics Science Art History Information and communication technology	What sort of as school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
13448	Mrs D Lloyd	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and behaviour How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
29262	Mr N Hardy	Team inspector	English Design and technology Geography Music Physical education	How good are the curricular and the opportunities offered to pupils? How well does the school care for its pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mary's CE (Aided) is a very small primary school with 50 pupils on roll. It is a popular school that serves a wide rural commuter area. Pupils enter the reception year in the term after their fourth birthday on a part-time basis and attend full time in the term they reach their fifth birthday. One pupil is currently part time. All but one child is white and none speaks English as an additional language. Only two pupils (four percent of pupils) are entitled to free school meals, which is a much smaller proportion than in most schools. Although fewer pupils have special educational needs than is usual, three pupils, a larger number than expected, have statements to support either physical or emotional and behavioural difficulties. Attainment on entry varies from year to year, which is common with small year groups, but is usually close to or just below national averages. The school has recently become involved in piloting a local education authority initiative, "The Digital Brain", which uses the Internet to support learning.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school that is continuing to improve. Pupils achieve well, teaching is good and pupils' learning is supported by very effective assessment practices. The school is well led and managed and despite the high cost of educating pupils in the school it provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils often achieve better than expected in the national tests and in their work.
- Teaching is good overall and very good in Years 3 to 6.
- The school very carefully assesses pupils' learning and uses the information well to improve it.
- The school is well led and managed, particularly by the very effective headteacher.
- Pupils are well behaved and are very positive about learning.
- The school benefits from very strong parental support.
- Pupils' spiritual and moral development is promoted well and their social development is promoted very well.

What could be improved

- The quality of the learning opportunities provided for pupils in the reception year.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since its last inspection in December 1996 the school has made good progress in tackling the key issues that were identified. Learning is now planned effectively for the different ages of pupils in each class, although there are still weaknesses in the provision for reception children. Arrangements for assessment and the monitoring of pupils' progress are now very good, and those made to support pupils with special educational needs are good. Other aspects of the school's life have also shown clear improvement: standards are higher in English and mathematics, teaching is better and there have been further improvements in the

leadership and management, which make the school well placed to continue to move forward.

STANDARDS

Because of the size of the school very few pupils take the national tests each year; for example, only seven pupils took the Year 2 and Year 6 tests in 2001. Direct comparisons of each year's results with those achieved nationally and in similar schools, based on entitlement to free school meals, are therefore inappropriate. However, when the results are averaged over three or four years, to even out the inevitable variations found with small cohorts of pupils, the results have been above the national averages in English, mathematics and science in Year 6 and above the average in English and mathematics in Year 2 (science is not tested in Year 2). Overall, boys achieve as well as girls in the school, which is not the case in most other schools. When the results over time are compared to the attainment on entry over time pupils are achieving better than expected. Pupils currently in Year 2, whose attainment on entry was average, are achieving just above national expectations in English and mathematics and in line with expectations in science. Year 6 pupils are achieving above expectations in English, mathematics and science and they produce some high quality work in art. For each of these year groups individual pupils are achieving at least appropriately and some are doing better than expected. Standards found in other subjects are comfortably in line with national expectations, except for information and communication technology (ICT), where they are improving but still just below the expectations for pupils' ages. Pupils in reception are on course to achieve the early learning goals although there are some weaknesses in their personal, social and emotional development. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards their individual targets. In the national tests the school has achieved the appropriate targets it has set itself.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils enjoy school and have very positive attitudes.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	This is good overall and very good in Years 3 to 6.
Personal development and relationships	Good, pupils are polite, aware of each other's needs and feelings and get on very well with each other and with the adults in school.
Attendance	Good. Regularly above national averages.

In a large majority of lessons pupils are well behaved and enthusiastic and in Years 3 to 6 they are very well behaved and this provides a strong platform for successful learning. The behaviour of reception children, when they are taught separately, is mostly satisfactory, but when they are supervised by an adult who has weak management skills their behaviour is often inappropriate and can lead to their learning being unsatisfactory. Relationships are very good and pupils' concern for each other is seen to particularly good effect in the way the pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in all aspects of the school's life.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Good	Very 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.

Overall, teaching is good but varies from being occasionally unsatisfactory to excellent. Almost all of the teaching in Years 1 to 6 is good or better with close to a half of the teaching in Years 3 to 6 being very good or excellent. Pupils in reception are supervised for the majority of the time by classroom assistants under the guidance of teachers. This works satisfactorily most of the time but one of the assistants is not as skilled as the other and is not always successful in ensuring pupils are sufficiently involved in the planned tasks and when this happens they achieve too little in the session and opportunities to promote their personal, social and emotional development are lost. Numeracy is taught satisfactorily in Years 1 and 2, where higher attaining pupils could sometimes be extended more, and it is taught well in Years 3 to 6. Literacy is taught well and in Years 3 to 6 sometimes excellently. Strengths found in all lessons are the clear plans that teachers produce to guide their work in lessons. In the most effective lessons the objectives are clearly explained to pupils and this enables them to work successfully with the teacher. Teachers are careful to plan for all the age groups in their class and to provide work that is usually at an appropriately challenging level for them. Pupils with special educational needs are provided with work that is well matched to their particular needs and ensures that they make good progress. Lessons are well organised and resources are often used effectively to support teaching and learning, for example in the well-taught science lessons. Particular strengths in the very good teaching in Years 3 to 6 are the lively pace and interesting explanations that successfully motivate pupils and make them keen to learn. A strong emphasis is also placed on developing independent learning skills in this class, for example in their use of computers, and through challenging questioning that encourages pupils to clarify their ideas and to extend their knowledge and understanding. A relative weakness in some of the lessons in art and design and technology in Years 1 and 2 is the over-direction of pupils by teachers which limits their abilities to plan and to extend their skills with materials and tools. Older pupils in particular benefit from the helpful comments that teachers make when marking their work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall and enhanced by good provision of extra-curricular clubs, and good links with the community and local schools.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Detailed individual education plans and regular assessment and review ensure effective support.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are no pupils in the school who speak English as an additional language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	This is good. Spiritual and moral development is promoted well and social development is promoted very well. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory with room for improvement in developing pupils' understanding of cultures other than their own.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils are well cared for.

Parents are very supportive, particularly through the Friends of St Mary's which raises considerable funds, and they are very positive about the school. Their involvement with their children's education could be higher if the approach to homework was clearer and more consistent and they were given more information about what their children will be learning. The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactorily balanced and appropriately broad and is increasingly being fine-tuned in light of information gained from the very appropriate assessment practices that are being used. These are used well to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning and to provide helpful targets for them to work towards. Considerable efforts have been made to meet the particular requirements of the reception children but the accommodation limits the quality and effectiveness of the provision that can be made. Effective measures are taken to ensure pupils' safety and welfare.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very good leadership and management and is supported well by teachers in their roles as co-ordinators.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are making a valuable contribution to the effectiveness of the school. They are knowledgeable, critical friends to the school and are appropriately involved in planning developments.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Detailed analysis is undertaken of test information to identify strengths and weaknesses and good use is made of observations of teaching to bring about improvements.
The strategic use of resources	The budget and other resources, including staff and accommodation, are used effectively.

The headteacher leads by example, has high expectations, a clear vision for the future of the school and positively embraces change. He successfully supports staff and promotes good teamwork. Teachers, although all are part-time, willingly take on responsibility and co-ordinate their subjects effectively. Although the school is trying hard to provide appropriate learning opportunities for pupils in the Foundation Stage (reception) the multi-purpose use of the hall, where they spend much of their time, limits the quality of the activities that can be provided to support their learning. In other respects the resources available to the school are at least satisfactory, and the safe and the attractively developed grounds enhance what can be provided inside the building. Although satisfactory use is made of the principles of best value, they could be more systematically applied when decisions are being made about how to improve the school.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like coming to school, • Their children are well behaved, work hard and are making good progress. • The school is approachable and willing to listen to suggestions and concerns and works closely with them. • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small minority thinks that the amounts of homework are not right. • A similar proportion would like more extra-curricular provision. • A few parents believe that they could be better informed about their children's progress.

The inspection team agrees with the positive comments made by parents and with the aspects that parents feel could be improved. Although there is a homework policy and homework is regularly marked, it is not set consistently. The school acknowledges this, and the provision for homework is under review. The range of extra-curricular activities is good for a school of this size, but these do not yet extend to children in Year 1 and 2. Information about pupils' progress is available informally on an ongoing basis, but there are limited formal opportunities for parents to discuss how their children are getting on, and the meeting arranged at the end of the summer term is too late for any problems to be raised and dealt with.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1 As in all very small schools, care must be taken when comparing its results with national results and with similar schools (based on entitlement to free school meals). Because so few pupils take the national tests in Years 2 and 6, results vary very considerably from year to year. If an average is taken over a number of years then this variation is smoothed out to an extent. The three and four-year averages for St Mary's show results in both Year 2 and Year 6 that are above the national average in English and mathematics and in science in Year 6 (science is not tested in Year 2). Both boys and girls exceeded the national average between 1999 and 2001 in both the Year 2 and the Year 6 tests, except for girls in Year 6, who achieved very close to but just below the national average over this time, in mathematics.

2 There are no figures to compare the school's performance in the tests with those in similar schools over a number of years. As above, considerable caution needs to be taken when interpreting any single year's results when so few pupils are being tested. In 2001, the only year for which results can be compared to those in similar schools, only seven pupils sat the tests in both Year 2 and Year 6. These results show considerable variation between the different subjects tested. In Year 2, they were well below those in similar schools in reading, below them in mathematics but above them in writing. In Year 6, they were in line with the average in English, above in mathematics and well below in science.

3 These wide variations again reflect the very small number of pupils being tested. When the results in Year 6 are compared with what the same pupils achieved when tested in Year 2 they achieved in line with expectations in English and mathematics but well below in science. When the baseline assessment of pupils (when they enter reception) is averaged over time, pupils' attainment on entry is just below national averages (again varying from year to year from just above to below). If Year 2 and Year 6 results are compared to the pupils' attainment on entry then they achieved better than expected. The difference between the results of boys and girls was noticeably less marked than in other schools.

4 The pupils currently in Year 6 are attaining just above national expectations in English and science and above in mathematics. The standards in science are better than those that were achieved in the 2001 tests and reflect some very effective teaching of the subject. In Year 2, pupils are attaining just above expectations in English and mathematics and in line with expectations in science. Given the attainment on entry of these pupils, they are achieving appropriately by Year 2 and better than expected by Year 6.

5 In English, pupils' skills in speaking and listening are in line with expectations. They speak confidently in lessons in all subjects, with Year 6 often using technical language well but not all the younger pupils listen as closely as they could do. Writing skills across the school are above average and most noticeably so by Year 6, where grammar and spelling are well developed and pupils are skilled note takers. In mathematics, the majority of pupils are working above expectations by Year 6. They calculate accurately and quickly in their heads, make use of different strategies to work out answers, have a secure knowledge and understanding of shapes and measures and have a good understanding of mathematical terminology. In science, Year 6 pupils have well-developed skills in investigating and secure knowledge and understanding of the different aspects of the subject, such as living things, materials and their properties and forces. By Year 2, pupils are able to demonstrate understanding above expectations, for example when they were investigating the effects of

placing more than one bulb in a circuit, but they are mostly attaining in line with the national expectations.

6 Pupils in Year 1 and 2 and in Years 3 to 6 are achieving in line with expectations in almost all the other subjects. By Year 6 pupils' attainment is just below expectations in ICT, where present information appropriately using word processing and graphing programs and are quickly improving their understanding and ability to use the Internet. Their ability to use computers to control devices and sense information are not sufficiently developed. In art pupils are able to produce work of good quality in a range of media, especially with water colours.

7 Pupils in reception are in the Foundation Stage and are working towards the early learning goals. The limited evidence available during the inspection indicates that they are on course to achieve them in each of the areas of learning, except for their personal social and emotional development, where limitations in the provision are reducing the progress that reception children make in developing their independence and relationships.

8 Pupils with special educational needs are given good levels of support and are making good progress towards their individual targets.

9 Since the last inspection standards have improved in English and mathematics and are similar in other subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10 Children's very enthusiastic attitudes to learning, their good behaviour and relationships and their good attendance, are strong features of the school.

11 It is clear that children enjoy coming to school and willingly take part in the varied activities provided for them, whether in lessons, after-school clubs or one-off events, such as the competition to draw the most original Easter egg that all children entered.

12 They apply themselves seriously to their work, settling quickly to tasks and maintaining their concentration throughout the lesson. They are eager to answer questions and demonstrate what they know and can do, taking great pride in their achievements; for example, children in the reception class were anxious to show their work to visitors and involve them in role-play activities. Most children have learned the importance of listening attentively and wait patiently while the teacher explains what each group in the class has to do. Children in the infant class showed considerable self-control in a music lesson, waiting to play their instruments until they were told.

13 The most consistently good behaviour is seen in the junior class, while the response of the infant and reception children can sometimes be more variable. Older children behave very well in lessons because they know what the teacher expects of them and are genuinely interested in their work. They work well together; for example, there was much good discussion in groups during a history lesson when children were engaged on research about Ancient Egypt. Sometimes the younger children find it difficult to concentrate on what they are doing. When expectations of their behaviour are not high enough reception children do not listen and can be selfishly demanding. There are occasional examples of silliness and inappropriate behaviour, such as calling out or refusing to do as they are told. At other times, they share equipment sensibly and join together in tidying up after their lesson.

14 Behaviour around the school is very good. There has never been the need to exclude a child. At lunchtimes children eat and play together happily. They are aware of routines and

do not need to be told what to do. They are polite and friendly with visitors and confident to express their views. Older children help to supervise and look after the younger ones. Children and parents agree that relationships throughout the school are good and that there is no bullying. There is no evidence of sexism or racism. Children are thoughtful and considerate, for example, in welcoming and befriending a new pupil to the school. Children with special needs are very well integrated into the school community.

15 All the children in Year 6 are part of the school council, which makes recommendations and decisions about issues that directly affect the children themselves, for example, how to make best use of vouchers collected for extra equipment. This, together with a range of duties covered on a rota basis, such as helping to clear the dining hall, collecting litter, and helping to supervise tables at lunchtime, enables them to learn about personal responsibility and contributes to their growing maturity. Pupils recognise the purpose of these duties and undertake them without complaint.

16 Because the number of pupils at the school is small, attendance figures can be badly affected by illness, as was seen last year when for two weeks most of the children were absent at the same time. Pupils' attendance is normally very good and in previous years it has been well above average for schools of this type. There is no unauthorised absence and hardly any pupils arrive late for school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17 Overall teaching is good. It varies from being satisfactory for children in reception, good for pupils in Years 1 and 2 and very good for pupils in Year 3 to 6. This is a stronger picture than at the time of the last inspection. All of the teaching is part-time, with the headteacher sharing the teaching of the pupils in Years 3 to 6 class. The Year 1 and 2 class is taught by two teachers, each teaching for half the week.

18 Children in reception are sometimes taught with pupils in Years 1 and 2. Most of the time they are taught by classroom assistants in the hall, under the guidance of the class teachers, while the teacher takes the Year 1 and 2 children in the classroom. This is because the classroom is too small to cater for the needs of the youngest children as well as the older ones in the class. This arrangement works satisfactorily for most of the time, but there are times when the teaching is unsatisfactory. At the start of the week the teachers take responsibility for introducing the main teaching points to the reception children and these are then developed by the classroom assistants. In these introductory sessions the teachers try to cover a lot of ground. This results in the children having to sit for extended periods of time. Some find it difficult to maintain their concentration if the pace of the lesson is a little slow and inattentive behaviour is not always effectively dealt with. The quality of the input from the classroom assistants varies. One of the assistants who takes the group for most of the time is effective in managing their behaviour. She provides satisfactory opportunities for them to learn through play activities that are matched to the week's learning goals, despite the limitations of the accommodation in the hall. The other assistant is less successful and does not manage the children's behaviour satisfactorily, allowing inappropriate behaviour and silliness. This makes learning ineffective and is not helping the children to develop their personal, social and emotional behaviour sufficiently.

19 A strength of the teaching across the school is the quality of planning. This clearly identifies what pupils will be learning in the lesson and how this is different for the year groups in each class. The planning is carefully followed and ensures that almost all teaching is well focused and purposeful. On occasions, for example during the mental practice time in numeracy lessons, the more able older pupils could be extended more but usually work is

well matched to different pupils. The impact of the clear planning is particularly noticeable when the intended learning is shared with pupils so that they are able to work towards the same goals as the teachers. This was seen working to particularly good effect with the pupils in the Years 3 to 6 class. Thorough preparation is also seen in the effective use of resources to support explanations and the tasks given to pupils. In a well-taught science lesson in Years 1 and 2 the teacher was very careful to ensure that all pupils were able to explore and discover how to make a complete circuit and to have additional equipment so that the more able Year 2 pupils could be challenged to extend their understanding of electricity by discovering and explaining what happened when more than one bulb was introduced into their circuits. A well-chosen story, large magnetic money, real money and an appropriate game all helped reception pupils gain a good understanding of coins and their relative values. Reference books, photographs, artefacts, the results of pupils' own practical investigations and well-chosen poems are just some of the resources that are very well used to underpin very effective teaching of the older children in subjects such as science, English, history and geography.

20 Teachers are generally knowledgeable, and often very knowledgeable in Years 3 to 6, about what they are teaching. This ensures that explanations are clear and enable pupils to successfully gain new understanding. In the best lessons confident and enthusiastic teaching clearly motivates pupils and makes them eager to learn and to undertake the tasks they are given. This was a consistent strength of some very good and excellent teaching in Years 3 to 6. In all classes tasks are explained clearly to pupils and teachers ensure that they are able to settle quickly and successfully to work. Teachers question pupils well to encourage them to extend their answers as well as to check on how well they have understood. In many lessons teachers consistently use the correct technical language, particularly in Year 3 to 6, and are careful to ensure that pupils understand what they mean and this supports well the pupils' acquisition of knowledge. A feature of much of the teaching of the older pupils is the emphasis placed on developing their independence as learners. In a short session using the Internet the headteacher very patiently questioned pupils to encourage them to work out for themselves how they would get the information they needed for their history research on the Ancient Egyptians from a web site.

21 In both the Years 1 and 2 class and particularly the Years 3 to 6 class, a strong emphasis is placed on learning through direct experience and through practical tasks. This is enabling pupils to develop their skills, for example of testing in science and in using a variety of sources to find out about places and different times in geography and history. In contrast, some of the teaching of art is too directed in Years 1 and 2 and this is limiting pupils' ability to make choices and to explore how to use tools and different materials.

22 Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and thoroughly, often making helpful comments and insisting that pupils make corrections to their work when this is necessary. This use of assessment is successfully helping pupils to understand how they can improve their work. Teacher use their knowledge of individual pupils well to modify work for them and to ensure that the pupils with special educational needs are provided with effective support that ensures they make good progress towards their individual learning targets.

23 Teaching is clearly better than at the time of the last inspection. Lessons are much more effectively planned, pupils are usually better challenged and the needs of pupils with special educational needs are now identified well and effectively met. A weakness that remains, though, is the use of homework, as identified by parents. It is still inconsistently given and does not support what pupils are learning in class as well as it could do.

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

24 An examination of teachers' planning shows that over the academic year all the required National Curriculum subjects, together with elements of the Lichfield diocesan guidance for the teaching of religious education, are covered. Pupils also benefit from the opportunity to undertake a residential visit during their time in the juniors. Swimming is also on the timetable for all pupils in Year 3 and above and pupils take part in a science week in conjunction with pupils from other neighbouring schools. These additional opportunities extend pupils' learning well.

25 Time spent on teaching during each week is in line with government recommendations but more time is spent on the teaching of English and mathematics than is usual. Pupils have only two lessons each morning, usually English and mathematics, and this results in the time available for teaching of other subjects being restricted. Some aspects of the science curriculum are visited only every four years and the teaching of history and geography is restricted to one of these subjects each half term. This results in some of the skills, knowledge and understanding needed in these subjects being neglected for too long and may contribute to results in science national tests being lower than they could be. The time spent on the teaching of each subject is not formally monitored. Effective links are made between subjects so that what is learnt in one contributes to another. This was seen to good effect in the geography, history and design and technology work being undertaken in Years 3 to 6.

26 The needs of pupils of differing age groups and abilities are catered for well in teachers' planning and plans contain clear aims for what pupils will learn during lessons. The challenge for the most able pupils is at appropriate levels. Careful note is taken of how well pupils have understood ideas and concepts and, where this is not satisfactory, lesson plans are modified to re-visit the topic later in the week.

27 The learning opportunities for pupils in reception, who are in the Foundation Stage, are firmly based on the areas for learning and the achievement of the early learning goals that are identified for these children. However, the quality of the provision that is made is compromised by the need to teach the reception for much of the time in the hall. This means that displays and purposeful play activities cannot be set up on a permanent basis and this limits what can be done.

28 Pupils with special educational needs are supported well, enabling them to make good progress. Teaching and support staff are well aware of pupils' needs and plan accordingly. Individual education plans for these pupils are detailed and contain measurable and achievable targets that are regularly reviewed. Parents are involved in these and are well informed of their children's needs. Good practice in recording weekly targets for some pupils helps to provide effective targeted support.

29 The National Literacy and National Numeracy strategies have been introduced satisfactorily and are beginning to have a positive effect on raising standards. The quality of pupils' reading has benefited through the regular guided reading sessions and writing skills are being well developed, not only in English, but also in other subjects such as history and geography. The school has identified spelling as an area for improvement and standards are now rising. In numeracy teachers are using the three-part framework structure successfully to help in planning. The introduction of mental and oral mathematics sessions has been incorporated into lessons and is contributing to rising standards.

30 The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities for such a small school. Pupils in the juniors benefit from sporting and musical activities including football, cricket, tennis and a general club that includes craft and ICT. These are not available to younger pupils. Opportunities for all pupils in the junior class to experience swimming and to take part in a residential visit help to enliven and extend pupils' learning.

31 Pupils have equal access to the curriculum. Work, suitable to meet the needs of all pupils, is provided in lessons and good questioning by teachers ensures that pupils of all ages and abilities are able to join in lessons. Where pupils undertake music lessons care is taken to ensure that they do not miss the same lessons regularly. Pupils with physical disabilities are encouraged and enabled to take part in all activities.

32 The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is satisfactory. Issues that concern pupils such as bullying or bereavement are discussed sensitively in assemblies. Teachers record significant points in pupils' personal development in their assessment books. St Mary's is a health promoting school and pupils are involved in projects to promote healthy eating and the benefits of exercise. This is encouraged through the range of physical activities on offer including healthy sporting competition between schools in the neighbourhood. The teaching of sex education, following consultation with parents, is provided appropriately through the science curriculum. There is no drug awareness policy but raising pupils' awareness is also covered through science lessons.

33 There are good links with the local community. Pupils' education is enhanced through visits from authors, potters, musicians, theatre groups and members of the local community who provide pupils with an insight into their own childhood in an interesting history project. Links with secondary schools are satisfactory and pupils make visits to these before transfer to the next phase of education. Links with other local primary schools are very good. Regular competitive sporting events take place, and pupils' social skills are well developed on shared residential visits, the joint science weeks and the increasing sharing of subject expertise between the other schools.

34 Provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development is good, very good for their social development and satisfactory for their cultural development, a judgement similar to that made at the time of the last inspection. The good provision for spiritual development is an integral part of school life and manifests itself through the care and concern that pupils and staff show for each other. Pupils regularly consider the beauty of nature around them and how their actions can improve conditions for all living things. Assemblies and regular opportunities to discuss important issues, help pupils to gain an insight into the values and beliefs of others. Provision for moral development includes learning to distinguish between right and wrong. School staff provide very good role models. Pupils display respect for adults and each other and older pupils make mature decisions on the quality of their behaviour and how it affects others. The very good social development includes positive relationships between pupils when working in pairs or small groups in lessons and taking responsibility for their own work and that of others. Older pupils are involved in the school council, taking their responsibilities seriously. Links with other neighbourhood schools encourage wider social skills well and, together with educational visits, inter-school competitions and extra-curricular activities, help to develop social skills. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory but with some good features. Pupils are taught to appreciate their own and other cultures through, for example, dance, drama, literature, history and geography. Experience of other cultures in music and art and design are more limited.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

35 The school has good arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of the children in its care. Child protection procedures are appropriately in place. Because the staff know the children so well, they are able to make sure that each individual child gets best value from the time spent in school.

36 The personal needs of children are well catered for in a secure, caring environment. Qualified staff are available to provide routine first aid and medical care, children are well supervised at all times and staff are aware of any particular circumstances that may require special care, such as asthma, or a family bereavement. Although a child protection issue has never arisen at the school, procedures are in place and staff have received appropriate training.

37 A detailed health and safety policy covers all aspects of school life and its rules are carefully observed. The headteacher ensures that regular checks are made of the premises, fire drills are carried out and all equipment is serviced as required by the regulations. When children go out of school on educational visits, proper risk assessments are undertaken to make sure that they will be safe. Particular attention is paid to safe practices in the use of the Internet, including a set of very clear rules for the children to follow.

38 The school's behaviour policy is based on the encouragement of self-discipline, respect and consideration for others. Rewards for good work and behaviour are welcomed by the children, who understand that good behaviour is expected of them as the norm, so that there is rarely any need to use the simple sanctions available to staff. There is a clear anti-bullying policy. Through assemblies, discussions in personal, social and health education for the juniors and circle time for the infants, children are led to an understanding of tolerance and kindness towards others. This, together with the school's Christian ethos, ensures that bullying is not an issue here.

39 Good attendance is encouraged through the use of a well-defined home-school agreement, with reminders to parents about the detrimental effect of holidays in term time. Because parents understand and comply with the school's request to notify any reasons for absence, attendance records can be scrutinised simply and effectively.

40 Children's personal development is routinely monitored by staff on a daily, informal basis. Staff know children very well and take note of any significant change in attitude or behaviour, so that any concerns can be addressed, in consultation with parents if necessary.

41 Recently very good procedures for assessing pupils' learning have been put in place and these are beginning to have a positive effect on raising standards. Assessments of progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and in most of the other subjects are regularly completed and recorded. Teachers keep careful records of what pupils know and can do in most subjects and this provides detailed tracking information that helps them when planning future work. A rigorous and thorough analysis of the results of the national tests conducted in Years 2 and 6 and of the optional tests completed by other pupils in the junior phase is made and this helps the school identify the strengths and weaknesses in the pupils' learning. This has, for example, resulted in the identification of spelling as a weakness, the modification of the teaching of this across the school and clear indications that standards are now rising in this area. The teaching staff regularly meet to review the standards of work produced by pupils in English and mathematics. They use this information, together with what they have learnt from analysing test results, to set targets for groups of pupils to work towards and to improve their work. The quality of teachers' marking contributes strongly to the improvement of pupils' work with clear comments being made that help to raise standards.

42 Pupils with special educational needs each have an individual educational programme. These are well written with small, measurable and achievable targets. Information on the progress made by these pupils is carefully recorded, often on a weekly basis, so that the correct educational programme can be planned. Pupils' personal development is also recorded by teachers, enabling them to develop a picture of the whole pupil, rather than just their academic progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

43 The school has a strong, fruitful partnership with parents. They are very happy with what it offers to children, are pleased with its achievements and support all its initiatives. They take an interest in children's learning at home and give valuable practical help, both in classrooms and through fund raising and donations.

44 Parents believe that children like coming to school, are expected to work hard and are making good progress. They find the school approachable and willing to listen to suggestions and concerns. A minority of parents feels that amounts of homework are not right, that there are insufficient extra-curricular activities and that they are not well enough informed about pupils' progress.

45 The inspection team agrees with the positive comments made by parents and finds some justification in the criticisms. Although there is a homework policy and homework is regularly marked, it is not set consistently. The school acknowledges this, and the subject of homework is under review. The range of extra-curricular activities is good for a school of this size, but these do not yet extend to children in the infants. Information about pupils' progress is available informally on an ongoing basis, but there are not enough formal opportunities for parents to discuss how pupils are getting on, and the meeting arranged at the end of the summer term is too late for any problems to be raised profitably.

46 The quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory. Regular letters keep parents up to date with events in school, but information about topics to be studied is insufficiently detailed. Those parents who wish to support their children's learning at home are able to attend newly organised ICT workshops, and there are plans to extend these to include other topics of interest to parents, such as mathematics and reading, but currently, there is little information to help parents understand what their children are learning or what they can do to help. School reports are detailed and informative, especially in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. They identify pupils' strengths and sometimes indicate what they need to do to improve. They do not always identify weaknesses.

47 Informal contacts with parents on a daily basis, or in connection with particular issues, are mutually beneficial, and the school is always ready to respond to individual requests for information. Most parents listen to children read at home and make regular comments in reading diaries. Some give support in classrooms and help the school by accompanying trips. Almost all parents attend the organised parents' meetings and support for activities involving children, such as productions and church services, is excellent.

48 The school benefits greatly from the support and generosity of its parents. Many parents give valuable practical help to the school through the Friends' Association. A committed group of parents organises fund-raising and social events, which contribute to the school's sense of community, as well as providing money for additional resources for the children, such as subsidised theatre tickets and re-stocking the school library. Parents have

also made donations of plants and materials for use around the school, and the adventure playground was set up by parent volunteers.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

49 Overall, leadership and management are good. The headteacher is enthusiastic and committed to providing equal opportunities, and has a very clear vision for how the school can develop and improve. He leads by example through his own teaching, his positive attitude and willingness to embrace change. His contribution to effective leadership and management is very good.

50 Governors meet their responsibilities well. They have a good understanding of the school through their monitoring of lessons, and discussions of test and assessment information and curriculum documents. They know what its strengths are and where it can improve and are increasingly fulfilling their roles as critical friends to the school. Governors are appropriately involved in deciding priorities for development and in ensuring that the budget is used sensibly.

51 Teachers' roles as subject managers are developing satisfactorily and they are making a good contribution to improving the provision made for their subjects. They have clear responsibilities that include scrutinising pupils' work, and analysing test results for strengths and weaknesses as well as developing the schemes of work for Years 1 and 2. Effective curriculum links are being developed across the local family of schools to share the co-ordination of subjects and expertise. This has resulted in a successful joint science week that maximised the use of resources and extended the learning of children across all the schools.

52 Teachers themselves commented positively on improvements to teaching, the school's curriculum and pupils' learning that have occurred as a result of the monitoring of lessons and the analysis and evaluation of test and assessment information. The newly qualified teacher has had very good levels of support and guidance which have helped her to make such a positive start to her teaching career.

53 The provision made for pupils with special educational needs is very well managed and, as with other elements of the budget, the funds available for special educational needs are used effectively for the children in the school. The governors have a satisfactory understanding of the principles of best value but could make more systematic use of them when making decisions about developments and the use of the budget. For example, they could consult parents more formally about what they think the school does well or could do better as part of the process of identifying priorities for improvement.

54 Overall the school has satisfactory resources to support teaching and learning. There are sufficient teachers and support staff, for both teaching and administrative tasks. The support staff are appropriately qualified or experienced and are used appropriately to help teachers and to enable the school to run smoothly. There are no significant weaknesses in the equipment and materials needed to support teaching and learning, and improvements to the resources available in ICT are enabling more rapid progress to be made in pupils' learning in this key area.

55 The school's building is of adequate size for the number of pupils on roll but is not well matched to the teaching and learning requirements for pupils in the reception year. They have to spend much of their time in the hall as the classroom is too small to provide appropriate play opportunities for them while at the same time meeting the teaching and learning needs

of pupils in Years 1 and 2. The current arrangements which involve using the hall is an inadequate compromise as activities have to be set up and then taken down every session because the hall is used for other purposes. This limits the quality of learning opportunities provided for reception pupils. The school is very aware of this problem and has very appropriate plans for extending the Years 1 and 2 classroom to tackle it.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

56 In order to further improve the quality of teaching and learning and the standards achieved by the school, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) Improve the provision made for pupils in their reception year by:
 - a. continuing to pursue the extension to the Years 1 and 2 teaching base in order to establish an appropriate space for teaching reception children;
 - b. providing high quality opportunities for them to learn through carefully planned investigations and structured purposeful play activities;
 - c. ensuring that the teaching of reception children is of a consistently high quality.

Please refer to paragraphs 18, 27, 55 and 57-64.

In addition the following minor issues should be addressed:

- a. Improve pupils' understanding of cultures other than their own (*paragraph 34*).
- b. Provide a more consistent programme for homework (*paragraph 23*).
- c. Take note of the parents' wishes for more opportunities for them to discuss their children's progress (*paragraph 45*).
- d. Review the time that is given to the different subjects in each week so that it can be used more flexibly, for example to enable aspects of the science curriculum to be revisited so that pupils can consolidate what they have previously learned (*paragraphs 25 and 86*).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	18
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	15

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	2	8	6	1	0	0
Percentage	6	11	44	33	6	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	n/a	50
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	n/a	2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	n/a	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	n/a	6

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

Unauthorised absence

%

School data	7
National comparative data	5.6

School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	50
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25
Average class size	25

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	40

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001
	£
Total income	146,365
Total expenditure	140,284
Expenditure per pupil	2,927
Balance brought forward from previous year	8,040
Balance carried forward to next year	14,120

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0
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Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0.5
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.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	50
Number of questionnaires returned	28

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	75	21	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	68	29	4	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	57	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	57	14	0	4
The teaching is good.	54	46	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	61	11	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	79	21	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	32	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	46	54	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	75	25	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	46	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	54	18	0	0

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

57 The children in the reception year are in the same class as the Years 1 and 2 pupils. However, for most of the time they are taught separately in the hall, mainly by classroom assistants. This approach has strengths and weaknesses. It enables the adults working with the reception children to concentrate on their needs without the distraction of the older pupils and allows activities for the reception pupils to be set up without disturbing the other pupils. However, the multi-purpose use of the hall means that the play, creative and investigative provision cannot be left in place and this reduces the quality of what can be provided. Another weakness is that teachers have to make concentrated inputs in a small number of sessions each week, particularly for developing communication, language and literacy and mathematical knowledge and understanding. This does enable the teachers to purposefully develop aspects of these key areas of learning but the children often have to sit for extended periods and concentrate on one thing. Many are still very young and find this difficult; their attention wanders and they lose interest, which reduces the impact of the teaching.

58 When they are not being directly taught by a teacher the children are supervised and taught by a classroom assistant, the role being filled by two part-time assistants. The assistants are fully involved and aware of what has been planned for the children and they provided a satisfactory range of appropriate activities to support the intended learning. However, the effectiveness of these assistants is very different. One is confident and has good skills in managing the pupils, while the other struggles to keep them positively involved and allows inappropriate behaviour to undermine the impact of the activities on the children's learning. Within this balance of strengths and weaknesses the teaching and learning of the reception pupils is satisfactory.

Personal, social and emotional development

59 Teaching in this area of learning is barely satisfactory and there are weaknesses that can lead to children not making sufficient gains in their learning. When the children are being taught by adults who have effective skills in managing their behaviour, the children are successfully encouraged to work positively together, take turns, share toys and equipment and play constructively together. This was the case in sessions led by one of assistants: a group sensibly shared tools and materials as they made 'nests' for chicks and they sustained this independent work well; others really enjoyed collaborative imaginative role-play outside when they dressed as policemen to attend an accident on their 'motorbikes'; they confidently shared their ideas with each other and the assistant when discussing party invitations. At other times and particularly when the management of their behaviour is weak, many of the children spoil what others are trying to do, for example when making homes for animals with construction toys, and fail to respond to requests made by the assistant. In the literacy and numeracy sessions, with teachers, several of the children also find it difficult to maintain concentration and attention. Most of the children are on course to achieve the early learning goals for this area but a significant minority are not.

Communication, language and literacy

60 This area of learning is taught satisfactorily by teachers and most of the time by classroom assistants. There are weaknesses in the approach to developing this area as described above but teachers' planning is clear and sessions are very purposeful and well focused, and as a result children are making very steady progress in developing their reading and writing skills. Assistants develop the new elements, introduced by the teachers, through

an appropriate range of linked activities across the week. Almost all the children can use their knowledge of letter sounds and simple letter blends to read words and they can write simple words without adult help. They enjoy stories that are often used well in other areas such as mathematics to support their learning. When the circumstances are supportive they readily join in discussions, listening to each other and adults attentively and contributing their own ideas. The children are on course to achieve and some are on course to exceed the early learning goals in this area.

Mathematical development

61 The same approach to teaching is taken with mathematics as with communication, language and literacy. It is satisfactorily supporting their learning and the children are on course to achieve the learning goals for this area and to exceed in some aspects, such as their knowledge of number, where most can identify and count accurately numbers to at least to 20. Teachers make effective use of resources to support their explanations, such as a well-chosen story to successfully develop vocabulary associated with money and bags of coins to encourage comparison of 'heavier' and 'lighter', and 'more' and 'less'.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

62 Teachers and mainly assistants are satisfactorily developing children's learning in this area, despite the limitations of the accommodation described above. It is not practical to set up stimulating displays for children to explore and develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. The children do, however, learn through appropriately planned practical tasks, for example exploring materials with adults and investigating how they change when baking cakes, and also considering the place of cakes in celebrations. They use a reasonable range of construction toys to make models and imaginary places and to refine their ideas about their environment, for example as they construct roadways and buildings. Through opportunities to use the computers with both language and mathematical programs, they are learning to enter information and control what happens as they use the mouse and keyboard. Teachers make effective links with this area of learning as they teach in other areas, for example asking questions that develop the children's understanding of magnetism when using a magnetic board to show different coins in a numeracy session.

Physical development

63 Again the emphasis placed by adults on practical activity enables children to develop sound physical skills. They manipulate small-scale objects successfully and use tools, such as scissors, with reasonable skill to make models and constructions, and handle crayons and pencils successfully when writing and drawing. They are given frequent opportunities to play outside with large toys and they steer and guide these, often with considerable dexterity. In their play they show appropriate co-ordination as they run, jump and skip.

Creative development

64 This area is developed satisfactorily by adults although many of the activities provided are over-directed and reduce the opportunities that the children have to experiment and develop their skills and understanding through independent work. This is particularly the case when the children are producing pictures and making models that require them to use materials that are cut and stuck. The children are learning to sing, use instruments and create different rhythmical effects and degrees of loudness through the music lessons they have with the older children. Children have limited opportunities to engage in imaginative play because the restrictions of the accommodation prevent high quality role-play areas to be set

up. They do, however, show appropriate imagination and often enter into roles as they play with small toys in the hall and with the large toys outside.

ENGLISH

65 Current standards by Year 6 are just above average in reading and writing and average in speaking and listening. Because of the small numbers of pupils being tested in the school and the considerable variation that this inevitably creates, it is not valid to compare the school's results with those in other schools. Analysis over the previous three and four years paints a more valid picture and shows that pupils' performance in English in the Year 6 tests has been consistently above average and, given the attainment of pupils when they come into the school, the results have been good. Over the previous three years, boys have achieved better results than girls, which is unusual.

66 In the Year 2 tests, averaged over a four-year period, results in reading have been above the national average and in writing they have been well above average and show achievement that is good based on their attainment on entry to the school.

67 Standards now found in Years 2 and 6 are a little better than those seen at the time of the last inspection. This is partly due to the successful introduction of the National Literacy Strategy that is providing good quality guidance to help teachers to plan and deliver the English curriculum. Good use of assessment systems have also helped the school to identify areas of relative weaknesses in the pupils' learning, for example in spelling, and to rectify them.

68 The standard of speaking and listening is average across the school. By the age of seven, pupils are becoming confident and articulate speakers. When given the opportunity they respond eagerly to teachers' questions in lessons. Pupils have a good range of experiences to develop their skills in speaking, not just in English but also across a wide range of other subjects, and they readily offer answers and provide information. Listening skills are not so well developed and many of the younger pupils do not listen carefully enough to instructions and so are sometimes confused as to what they are required to do. By Year 6, the majority of pupils have expanded their technical vocabulary well and use this accurately in discussion. The more articulate express their views in detail and are able to construct an argument. They talk confidently to adults, for example when describing their residential visit or saying what they enjoy most about their music lessons. Pupils are given the opportunity to participate in both class and group discussions and share their views with others. Across the school, teachers value the pupils' contributions and ensure that those who wish to have an opportunity to respond to a question or to express a view.

69 By the end of the infants, attainment in reading is average. Pupils read a variety of texts and have good strategies for reading words that are unfamiliar and know how to search for evidence when reading non-fiction books. Many pupils read with fluency and with expression. They can provide ideas on the similarities and differences between stories, for example between *The Small Good Wolf* and the story of *Red Riding Hood*. Pupils often use a mature and sensible range of vocabulary to describe these differences and are able to answer teachers' questions on characters and content.

70 By the end of the junior stage, standards are just above average. Almost all read with expression and have acquired the necessary skills to read a wide variety of texts. Most pupils at this age read independently and recognise when they have made mistakes in reading and correct themselves. Pupils talk knowledgeably about the stories they are reading and offer opinions on why they enjoy the work of a particular author. They extract information from non-

fiction books quickly and efficiently and have a good understanding of the use of the index, contents page and glossary. By the age of eleven pupils know how to locate books in the library and are able to access the Internet to find answers to questions. The well-established reading record system contains good quality comments which help to raise standards of reading.

71 Standards of writing in the infant class are a little above average. Many pupils make good progress with their writing skills which enables some pupils to demonstrate a quality of work above that normally expected. Pupils experience a good range of writing tasks such as writing poetry, providing instructions for the completion of a task and writing at length about things that interest them, using a good range of vocabulary to explain what they mean. Appropriate attention is paid to punctuation with many pupils accurately use full stops, commas and speech marks. By the end of Year 2, most pupils are able to complete a simple book review giving detail on characters and story line. Much of the work is completed in a neat and legible script and attention is paid to the improvement of spelling, a target for improvement throughout the school. Writing skills are developed well in other subjects with pupils expected to use their own words and phrases to describe what they see, know and do, rather than copy work.

72 Writing skills are developed well in the juniors. Good attention is paid to the development of grammar skills and pupils understand and use prefixes, suffixes, adjectival phrases and parentheses and use these in their writing. They understand the term 'genre' and gather experience in writing newspaper articles, film criticisms and plays. Note-taking skills are very well developed and used by pupils in a variety of subjects. Punctuation, spelling and handwriting skills continue to be developed well following the good start made in the infants, so that by Year 6 most pupils are secure in writing in the first and second person and in the use of the apostrophe.

73 Pupils across the school enjoy literacy and are keen to participate. With the exception described earlier, pupils listen carefully to instructions and respond with enthusiasm to questions and discussions. They are well behaved and concentrate well on their tasks, particularly where the teachers' enthusiasm is infectious. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in both reading and writing. Good quality support is received from both teachers and support staff that enables them to join fully in lessons. Work is carefully planned for these pupils and a check is kept on their progress, often on a daily basis.

74 The quality of teaching is good overall but with some excellent teaching seen in the juniors. Lessons are well planned and follow the recommended strategy and take account of the needs of all pupils, offering a good level of challenge to the most able as well as support to those who find the work more difficult. Teachers' knowledge and understanding and their expectations of what the pupils will know and can do at the end of lessons are good and sometimes very good, especially for older pupils. Teachers' questioning is effective and they have good relationships with pupils, which gives pupils confidence to answer questions on even the most sensitive of topics. Lessons move at a good pace and appropriate time limits are set for tasks in lessons. The quality of marking is always good and sometime very good, with comments in pupils' books giving clear guidance on strengths and areas for improvement. This has a positive effect on the standards attained in English.

75 The management of the subject is good and there are clear ideas on how the subject is to be developed in the future. The quality of teaching is monitored and staff are open to ideas to improve their teaching. A careful analysis of test results is completed to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning and action is taken promptly to rectify problem areas, for example, spelling. Little evidence of pupils using ICT to compose text was available but the school recognises the need to develop this area. Library facilities and number of

books available are satisfactory; some additional non-fiction books are borrowed from the county library service and this enhances book provision.

MATHEMATICS

76 Pupils achieve well in mathematics. Because of the small number of pupils tested each year the results vary considerably from year to year depending on the particular make up of each year group. It is therefore not helpful to compare one year's results in the school with results in schools across the country or with those in similar schools. If a three- or four-year average is taken, to even out the annual variation, then the results in the school have been above the national averages in both Year 6 and in Year 2. They have probably also been better than those in similar school based on the levels of free school meals entitlement. Given that the attainment on entry taken over a number of years is close to the average found in schools nationally, the results have been good. The pupils currently in Year 2 are attaining just above national expectations and given that their attainment on entry was broadly in line with the average they are achieving better than expected. The pupils now in Year 6 are attaining above expectations and are achieving well. The standards being achieved reflect effective teaching and careful planning of the programme for learning.

77 By Year 2 pupils are working comfortably at the expected level and are beginning to access some aspects of the higher level 3. They have sound skills in calculating answers to question in their heads such as adding pairs of numbers to 20 and can count confidently in 2s. They are accurate when working with pencil and paper, for example when adding tens and units, including exchanging units for tens. When working out answers they are starting to use strategies, such as 'near tens', to make the working out easier; for example when taking 11 they first take 10 then take another 1. They can identify missing numbers in sequences, and odd and even numbers, and have a secure understanding of place value including hundreds tens and units. They have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of measuring and of two-dimensional shapes. The weakest aspect of their learning is data handling, including collecting information and displaying it using different sorts of graphs.

78 Pupils in Year 6 calculate well in their heads. They know their tables and use a good range of appropriate strategies, including estimates and approximations, to work out answers mentally, for example $39+45 = 40+45-1$ or $30+40+10+4$. Most have a good understanding of mathematical vocabulary and use the correct terminology when describing numbers, for example 'multiple', 'factor' and 'product'. They work accurately on paper, handling large number calculations such as $3,456 \times 39$ with confidence, and understand about fractions and their equivalence, including decimals, but are less sure of percentages. When asked to, they are able to apply their knowledge and understanding to work out logical problems and sometimes make use of spreadsheets to help in this. Their knowledge of shapes is good and they understand the appropriateness of different units for measuring. Pupils choose appropriate graphs to present information, including line graphs to show change over time and they have a sound understanding of probability and statistical measures such as mean, mode and median.

79 Pupils are positive about mathematics and particularly so when their teacher is enthusiastic about the subject. The older ones are aware of their targets and work hard towards achieving them.

80 Teaching is good. It is often very good in Years 3 to 6 and satisfactory in Years 1 and 2. Lessons are well planned. They have clear objectives, take good account of the different age groups in the class and mostly provide work at a suitably challenging level for the pupils, although this is not always the case with mental sessions in Years 1 and 2 when the higher

attainers could be stretched more. A positive feature that supports effective learning is teachers sharing the objectives of the lesson with their pupils. This makes learning more meaningful to the pupils and enables them to focus their efforts and to work to the same goals as their teachers. Teachers explain clearly both new learning and the tasks they want pupils to do. This also ensures that pupils understand what is expected of them and supports effective learning. What makes the teaching of the older pupils so good is the teachers' enthusiasm, consistent use of technical vocabulary and expectations that pupils will think for themselves. All teachers are well prepared and make effective use of resources, including other adults, to support learning. A relative weakness in some of the teaching in Years 1 and 2 is the management of pupils. Too much calling out is sometimes tolerated and teachers do not always ensure that pupils are sufficiently involved in what they are supposed to be doing. The marking of work is often good, making clear to pupils where they have made errors and giving them guidance to address problems. Homework could make a greater contribution to pupils' learning if it were set more systematically.

81 The subject is effectively led with good use being made of information from assessments to track individual pupils' progress and to identify strengths and tackle weaknesses. The curriculum is effectively planned to implement the National Numeracy Strategy in mixed age classes. Good progress has been made in developing the subject since the last inspection and in raising standards.

SCIENCE

82 By the time pupils are in Year 6 they are achieving well. Their attainment is above expectations and better than previous test results would indicate. Standards in Year 2 are in line with expectations and appropriate given the pupils' attainment when they start school. As in English and mathematics, results in Year 6 vary considerably from year to year because of the small numbers of pupils tested, for example in 1999 they were well above the national average and in 2001 below it. The average of the test results over a number of years is a more reliable guide and shows achievement that is in line with the national average and, given pupils' attainment on entry, this was appropriate.

83 Pupils in Year 2 have made steady progress and are attaining expected levels in their completed work. They occasionally attain above expectations as was the case in the lesson observed where they demonstrated a good understanding of electrical circuits and could, for example, describe the effect of adding bulbs in series to a circuit. They are given many opportunities to undertake practical activities; this has made them confident in carrying out investigations and they can successfully describe and record what they have found out. They have satisfactorily balanced knowledge and understanding across the areas of study including living things, materials and physical processes, such as electricity. They can, for example, describe the life cycle of a butterfly, and characteristics of different leaves, and name parts of the body, including some in detail, such as parts of the eye. Most know that sounds are made as objects vibrate and they can draw electrical circuits and identify whether they are complete or incomplete. Their work on materials has enabled them to successfully sort and classify them using their different properties.

84 By Year 6, pupils have studied most aspects of the subject in detail and many have a good knowledge and understanding of what they have covered. The teachers place a strong emphasis on learning science through investigation and this ensures that pupils have good understanding of testing and skills in carrying them out. Pupils' knowledge and understanding is well balanced across life and living things, materials and their properties and of physical processes. They have good understanding of nutrition and the importance of different food groups, the nature and effects of micro-organisms, parts of the body, how animals are

adapted to live in different environments (good curriculum links between science and geography help to reinforce this) and of food chains and the feeding relationships within them. They understand the differences between gases, liquids and solids and can explain how to separate out mixtures of different materials using filters. They understand the nature of friction, air resistance and magnetism and use appropriate units of measure, such as newtons, when taking measurements during investigations of these processes.

85 Teaching of science is good across Years 1 to 6 and is often very good in Years 3 to 6. As in other subjects, lessons in all classes are very carefully planned for the different age groups and are very well prepared, which ensures that even complex practical activities are successfully undertaken. Teachers build effectively on pupils' early learning by reviewing what they already know before introducing the new learning. The lessons' objectives are clear and shared with pupils so they can work with the teacher to the same ends. A strong element in teaching is the consistent use of technical vocabulary, which consolidates and extends pupils' knowledge and understanding. Particular strengths of the very good teaching are the teacher's skilful interactions with individual pupils, her infectious enthusiasm that motivates pupils to learn, and the helpful guidance that is provided in written marked work. In the lessons seen pupils showed a strong interest in science and much of their completed work reflects their desire to produce good quality work.

86 The curriculum is carefully planned to deliver the national requirements to mixed age classes but inevitably this leads to some aspects of science not being visited for several terms. The present emphasis in the weekly timetables that is given to mathematics and English limits the opportunities that teachers have to revise and revisit work covered in the past. The pupils' progress is carefully monitored and evaluated and supports the good progress that they make. The subject is effectively led and managed and lessons are well resourced. The good standards found during the last inspection have been maintained.

ART AND DESIGN

87 Standards in art and design are above national expectations by Year 6 and in line with expectations for pupils in Year 2. No art lessons were observed so it is not possible to make a firm judgement on the quality of teaching.

88 The support given to pupils who were painting landscape scenes, as part of their geography work, was effective and Year 5 pupils were able to produce subtle water colours that showed good skills in mixing and matching colours and the detail in their paintings demonstrated good drawing and brush skills. The school has used visiting artists to good effect as seen in the high quality clay tiles that were produced following the visit of a local pottery designer. The older pupils appreciate the work of famous artists, including Andy Warhol and the Impressionists, and use their work well to inform their own high quality pictures in similar styles. As seen in the geography lesson above, teachers plan many opportunities for pupils to use and develop their skills by illustrating their work and by producing pieces of art linked with their learning in other subjects. The pupils' understanding of Ancient Egypt has been enhanced by painting scenes of everyday life, Egyptian gods and hieroglyphs. Their careful and detailed illustrations of the Knights of the Round Table complement very well their written accounts.

89 The pupils in Years 1 and 2 are also able to produce effective illustrations to enhance their work in other subjects, such as in literacy when they used crayon and pencil to enrich their writing on Little Red Riding Hood. However, too often the teachers limit the opportunities pupils have to develop their art skills by providing templates for them to colour and paint.

Pupils do this well but it diminishes their own efforts at drawing and prevents them from improving their techniques.

90 Since the last inspection standards have improved in Years 3 to 6 but have dropped slightly in Years 1 and 2.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

91 Standards in design and technology are satisfactory by the time pupils attain the ages of seven and eleven, a judgement reached through interviews with pupils, a scrutiny of their work and work seen in one lesson, that being in the infant class. Attainment has fallen since the previous inspection.

92 Pupils have a secure understanding of the designing process. Pupils in the juniors produce carefully drawn designs paying good attention to accurate measurement and accurate labelling. They decide on the suitability of the materials they use in making their models and note these on their plans. Careful attention is paid to safety factors and pupils often record these separately on their designs. They understand the importance of disassembly, when for example redesigning and making boxes to hold sweets. When their project is completed, pupils carry out an evaluation and note areas for improvement which helps to raise attainment and standards. Most skills are taught well with the appropriate attention paid to the use of tools. They know how to join differing types of materials although pupils' recall of methods to make strong joints using triangles is less secure. Pupils know the importance of a good quality finish, for example, sanding joints when making a Tudor house. A further good link with history involved pupils making 'shadufs' in a topic on Ancient Egypt.

93 Younger pupils, in the one lesson seen, improved their skills in cutting accurately with scissors, threading, punching and gluing. Guidance was given to pupils who needed to improve these skills and was successful but pupils were given little opportunity to make their own decisions about how they would make things. Photographic evidence of infant pupils' work includes the use of construction kits to create animal homes and shows pupils working well together. A variety of models using boxes and tubes demonstrate that pupils are taught to securely join differing surfaces together and to pay attention to how the models are finished. Examples of food technology with pupils producing biscuits show that the range of design and technology projects is sufficiently broad.

94 No judgement on the quality of teaching can be made as only one lesson was seen. Interviews with pupils and their behaviour and interest in the lesson do, however, indicate that they enjoy their work and find it interesting. Teachers plan satisfactorily to deliver the curriculum and record the progress that pupils make in learning skills. These are used to plan what pupils will learn next.

GEOGRAPHY

95 The quality of work seen through a scrutiny of pupils' work, an examination of planning documentation and interviews with pupils, indicate that standards in geography are satisfactory by the time pupils reach the end of Year 6. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. Only one lesson was seen during the inspection and, as a result, no judgement can be made on the overall quality of teaching.

96 A scrutiny of pupils' work shows that they have a satisfactory understanding and knowledge of the environment and the locality in which they live. Pupils are involved in

fieldwork and they have explored the school grounds and the village. They are able to demonstrate a mature understanding of the problems of pollution and its causes and know the benefits of re-cycling waste products. In a good development of both geography and their writing skills, pupils 'wrote' to their local councillor to draw attention to the dangers in the local park. Further good links with other subjects are made in history and ICT in a study of both ancient and modern Egypt, with pupils finding information on the Internet. They use this information to make notes before writing the information in their own words, again a good extension of literacy skills. They seek out the similarities and differences between the two times and the way of life of the people, the climate and the occupations of those who live there. Pupils have a good understanding of the effects of tourism and why most settlements are grouped in the Nile valley. Pupils draw maps of their own local area and they are beginning to develop a sound understanding of the symbols used on maps. This work is developed satisfactorily from earlier work in the infants where pupils draw maps of their journey from home to school and locate places on maps. A sound understanding of co-ordinates is developed, providing a good link to mathematics. Pupils' geographical vocabulary is developed satisfactorily and they use correct geographical terms confidently in discussion. Their knowledge of continents, major oceans, rivers and countries is less well developed and currently there is no evidence of pupils studying a contrasting area of Britain.

97 In the one lesson seen pupils furthered their understanding of Egypt and desert environments. The work was a good match for the needs of the pupils, the teaching was enthusiastic and the teacher knowledgeable. Questioning was of good quality and this ensured that pupils had a good understanding of what they were required to learn and that they concentrated and behaved well.

98 The co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory. Appropriate attention is paid to the development of geographical skills through fieldwork. The subject is not currently taught each half term and this results in pupils not regularly consolidating their learning. Records of what pupils know and can do are kept by teachers and this benefits planning.

HISTORY

99 Standards are comfortably attaining national expectations by Year 2 and Year 6 and this is a slightly better picture than found in the last inspection. Pupils are making good progress as a result of the effective practical approaches to teaching the subject. This enables pupils to learn about the past as they successfully develop their skills in using a good range of sources.

100 By Year 2 pupils in Years 1 and 2 can make accurate comparisons between the present and life in the past, based on their observations and study of pictures and artefacts, for example of how Victorian kitchens were different from those in modern homes. They understand that change occurs over time and have studied and sequenced pictures of themselves growing and this has helped them to begin to develop a basic understanding of chronology. Similar exercises, such as examining teddy bears and comparing photographs, have enabled them to improve their skills in using artefacts and at the same time consolidated their ability to place in order items from the past. Teachers have been careful to tell the pupils about the lives of important and famous people in history, including Guy Fawkes, Samuel Pepys, Helen Keller, Louis Braille, and Florence Nightingale. This has enabled them to learn about the contributions these people have made to our lives, and to start to gain an understanding of the causes and consequences of events, such as the Fire of London.

101 Pupils in Year 6 have produced considerable amounts of independent work based on their own research notes and examination of artefacts and other sources. They have developed a good understanding of what life was like for different groups of people in different periods of history, including recently the Tudors and Ancient Egypt. They understand, for example, how vital the Nile was in the development of the prosperity and culture in Egypt, about the gods the people worshipped, the nature of the position of Pharaoh and the purpose of the pyramids. Their research on Tudor monarchs has enabled them to produce brief biographies and to construct a timeline to show when they reigned. Similarly, their research on Henry VIII has given them insights into this 'multi-talented' character and into reasons for the dissolution of the monasteries and why he had so many wives.

102 Teaching is good. Lessons are carefully planned and teachers make good use of resources to develop pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. A visit by a senior citizen to the Years 1 and 2 class extended the children's understanding of how life has changed since World War II, while well-chosen photographs enabled them to describe how their own lives have changed over time. In Years 3 to 6 the teachers use the Internet well to extend the resources, such as information books that are available in the school. This further develops their enquiry skills, as well as their skills in using computers. A feature of a good lesson in Year 3 to 6 was the quality of the research packs that the teacher had prepared for each year group. These ensured that activities were appropriately matched to pupils' development needs and provided a clear focus for their work. The greatest strength in the teaching is the emphasis placed by teachers on pupils being historians as they find out about the past. Teaching and learning are supported well by the well-planned curriculum and the careful monitoring of pupils' progress in acquiring key concepts and skills.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

103 Standards in ICT were found to be below national expectations during the last inspection. Recently the school has improved its resources for the subject by creating a small computer suite and adopting and adapting the national scheme of work. Skills in the subject are now more systematically taught and the school is taking part in a pilot project, The Digital Brain, which is developing the use of the Internet to support both teachers and pupils in their work across the curriculum. These developments are making a very positive impact on pupils' learning and although standards are still below national expectations in areas of their learning pupils are now making more rapid progress and are on course to close the gap.

104 Teachers plan opportunities for pupils to use the computers in many subjects; for example pupils in Years 3 to 6 were researching information on life in Ancient Egypt and groups were skilfully taught to use the Internet by the headteacher in the computer suite while the rest of the class worked in the classroom with other resources. This approach is used often and works well. Pupils are consistently encouraged to be independent and to work out for themselves how to obtain the information they want and only shown how to do things when this is really needed. As a result of this patient and skilfully probing approach their skills develop steadily and their learning is secure.

105 The strongest areas in the learning of pupils in Year 3 to 6 are in using computers to present information, using word-processing software and, in collaboration with the headteacher, using Internet authoring software to produce interactive stories. They produce thoughtful work making effective use of fonts and pictures to enliven what they do, for example their house sale advertisements. They have used art programs to produce work in the style of famous artists such as Seurat. In mathematics they have used spreadsheets to help in solving problems and in science to present information graphically at appropriate

levels. Pupils' understanding of databases is less secure and, apart from being able to describe how to give instructions to a programmable toy, their understanding of monitoring events and controlling devices using computers is weak.

106 The pupils in Years 1 and 2 have sound skills in using word-processing tools. They confidently enter text and use the mouse to make selections and to move the text around. They can print their work but are less sure about saving it. They have developed secure skills in cutting and pasting text and pictures through using interactive programmes linked to their work in science and other subjects, and they can produce simple graphs to present information they have collected.

107 Pupils are positive about ICT, enjoy using computers and respond well to the challenges that teachers give them. They understand the importance of computers in the modern world because of the way teachers use ICT, particularly in Years 3 to 6 as a central resource for gaining and sharing information.

108 Teaching is good overall, particularly because the headteacher, who has considerable personal skills in the subject, takes groups for ICT sessions. His purposeful patient approach, which stresses the development of independence, is very effective. Occasionally class teachers miss opportunities for pupils to use computers, for example for writing in literacy lessons, but mostly appropriate opportunities are planned that enable them to develop aspects of ICT while using computers to support and extend learning in other subjects. Appropriate assessments and records are maintained to track pupils' progress and the school now has adequate resources to support teaching and learning, which it uses well. Since the last inspection progress in the subject has been good and is supporting an acceleration in the raising of standards.

MUSIC

109 Standards are satisfactory in singing, an improvement since the previous inspection, and good in the playing of instruments. Only one music lesson was seen during the inspection and that was taken by a member of the local education authority's peripatetic music service. Singing was covered in a good quality whole-school hymn practice taken by a member of school teaching staff but further sessions are taken by the teacher from the music service. Other evidence has been gathered from interviews with pupils.

110 In the hymn practice, singing was mostly tuneful although a little too enthusiastic at first. Skilful teaching helped to raise the standards and quality of the singing and ensured that pupils considered the phrasing and meaning of the words. All pupils from Year 2 onwards have the opportunity to learn to play the recorder and most take advantage of this. This includes learning to read music. Pupils who wish can move on to learn to play the flute or clarinet. In the music lesson, pupils increased their understanding and skills in keeping to a rhythm and improved their techniques in playing percussion instruments. The teacher provided good opportunities for pupils to practise what they had learned in the lesson and this helped to raise standards.

111 Interviews with pupils reveal that music is a regular part of the curriculum. Pupils know and use a variety of musical terms such as 'dynamics', 'tempo' and 'duration' and in conversation and questioning use these confidently. They know about the different instruments in the orchestra and talk about strings, woodwind and percussion. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to compose music and there is no evidence of them using ICT to do this.

112 Most musical tuition is provided by outside services and is of good quality. Pupils appear to enjoy taking part in musical activities and are given opportunities to sing, play instruments and take part in concerts. The teaching is well organised but currently there are no records of pupils' progress in the learning of skills.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

113 There were no opportunities to see any physical education lessons during the inspection and so no judgement can be made on the standards attained by pupils or on the quality of teaching. Evidence of the coverage of the physical education curriculum has been gathered from teachers' planning, from assessment files and from interviews with pupils. This reveals that a balanced and varied programme of physical education is provided including gymnastics, dance and games. Each pupil in the juniors attends swimming for the full four-year period that they are in that age group. Interviews with pupils indicate that they become competent swimmers, covering personal survival and life saving as well as distance awards and improvement of stroke techniques. Pupils also undertake a residential week during which they experience interesting and varied activities such as orienteering, rock climbing, archery and canoeing. All pupils, including those with special educational and physical needs, are given the opportunity to join in with the full physical activities programme. Pupils' interest in competition is enhanced through a swimming gala and competitive games against other neighbouring schools.

114 Discussions with pupils reveal that most derive considerable enjoyment from physical activity and understand the benefits to be gained from exercise and a healthy diet. Teachers' planning shows that the curriculum is covered well with the appropriate time being devoted to physical activities each week. Resources for pupils to use in the various activities are well organised and sufficient for pupils to work individually or in small groups. Detailed records of the skills that pupils have developed in each of the different physical activities are kept in teachers' assessment files and help in planning future work. The records show that in gymnastics, for example, pupils have the opportunity to improve skills in linking balances together with a series of rolling movements or working with a partner to mirror each other's actions. Records show that these skills are learned satisfactorily.