

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **OUR LADY OF RANSOM PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Rayleigh

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115163

Headteacher: Mr J. Francis O'Brien

Reporting inspector: Lynda Maple  
6435

Dates of inspection: June 24 – June 27 2002

Inspection number: 197310

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant & Junior School

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 4-11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Little Wheatley Chase  
Rayleigh  
Essex

Postcode: SS6 9EH

Telephone number: 01268 785741

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Rev Fr A Dorricott

Date of previous inspection: June 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Lynda Maple 6435	Registered inspector	Mathematics	What sort of school is it?
			The school's results and pupils' achievements
			What should the school do to improve further?
Bryan Findley 9003	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Elaine Adams 23257	Team inspector	Art	
		Design & technology	
		Music	
		Equal opportunities	
Carol Frankl 18936	Team inspector	Science	
		Special educational needs	
Bradley Simmons 32145	Team inspector	Information & communication technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		Geography	
		History	
Gerard Thomson 23318	Team inspector	English	How well is the school led and managed?
Lyn Watkins 10856	Team inspector	Under fives	How well are pupils taught?
		Physical education	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Our Lady of Ransom Catholic Primary School is a two-form entry school with 402 pupils on roll who are taught in parallel year groups. It is situated in the residential area of Rayleigh where there is a high proportion of privately-owned housing. Pupils come from a wide and varied catchment area, and in general the socio-economic indicators are above average. It is bigger than other primary schools and there has been a steady increase in numbers from 1995. The percentage of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. Five pupils speak English as an additional language and none are at early stage. There are no refugees and no travellers and mobility is low. 15.6 % of pupils have special educational needs including 0.5% who have statements. Both figures are below the national average. Attainment on entry is above average. In recent years the school, like others in the area, has experienced difficulty in recruiting teachers.

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

Our Lady of Ransom is a very successful school. Many areas of its work are good. In particular, its pupils achieve well and make good progress as they move through the school. There is a shared commitment to maintaining high standards and providing a good quality of education. The school is led and managed very effectively by the headteacher and the governing body's contribution to the life and work of the school is excellent. The school provides very good value for money.

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

- Pupils achieve high standards in English, mathematics and science
- Teaching is good overall and pupils make very good progress
- The leadership of the headteacher and governing body is very good
- Pupils are well cared for and there is very good provision for their personal development
- Provision for the Foundation Stage and the information and technology curriculum are very good
- It promotes very good partnership with parents

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

- Standards in art and geography at the end of Key Stage 2 are not as high as they should be
- The creative and investigative aspects of the curriculum are not fully exploited
- The role of the co-ordinators in monitoring and evaluating the quality of education

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in 1997 and since then overall improvement has been good. The main weaknesses identified in the report have been successfully tackled. The quality of education required substantial improvement; this inspection finds the quality of education to be good. There has been excellent improvement in the curriculum and provision for pupils in the Foundation Stage and in information and communication technology (ICT). Teaching is also much better; only a very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was seen compared with 19% in the previous inspection. More lessons were judged good or very good and some excellent teaching was observed. While the work set for the most-able pupils is generally sufficiently challenging, attention still needs to be given to providing more open-ended, investigative tasks with more planned opportunities for independent work. The management and efficiency of the school required some improvement. These are now strong features of the school's work. The headteacher and governors steer the school with clear vision and a good understanding of what needs to be done. The co-ordinators are taking a more active role in managing their responsibilities, though changes in staffing have delayed some activities. The school recognises that more attention is needed in this area of the school's work.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				<b>Key</b>
	All schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
English	A	A*	A*	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
mathematics	A*	A	A	A	
science	A*	A	A	A	

The school's results are consistently high. When compared with results nationally, standards in mathematics and science are well above average and in English they are in the top 5% of schools. When results are compared with similar schools, standards in all three subjects are well above average. The school exceeded its targets for both English and mathematics. In recent years the school's results in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 have also been well above average. However, results at the end of 2001 showed a drop in reading and mathematics, mainly because fewer pupils attained the higher level in these subjects. The school considers that several changes in staff in the Year 2 classes had an adverse effect on pupils' achievements. However, it took prompt action to rectify the situation and the results of the tests at the end of this year show pupils have made good progress and have caught up.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils work hard with enjoyment and a desire to succeed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The vast majority of pupils understand and observe codes of behaviour very well.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Most pupils develop mature and sensible attitudes. Relationships with staff and other pupils are very supportive.
Attendance	Very good. Rates are consistently very high for all ages. Pupils are punctual for school.

Pupils work very hard and play happily together with few tensions of any kind. They co-operate very well in lessons and use equipment sensibly. At play, pupils share space very well and show consideration for others. Relationships are warm and trusting, which creates an atmosphere in which pupils learn very well. Attendance rates are well above average.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
59 lessons seen overall	Very good	Good	Good

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

Teaching was excellent in 3 lessons, very good in 14, good in 19, satisfactory in 21 and unsatisfactory in 2. There are very few weaknesses in the teaching in the school and a high proportion - 61% - is good, very good or excellent. The teaching of English and mathematics is good and attention to developing literacy and numeracy skills makes a strong contribution to learning in other subjects. The pupils are enabled to achieve what they are capable of.

The key strengths in the teaching are;

- very good planning and class management throughout the school
- secure subject knowledge on the part of teachers that underpins their planning
- clarity about the standard of work expected
- information that is well structured and presented

The few weaknesses in the teaching are;

- time could be better used in some lessons
- less adherence is needed to published schemes in some classes and more opportunities for problem solving, investigative work

The result of the good teaching is that the pupils make good progress because;

- they are motivated and challenged and clear about what they have to do
- they keep up a good rate of work and stay on task in lessons
- over time they progressively learn new skills and knowledge and absorb information

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum for children in the foundation stage is very good. The curriculum for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 is broad, generally balanced, relevant and inclusive.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. They have access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum that builds on and develops their knowledge, skills and understanding. Support by teaching assistants in the classroom enhances their access to the curriculum.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social education is very good and has improved since the last inspection. The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. The school promotes a set of values, beliefs and principles based on the Catholic faith and ethos. There is a whole staff commitment to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils well. It looks after their safety and welfare very well. Behaviour and attendance are managed very successfully. The school supports personal development well.

The school has a very good relationship with parents. It works hard to inform and include parents in school life and pupils' learning. Parents involve themselves very well in the education of their children and make a significant contribution to their learning.

## 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 manages the school very effectively. Co-ordinators play an active part in promoting and developing their curriculum areas. The school recognises that their leadership roles should be developed further.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are enthusiastic and knowledgeable and fulfil their responsibilities very well. They provide excellent support to the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has very effective systems for evaluating its performance. Strengths and weaknesses are clearly understood and appropriate action is taken to improve where necessary.
The strategic use of resources	The school's resources are used very effectively to promote high standards. Financial management is very good.

The school is well staffed although it has experienced difficulty in recruiting teachers. The accommodation is good overall and plans for further improvements will ensure that it will be very good. Learning resources are good in most areas, especially in the foundation stage and for information and communication technology. The headteacher and governors share a clear vision for the school and together with the senior staff have established systems for maintaining high standards and ensuring a very good quality of education for the pupils. The school as a whole is successful in applying the principles of best value.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• their children like school</li> <li>• they are helped to become mature</li> <li>• they are expected to work hard</li> <li>• they make good progress</li> <li>• behaviour is good</li> <li>• the school is well led and managed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• information on their children's progress</li> <li>• provision for homework</li> <li>• more after school activities</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with most of the views expressed by the parents. They disagree, however, that provision for homework needs to be improved. It was judged satisfactory and very similar to practice in most schools. After-school activities are good and better than normally found. Reports to parents are broadly satisfactory but in some reports the team agrees that progress is not well reported.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment is above average. Baseline assessment results show that in mathematical development and speaking and listening, attainment is above average.
2. In the 2001 National Curriculum Year 2 tests, the school's performance was well above the national average in writing and average in reading and mathematics. When compared with similar schools, results were above average in writing, below average in mathematics and well below in reading. These results were much lower than in previous years and of great concern to the school. A major contributory factor was the low percentage of pupils attaining the higher level in these two subjects. Poorer performance than usual is probably due to the many staff changes experienced by the classes concerned. The school took immediate action to ensure pupils were given sufficiently challenging work to help them achieve the higher levels. Results for these pupils at the end of Year 3 show all groups have made very good progress; in particular the proportion gaining an above average level has greatly increased. The unpublished results for the current Year 2 class indicate a very positive picture and more in line with the school's previous performance.
3. Results in 2001 for Year 6 pupils were very high. In English they were in the top 5% of schools nationally; in mathematics and science results were well above the national average. Compared with similar schools, results in all three subjects were well above average. The pupils made good progress since the end of Key Stage 1, especially in English where they made very good progress. This is mirrored in the work of the current Year 6 pupils; their speaking and listening skills are well developed, they read accurately, fluently and with enthusiasm and they are confident in the techniques of writing.
4. In mathematics, pupils demonstrate a good understanding of all aspects of the subject and more-able pupils are suitably challenged to enable them to attain the higher levels. Pupils confidently tackle mental and written calculations and have a secure knowledge of how numbers work and the relationship between them. In both English and mathematics the school is on track to meet its targets.
5. In science, teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 show that pupils' attainment was above average and at Key Stage 2 it was well above. Inspection findings indicate a similar profile of attainment with pupils throughout the school achieving good standards in all aspects of the subject.
6. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards in art, design & technology, geography, history, information and communication technology and physical education are as expected for pupils' ages.
7. There is a similar picture for Key Stage 2, except that standards in art and geography are below those found elsewhere. In both subjects the breadth of study is too narrow and not developed to sufficient depth.

8. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. This is because their learning needs are clearly identified and appropriate support is provided. In other aspects of the curriculum, they make satisfactory progress.

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

9. Pupils of all ages demonstrate the same very good attitudes and levels of behaviour evident at the time of the last inspection. There is a keenness and enthusiasm for school, which is all too apparent in the way pupils prepare for the start of the day and participate in activities throughout the whole day. They take a pride in what they do and are eager to succeed, mainly because their teachers make the work interesting and challenging. Pupils regularly attend after-school activities in large numbers. Pupils with special educational needs have very positive attitudes to work and behave well in all lessons.
10. Behaviour is very good because the pupils understand the codes of conduct they have helped to devise and have a very clear idea of what is expected of them. Pupils behave well out of desire and the vast majority need very little intervention from members of staff. They take very good care of equipment in lessons and look after their surroundings very well. For example, they keep the dining hall and play areas free from litter. Pupils respond very well to a very effective system of awards and sanctions of any severity are rare. There have been no exclusions from school for many years.
11. Relationships between pupils and members of staff and with each other are very good. Pupils work and play happily together with no evident tensions and levels of co-operation in the classroom are very high. There is no evidence to indicate any concerns about bullying or other forms of oppressive behaviour. Pupils' personal development is very good and the older pupils, for example, demonstrate sensible and mature approaches to their relationships with teachers. They value the opportunity to be involved in visits and school journeys and are aware of the benefits these confer. Pupils respond well to the limited range of opportunities provided for exercising responsibility, such as when helping younger pupils at play.
12. Attendance remains very good and is well above the national average. Levels have been consistently high for a number of years. Unauthorised absence is below the national average and pupils are punctual for school. Any lateness is usually due to the late arrival of the school buses, but it is not the problem that existed at the time of the last inspection.

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

13. The quality of teaching is good and very much better now than it was at the time of the last inspection. For example, 97% of lessons are now satisfactory compared with 80% in the previous inspection. The proportion of good teaching has almost doubled, from 33% to 61%. The school has greatly reduced the incidence of unsatisfactory teaching while markedly increasing the amount of good teaching. Important improvements have been made in planning over both the long and short term and this has had a very positive impact on the progress pupils make. Throughout the school, teachers have warm and supportive relationships with their pupils and this creates an environment where pupils feel confident and prepared to rise to challenges. It was

evident in many classes that pupils are enthusiastic learners who are justifiably proud of their work. Teachers manage their classes very well and they rarely need to exert any overt control over the pupils' behaviour. The climate for learning is very positive. Good literacy and numeracy teaching has a very positive impact on standards and the pupils' learning in all their subjects is enhanced by their very good skills.

14. The last report indicated that teaching in the reception classes was weak in many important areas and was unsatisfactory overall. Planning was described as vague and teaching as lacking focus. There was too little opportunity for children to use their imagination or work independently at tasks and because they were not stimulated their behaviour suffered. Improvements made since then have resulted in almost all the teaching being good and, in many areas of learning, very good. The teachers have a secure understanding of the needs of children of this age and plan very well a range of active and practical learning experiences. They provide opportunities for the children to work at challenging activities both in the classroom and the outdoor area. The children have appropriate opportunities to make choices and develop their independent learning skills. Their behaviour is remarkably good. They are positive and interested and work very well with others. They are safe and secure and their learning is enhanced by high quality provision of materials and resources and adults who have high expectations of them.
15. The teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 is good overall. Throughout the school, the teaching of English, mathematics, science, history, music, physical education and information and communication technology is good. In design and technology, geography and art, teaching is satisfactory.
16. Where teaching is satisfactory, strengths are balanced by weaknesses. Though planning, organisation and class management are good, some of the other elements are less so. In a Year 6 English lesson for example, the good pace of the introduction was not maintained through the rest of the lesson and pupils lost their initial interest. In a minority of English and mathematics lessons, while pupils are making progress, their creativity and independence are not sufficiently fostered. For example, some teachers rely too much on the published schemes and miss the opportunity to challenge and provide creative extension activities for the more-able pupils. In geography, the quality of teaching is impaired by the provision of low-level colouring activities at the expense of opportunities to reason and draw conclusions from the learning.
17. Teachers whose lessons are good have a secure understanding of the subjects they teach. Their planning is good and work is differentiated to challenge and support pupils. In good history lessons, for example, teachers have planned interesting tasks that give the pupils good opportunities to develop skills of research and analysis. In all of the good lessons teachers share the objectives with the pupils and measure progress against the objectives throughout the lesson and during the plenary sessions. They expect high standards of work and pupils respond by working hard. The pupils take justifiable pride in much of the work they do. The very positive relationships between adults and pupils support and encourage the pupils to achieve high standards.
18. In both key stages, there is some very good teaching in English, science, mathematics, information and communication technology and music. Some of the teachers have a high degree of expertise in teaching these subjects. They have a very secure understanding of the content and are imaginative and creative in planning the work for their classes. They outline clearly what the pupils are to do, explain new

ideas well and question carefully to be sure that they are understood. In a very good ICT lesson in Year 6, the teacher encouraged pupils to demonstrate to each other how to do the task and helped them use new technical vocabulary. In a very good Year 1 numeracy lesson on place value, lively and enthusiastic teaching helped pupils reach high standards. Excellent use of visual resources increased the pupils' ability to grasp the teaching points. In some Year 4 and 5 science lessons, whole-class teaching sessions are well utilised to encourage children to predict what they think will happen. These ideas are discussed fully and then tested out. Practical sessions are imaginative and allow pupils to draw on their own experiences. Very good use is made of the local environmental centre to give pupils additional science experience. The visit that took place during the inspection made a very positive contribution to the Year 4 pupils' learning. In music pupils benefit from teachers' subject expertise. Singing is of a particularly good standard thanks to clear and very good teaching of skills that raises the quality of work. Very good specialist teaching of swimming in both key stages leads to higher than expected standards of attainment and very good cricket coaching to rapid development of skills.

19. Some excellent lessons provided very challenging work and led to high levels of achievement. In a Year 5 class, the English work produced by the pupils reached an exceptional standard of quality and presentation. The teacher set very high expectations, demanding and achieving extremely good work and excellent behaviour. All pupils were fully engaged for an hour. They listened well, progressed at an excellent rate and were eager to find out what they would be doing in the next lesson. An excellent Year 4 music lesson inspired the class and high quality direct teaching led to high standards of performance.
20. Pupils who have special educational needs are fully included in class lessons and they spend their time actively on task. They work hard and make an effort in lessons. In whole class sessions, teachers take care to give them time and opportunity to join in discussion and answer questions. In all classes the pupils are well supported by the teaching assistants. In many lessons, in science in Year 5 for example, pupils are positively encouraged to be independent in their learning. The teaching for these pupils is satisfactory though there are instances where the tasks they are given do not meet their needs well. For example, copying out rhymes in a literacy lesson when their greatest need was help to deepen understanding.
21. Only two of the 59 lessons seen were unsatisfactory; both were in Key Stage 2. In an athletics lesson there was too little challenge and too little opportunity for pupils to practise their skills. Almost half the lesson time was taken up with discussion about the effects of exercise. While this is important it took up too much of the valuable and scarce lesson time. A history lesson was similarly ineffective in improving the pupils' skills and knowledge. Pupils lost interest when the question and answer session went on too long and the task of writing a letter was, though interesting for the pupils, not related to the history objectives of the curriculum.
22. Homework is regularly set and is generally satisfactory and some good practice was seen. For example, in one of the reception classes the children were asked to find out about an environmental disaster by watching the television news. Homework is less effective when the pupils do not fully understand the work they have covered in class.

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

23. Curricular provision is satisfactory throughout the school and meets statutory requirements. Provision in the foundation stage and information and communication technology has improved significantly since the last inspection. These areas, together with science and music are strengths of the school. English and mathematics are appropriately given a considerable proportion of curriculum time. This has contributed to National Curriculum test results in Year 6 that are well above national average.
24. The curriculum for pupils in both key stages is broad, generally balanced, relevant and inclusive but at times lacks excitement and creativity. Too few tasks are focused on developing pupils' thinking skills and encouraging variety and experimentation. It gives all pupils, including those with special educational needs, opportunities to make at least satisfactory progress in all subjects except art and geography in Key Stage 2. The time allocation for all subjects is appropriate and is used effectively in all subjects except art and geography.
25. The curriculum for children in the Reception Classes is very good and has a very positive effect on their learning. The steps in all six areas are well covered through the provision of a range of activities. Strong emphasis is given to children's personal and social development, communication, language and literacy and mathematical development.
26. The national strategies for Literacy and Numeracy are very well established and have a very positive impact on pupils' learning in English and mathematics. The literacy hour is consistently planned and taught in all classes. Oral work is used well to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. Subject vocabulary is prominently displayed in some classrooms and around the school. A daily mathematics lesson is in place for each class and planning for numeracy is very effective. There is a very good, structured approach to lessons, with appropriate time given to mental arithmetic. Emphasis is given to developing mathematical vocabulary and solving word problems. The Strategies are having a very positive impact in improving results for Year 6 pupils.
27. In other subjects, the school has schemes of work that provide clear guidance for staff. These are based on QCA schemes of work and are revised when necessary to meet the needs of pupils. The school has developed curriculum maps in all subjects to ensure that there is appropriate coverage and that the development of pupils' knowledge and understanding is progressive. Planning available during the inspection week was very good. Individual lesson plans are based on appropriate long-term plans, based on schemes of work. Learning intentions are clearly stated with suggestions for assessments to be made during lessons to guide future planning.
28. Marking is good in some cases but practice is inconsistent throughout the school. The best marking helps children to make progress, showing them what they can do, and what they need to do next.
29. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. They have access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. These pupils have Individual Education Plans that build on and develop their knowledge, skills and understanding, and pupils are involved in reviewing their targets on these plans. Support by teaching assistants in the classroom enhances their access to the curriculum. Provision for pupils with statements of special educational need is managed effectively.

30. Equality of access and opportunity in relation to the curriculum for all pupils is satisfactory. The school is committed to equal opportunities, ensured through its aims, general philosophy and ethos. A large number of boys and girls in Key Stage 2 participate equally in extra-curricular activities.
31. The programme for personal, social and health education is satisfactory, including sex education and drugs education. Sex education follows the local education authority and diocesan recommendations but the policy for drugs education is not yet set out formally as required. This whole area of the curriculum is now managed as a discrete subject and being adapted to meet the latest guidelines for teaching citizenship. Good use is made of outside speakers, such as from the police on child protection.
32. Extra-curricular activities are good, with a wide range of clubs to stimulate pupils' interest in learning and these are very well attended. Activities include team sports, athletics, art, and ICT. Provision for younger pupils is limited but the school recognises parental interest in this area and is reviewing what it can do in the current school development plan.
33. Links with the community are good, especially with the local parish, which supports assemblies, religious festivals and lessons in religious education. Good use is made of local facilities, such as Rayleigh Mount, Bradwell Power Station and other local buildings of historical importance. Members of the community support in specialist areas, such as sports coaching in rugby and football, and visitors have included an author, storyteller, puppeteer and a theatre group. Links with other schools and colleges are satisfactory, especially for joint training sessions.
34. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social education is very good and has improved since the last inspection. The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. The school promotes a set of values beliefs and principles based on the Catholic faith and ethos. There is a whole staff commitment to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
35. Provision for spiritual development is very good. Assemblies, religious education, English, and music all provide opportunities for pupils to reflect and demonstrate an understanding of feelings and emotions. The Collective Act of Worship supports spiritual development by sharing insights into pupils' personal experiences. Adults and pupils leading assemblies provide time for prayer and reflection. Human achievement is celebrated in many ways including, for example, through the sense of wonder inspired by listening to, or performing, music. Some good opportunities are provided for pupils to develop insight into their thoughts and feelings in lessons. For example in an English lesson pupils discussed the childhood of Roald Dahl and his need to impress his friends at the expense of his own integrity. In music lessons pupils are taught to value silence as a time to reflect. There is too little opportunity, however, for pupils to respond creatively to the work of a range of artists and composers.
36. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. The school has a clear standard of acceptable behaviour reinforced by class rules. Pupils are clear about the need for rules to promote a fair community. They are encouraged to exercise self-control and show consideration for others. Pupils in Year 6 take care of the younger pupils in Computer Club. Pupils in Year 2 know that hitting and name-calling are wrong. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is very good. Rewards are fair and pupils' good work and deeds are publicly displayed to celebrate achievement and raise self-



esteem. Teachers remind pupils about their responsibility to respect and value the environment. Teachers and pupils have positive relationships and respect each other.

37. Very good provision is made for pupils' social development. Pupils are taught to show respect for others, living things, property and the environment. In the best lessons, warm and trusting relationships between teachers, support staff and pupils, encourage co-operative working and mutual support. Pupils listen respectfully to each other's opinions and celebrate others' achievements. For example, pupils in Year 6 listened to, celebrated and applauded each other's musical compositions. In lessons, pupils explore personal qualities such as thoughtfulness and honesty. Behaviour around the school and in lessons is very good and often excellent. This supports learning very well.
38. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Opportunities are provided for pupils to recognise, explore and understand their own culture. The study of western music is well promoted though opportunities for pupils to extend their cultural knowledge through the study of non-western influences remain underdeveloped. The school rarely uses partnerships with outside agencies to develop this aspect of learning. In history, however, teachers use positive role models such as Martin Luther King, to address racism and promote race equality.

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

39. The school continues to provide a safe and caring place for pupils to learn. Arrangements for the safety and welfare of pupils are very good. Procedures for child protection are very good and follow the recommendations of the local Area Child Protection Committee. Health and safety procedures are very effective, with properly organised and recorded site inspections and risk assessments and appropriate reporting to the governing body. Health and safety practice is audited independently. Welfare arrangements are very well managed and supported by very good levels of training to meet first aid and other specialist needs. Pupils who have special educational needs are also cared for very well.
40. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good and the school uses information very well to keep attendance levels very high. Good behaviour is promoted very well and supported by a positive ethos of respect and consideration for others, which is very apparent in the day-to-day life of the school. Members of staff insist upon high standards of behaviour and set very good role models for the pupils. Pupils are made very aware of how they should behave, so that they rarely require more than a gentle reminder and sanctions of any severity are unnecessary. There is an effective system of awards for class and whole school achievements and these are celebrated in assemblies.
41. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are good. Pupils are known well by all members of staff through the quality of trusting relationship they enjoy. The school also makes good use of outside expertise, such as counselling by social workers from the Catholic Children's Society.

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

42. The school plays a full part in promoting a very high quality partnership with parents. Parents generally have very good opinions of the school and they express considerable confidence in most areas of its work. Nearly all parents consider that behaviour is good, that pupils are helped to become mature and are expected to work hard and do their best. The vast majority of parents appreciate the quality of leadership and management, the quality of teaching, the progress pupils make and how much their children like school. The inspection findings support these positive views. A significant number of parents would like to see improvement in the quality of information they receive about the progress their children make. Some parents would like improvement in the use of homework and in the provision for extra-curricular activities. The concerns about information are not fully justified because information is generally good in the reports parents receive and there are adequate arrangements to discuss progress. Some reports do not always give enough information about the areas in which pupils need to improve and the terminology used does not always give a sense of progress a pupil has made since last reported on. The concerns about homework and extra-curricular activities are not justified. Homework is used satisfactorily to support the curriculum and the range of clubs and activities outside lessons is good and better than those usually found in schools.
43. Parents take a very keen interest in school life and many work very closely with the school. Parents are effectively involved with pupils' learning, both at home and with work at school. A large number of parents attend regularly to support work in the classrooms and this greatly extends the activities teachers can plan for, particularly in group work and swimming. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in review meetings. There is a very active parents' association that raises funds for school activities and school improvement. Parents' views are taken into account when the school development plan is reviewed and the school has recently used its own questionnaire to seek the views of parents about the school.
44. Information to parents about school life is good, for example through very good publications such as the school prospectus, newsletters and a school web site. Curriculum meetings are held to equip parents to support learning from home. Written reports contain detailed information about what pupils can do in all areas of the curriculum. Areas for improvement are indicated in English and mathematics but not always in other subjects. There are adequate arrangements to discuss progress at an annual consultation evening, or by arrangement with the school at any other time in the school year.

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

45. The leadership and management of the school are good. The head teacher provides very good leadership. He knows his school well and has a strong, clear vision of the priorities to be pursued for continued development. He manages the school very efficiently on a day-to-day basis and his presence is evident throughout the school. Through his example and endeavours, staff share a commitment to self-evaluation and improvement. He is committed to maintaining standards and further improving pupils' attainment. He readily acknowledges the challenge of recruiting and retaining good quality staff. His example and dedication promotes the strong Catholic values that underpin the work of the school and is very effective in maintaining and developing a positive ethos. The school community rightly holds him in high regard. The governing body recognises his excellent communication skills as pivotal to the school's success.

46. He is well supported by his deputy who has been in post for two years. She has benefited from extensive training for the role. She meets regularly with the head teacher to discuss school matters and attends all governing body meetings. Her understanding of the school's strategic direction is comprehensive and clearly focused. She regularly monitors teaching and takes an active role in performance management. However, her wide and varied management responsibilities together with her teaching commitment make it difficult to fully develop her role in the strategic management of this large school.
47. Subject coordination in the school is good, overall. Staff play an active part in leading training and attending courses related to their subjects. This enables them to disseminate developments in the curriculum. Co-ordinators systematically monitor planning and ensure that constructive feedback and guidance is given to staff. Samples of pupils' work are regularly examined and reports on progress are presented to the governing body. The science and literacy coordinators have wide experience and a particularly clear understanding of standards achieved in their respective subjects. Test results are analysed to ensure gaps in curriculum coverage are identified. Interventions undertaken by the school, particularly in English, have helped raise standards, for example in reading in Year 3. However, the influence of coordinators on standards of teaching is under-developed. There are too few opportunities to identify and share good practice among colleagues or training needs. The senior management team recognises the need for further training and more non-contact time in order to improve these management functions. This is a key area for development noted on the school improvement plan.
48. Leadership and management of special educational needs are sound. The recently drafted policy complies with the new Code of Practice and the school fulfils its statutory obligations. There are effective new staffing arrangements for supporting pupils with special educational needs. The school has invested heavily in teaching assistants and ensures their effective induction into its routines. There are clearly defined job descriptions. The assistants are well prepared and make accurate assessments of progress during lessons. Class teachers and the special needs co-ordinators effectively support their work.
49. The governing body provides excellent support to the school. Members are highly committed, very well informed and actively support the school in all its endeavours. They know and understand the strengths and areas for development within the school. Their responsibilities are systematically and diligently carried out. The body holds the school to account and shrewdly fulfils its role as critical friend. Governors are actively involved at all stages of school improvement planning. They have set up the appropriate statutory committees, which meet once or twice each term. These committees contribute to the strategic development of the school and comply with all statutory requirements. The governing body evaluates its own work through a committee set up specifically for that purpose. Governors regularly visit the school and receive reports from subject co-ordinators. They play a very active part in the day-to-day life of the school. Each governor has adopted a class, which they track as the pupils progress through the school.
50. The carefully-constructed school improvement plan is comprehensive and ambitious. It was produced in consultation with major stakeholders in the school. The school is outward looking and embraces external support to assist in achieving its aims. The introduction to the plan acknowledges the school's many successes but is not complacent. The school intends to raise attainment further through rigorous

examination of its provision of teaching and curriculum. The plan has attainable targets with identified resources and realistic timescales. Central to the process is a sharp focus on developing highly effective teaching in order to promote the learning of all pupils. The school intends to improve opportunities for gifted and talented pupils by providing a challenging curriculum and setting ambitious targets. There are also planned opportunities for the pupils' views and opinions to be considered in shaping the school's development.

51. Financial management is very good. The budget is carefully managed and the head teacher provides regular and comprehensive budget monitoring. Day-to-day systems in school are efficient. The senior administrative officer is well trained and makes an effective contribution to the smooth running of the school. Grants for specific purposes are spent appropriately and the school has taken advantage of New Opportunities Funding to train staff in information and communication technology. Part of the budget for the forthcoming year has been earmarked, wisely, to improve accommodation. It will extend presently limited library facilities and build new classrooms. The school ensures that the best principles of comparison, challenge, consultation and competition are applied effectively. Members of the finance committee have a thorough understanding of financial management and are actively involved in all spending processes. Long-term financial planning is good and relates clearly to the priorities in the school improvement plan.
52. The school is well staffed with teachers and learning support assistants, despite recent difficulties of recruiting and retaining teachers. The deployment and use of classroom assistants has improved significantly since the last inspection and members of staff now work closely with support plans and use the information well to meet pupils' individual needs.
53. Accommodation is generally good and very good for outside activities, such as play and physical education. There is a wide range of facilities for play, including well-equipped playground garden and climbing frame areas. Grassed areas support a wide range of athletics activities and large team games. The new computer suite enables staff to teach ICT very effectively. Other improvements since the last inspection include changing rooms for the swimming pool, secure Foundation Stage play area and parents' waiting area. All areas and buildings are kept clean and well maintained.
54. Resources are good for supporting learning in most major subjects and have improved significantly for teaching ICT. Resources are very good in physical education, for pupils under five and good all round for music. There are good resources for mathematics and English but they are not always used well in mathematics. There has been good investment in English but the library is still inadequate as a place to work and develop referencing skills. In science, resources are good and well organised and labelled. Resources are unsatisfactory for supporting the extension of skills in art.

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

The school should continue to build on its many successes by:

- (1) raising standards in art and design and geography at the end of Key Stage 2 by:  
ensuring the subject-specific skills are systematically taught in all classes,

giving more attention to stimulating pupils' creativity and imagination in art and design lessons,

providing more opportunities for pupils to carry out geographical enquiry inside and outside the classroom.

- (2) improving the creative and investigative aspects of the curriculum by:

providing training to develop teachers' understanding and expertise

ensuring planning includes a wide range of open-ended tasks that challenge pupils' thinking skills

- (3) developing the role of co-ordinators to enable them to contribute to the evaluation of the quality of education by:

providing training for all staff with management responsibilities

agreeing a monitoring programme that enables co-ordinators to reflect critically on how they can support teaching and learning

## **PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS**

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

Number of lessons observed

59

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

43

### ***Summary of teaching observed during the inspection***

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	22	34	36	3	0	0

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

### ***Information about the school's pupils***

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	YR– Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	402
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	11
<b>Special educational needs</b>	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	62
<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5
<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

### **Attendance**

#### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	96.4
National comparative data	94.4

#### **Unauthorised absence**

	%
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.*

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	29	29	58

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	25	28	29
	Girls	28	29	29
	Total	53	57	58
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (98)	98 (96)	100 (100)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	29	27	28
	Girls	27	28	29
	Total	56	55	57
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (93)	95 (100)	98 (100)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2**

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2001	26	25	51

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	24	23	26
	Girls	24	23	24
	Total	48	46	50
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	94 (95)	90 (91)	98 (98)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	20	22	24
	Girls	23	23	24
	Total	43	45	48
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	84 (89)	88 (91)	94 (96)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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



**Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	2
Indian	1
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	2
White	340
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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

**Exclusions in the last school year**

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

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

**Teachers and classes****Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
Average class size	29

**Education support staff: YR– Y6**

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	193.5

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Financial information**

Financial year	2001 - 2002
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	£
Total income	815,237
Total expenditure	793,960
Expenditure per pupil	2,036
Balance brought forward from previous year	24,339
Balance carried forward to next year	45,616

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

68%

Number of questionnaires sent out

402

Number of questionnaires returned

272

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school	54	43	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school	53	43	3	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good	58	41	1	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home	32	50	17	0	1
The teaching is good	50	46	3	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on	31	46	20	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem	50	40	7	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best	70	29	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents	42	42	12	1	3
The school is well led and managed	65	31	1	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible	57	41	1	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons	35	46	15	1	3

## **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**

55. There has been major improvement in the foundation stage since the last inspection, which identified very many shortcomings in provision for the under-fives. All weaknesses have been thoroughly and carefully addressed and provision is now very good. The classrooms and the outdoor area are very well organised and resources are plentiful and stimulating. Curricular planning and teaching have greatly improved and as a result the children make good progress in all areas of their learning. The whole quality of experience, in the classroom and in the outdoor area, is much richer and more challenging than it was and better develops the children's independence and learning skills. The school has worked hard to develop the use of the outdoor area as an extension of the classrooms and learning experiences are planned for both. For example, pattern making on a small scale took place on the tables indoors while quoits and beanbags and large floor tiles were provided for larger scale patterns outdoors.
56. Many children enter the reception classes with above average attainment, and well above average attainment in speaking and listening and mathematical development. Good teaching builds on their skills and helps the children progress quickly through the stages in their learning. Most have begun work on the National Curriculum and many have already achieved the first level when they start Year 1.

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

57. Great improvements have been made, since the last inspection, in providing experiences that help the children become increasingly secure and confident learners. As a result, children are positive and enthusiastic, attentive and interested in the tasks they are given as well as the tasks they choose. They are developing good levels of independence in selecting activities and persistence in seeing them through. Outdoors for example, children worked independently at the pattern making activities, challenging themselves to create increasingly complex repeated patterns. They worked at this task for a considerable length of time. The children are learning how to relate well to others and form friendships. It was noticeable that children were polite, spontaneously saying excuse me when they needed to reach across others, for example. On the rare occasion where a child complained about another's actions he or she readily accepted an adult's explanation or the other child's apology. There were innumerable examples of co-operative and helpful behaviour, sharing of equipment and generally friendly give and take. The atmosphere of harmony and tolerance is very conducive to the development of positive attitudes to self and others.
58. The adults are sensitive to the children's needs and help them to work and play together and develop a strong sense of self-esteem, self-confidence and belonging to the class and the wider school community. They teach the children to respect their environment and take responsibility for it. In a discussion in one class, for example, the teacher encouraged the children to think about and share their ideas about litter and the importance of recycling. In day-to-day activities adults show that they have very high expectations and trust the children to behave well and try their best. This has a very positive impact on the children's disposition to learn and succeed. They

note achievements and take every opportunity to highlight and reinforce positive attitudes and behaviour. They demonstrate that they value the children's independence and willingness to contribute their ideas and say what they think. Overall, they are very successful at promoting the children's personal, social and emotional development.

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

59. The good skills and knowledge the children have when they join the reception classes are built on well and their attainment is well above average when they join Year 1. The great majority reach the Early Learning Goals and some significantly exceed them. The foundation stage curriculum is very well integrated with the National Literacy Strategy and the Literacy Hour is established. Children know the routines well and work together effectively in all the planned activities. Teachers and assistants collaborate well in teaching. Assistants focus on individual children and observe for example how well they respond to stories or read aloud or participate in discussion. They help the children to work together and they reinforce the teaching successfully.
60. The children speak clearly, express themselves well and the oldest listen attentively to others without interrupting. They talk to each other in the course of their activities, comparing and describing the detail they are putting in their pictures, for example. In their imaginative play they looked at travel brochures, planned their holiday and made telephone calls. In lessons they readily answer questions and offer their thoughts and ideas in formal and informal discussions. They enjoy rhyme and develop awareness of phonics. Teachers use all available opportunities to enrich the children's language and widen their vocabulary.
61. By the end of the Reception Year most can read, and most of the older children read fluently. They enjoy books and stories and participate well in the class work on letters and words. They read text in books, on signs and labels and on the computer screen. In a music lesson they followed the words of a song on a large poster. Reading the class big book, "The Fisherman's Wife", they joined in with appropriately expressive intonation. Many are beginning to perceive meanings beyond the words on the page. For example, they could suggest what kind of person the fisherman's wife was and predict what they thought she would ask for next. Teachers provide a wide and very suitable range of texts and demonstrate that reading is pleasurable and useful. They encourage the children to make sense of what they read by for example asking questions such as, "I wonder why he did that?" They also teach reading skills explicitly, demonstrating and explaining how stories work and how sounds and letters form words.
62. Through enjoyable opportunities such as retelling favourite stories, the children's writing abilities develop well. They make their own versions of picture storybooks, writing their own captions and this helps them structure their writing, recording events in order for example. For the group as a whole their knowledge of sounds and letters exceeds that usually found at this age. The most advanced spell well and attempt quite complex words, using their knowledge of sounds and spelling patterns. They are accustomed to writing their own names on their pieces of work and do so with confident letter formation. A great strength in the teaching is that the children are encouraged to experiment with writing and be confident to attempt their own spellings. They are as a result independent and confident and not fearful of making mistakes.

### **Mathematical development**

63. The children are attaining very well in this area of their learning. Most count easily to twenty and many are comfortable with bigger numbers. They have a daily mathematics lesson as well as many informal opportunities to count, order and compare. Children use everyday language to describe the size and position of objects. They solve problems involving numbers and record these mathematical experiences independently. In the outdoor area for example some children worked out all the ways to distribute nine beanbags between two hoops and wrote down all the combinations they found. They know the names of shapes and talk about the faces and corners on three-dimensional shapes. They create repeating patterns and describe and compare them. The teaching is very successful in presenting the children with challenging problems that get them to think for themselves. The teachers make the learning enjoyable and stimulating and this keeps the children interested and keen to learn more.

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

64. Children make good progress in learning about the world within and beyond home and school. They find out about their environment in a range of ways. They have recently been learning how plants grow through observing the sunflowers they have planted in their garden. They have visited the local countryside centre and the zoo to learn about the natural world. In one lesson they talked about looking after the environment and not wasting its resources. Many children had good ideas about the consequences of failing to care for the environment. Good links were made to the impact of a forest fire in the United States and for homework the children were encouraged to find out more by watching the news on television.
65. They are finding out about times and places beyond their immediate experience. During the inspection, for example, one class learned about the coast and seashore and the kinds of animals and geographical features found there. Their pictures showed good levels of awareness and interest in learning about other places.
66. Children have opportunities in every session to use the class computers. They collaborate well with each other and use these and other machines confidently. They have good control of the mouse and many use the keyboard to write independently.

### **Physical development**

67. Provision for physical development is exceptionally good both in range and quality and teaching is of a very high standard. Fine skills are nurtured by regular opportunities for using tools to cut, draw, paint and print and handle many different kinds of small apparatus. For example, in a mathematics lesson children made arrangements of shells in dry sand and used tiny moulds to make shapes in the wet sand. The outdoor area is equipped to a very high standard and it is used throughout the day. The children use the space imaginatively because they have frequent opportunities to initiate their own activities. Their skills of running, jumping, throwing, catching and balancing are very good. In their regular physical education lessons children use apparatus with increasing confidence and control. In one lesson for example they moved in and out of hoops, exploring ways of leading with different parts of the body. They have swimming lessons in small groups where they are making excellent progress in developing the skills of moving in the water. Very good, well-paced teaching develops the children's confidence and agility and makes the most of the time available to practise and improve skills.

### **Creative development**

68. Provision for creative development is satisfactory. Children have opportunities to paint, print, draw from imagination and observation, and make models and collages. They sing and respond to music and have the opportunity to explore the sounds made by musical instruments. They know the words of songs and join in enthusiastically with actions and movements. In their artwork, where they are given the opportunity to determine for themselves what they are going to make, the creative process is fostered well and the results are individual and original. For example, where a group drew and decorated their own pictures of fish, the results showed their imagination and creativity. Or outdoors, where the children had the opportunity to contribute to an ongoing piece of work weaving strips of fabric into the fence, the same was true. However, where the adults have decided in advance what the finished product is to be, the children's creativity is not adequately expressed and the outcomes lack originality. For example, when the children fill in outlines drawn by the adults, they are not being given the opportunity to fully express their own ideas or be independent in deciding what their work will be like.

## ENGLISH

69. Standards in English are very high throughout the school and pupils make very good progress in reading, writing speaking and listening. The most recent data for the end of Key Stage 2 tests show that standards for 11-year olds are well above the national average. Results have been consistently high since 1998. Results of 2001 tests for pupils in Key Stage 1 show that, while writing standards were well above the national average, reading standards were in line. This reflected a slight dip in reading results when compared with trends over the last few years. The school attributes this slight dip to a high turnover in staff. Early indications of the unpublished results for Key Stage 1 this year indicate that the decline in reading results was a temporary setback and that current standards are high. Extra support has been given this year to last year's cohort of pupils. Results of the non-statutory tests of pupils in Year 3 show that the school's interventions to improve reading have been very successful.
70. Inspection evidence indicates that standards throughout the school are very high in speaking and listening. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are confident and articulate speakers. They express opinions well and have regard for the need of the listeners. They are very keen to answer questions during lessons. Pupils listen to each other with respect and interest. They are attentive in class and listen to instructions carefully. During one lesson, pupils in Year 1 enthusiastically shared their opinions with the class teacher while studying the text of 'The Butterfly Kiss.' Pupils interpreted the text and made good connections between the text and recollections of their experiences encountered on a trip to Tropical Wings. They also demonstrated good scientific knowledge of metamorphosis. They picked out significant events in the story and used vocabulary such as cocoon, nectar and chrysalis to support their opinions. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils speak with great confidence. They are eager and willing to join in debates and discussions. They ask relevant questions and listen attentively to the answers given by their teachers and each other. For example, in a Year 5 literacy lesson, pupils were discussing the text of 'Akimbo and the Crocodile Man'. The teacher used this text to look at how connectives were employed and how the author created suspense. Pupils were very keen to discuss the way in which the text left the readers on a cliffhanger. Pupils were very mature in their exchanges. They listened carefully to each other's opinions and discussed their responses. Consequently, the lesson moved along with a great sense of debate, excitement and purpose.

71. Reading standards at the end of both key stages are very good indeed. From an early age pupils are taught letter sounds and sounds made from different groups of letters. These early phonic skills help them to tackle unfamiliar words in texts. Pupils are given opportunities to practise and extend their skills through a rich variety of fiction and non-fiction texts. The vast majority of pupils read accurately, fluently and with enthusiasm. They tackle texts using a range of cues and are very able at decoding texts. Pupils are very confident in expressing opinions on their likes and dislikes. Pupils in a Year 2 class discussed the meanings of words and phrases in tongue twisters. They recognised the rhymes and patterns in the poems. They recited them aloud with enthusiasm and an appreciation of the humour in the poems. One pupil said that she liked the tongue twisters because "they were fun to read and like solving a puzzle." Older pupils in Key Stage 2 read fluently and with expression. They are aware of the subtleties of text and, when reading aloud, use expression and characterisation to bring the story alive. Older pupils confidently and competently use higher-order reading skills. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils were employing the skills of skimming and scanning to identify opportunities for writing an alternative version of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears.' They adroitly sifted through irrelevant text and completed the task quickly. The library resources available are of a good quality and range though rather limited. The development of a new library is part of a scheme of rebuilding to be undertaken in the near future.
72. Standards in writing are a strength of the school. Pupils throughout Key Stage 1 write in many forms, including creative writing, poetry, letters and recording science experiments. The approach to handwriting is consistent throughout the school. Pupils are encouraged to join up their script from Year 1. This results in pupils taking great care in the presentation of their work. Most pupils have developed a neat and legible cursive script. Pupils are rightly proud of their work and keen to discuss it with visitors. Often their writing is mature and their enthusiasm is apparent in all their work. Some of their stories show an understanding of some of the conventions authors employ to make tales more compelling. For example, a pupil in Year 2 wrote, "Straightaway, they opened the parcel. It was a coloured egg." Another pupil's work from earlier in the year presented short and simple sentences. By the end of the year the same pupil wrote, "So one night spider made a giant web and worm was stuck." Other pupils' work showed well-chosen vocabulary, such as 'glittery' and 'mysterious', to enliven the text. Samples of work across the ability range in Year 2 showed very marked progress. Standards of spelling are high and when errors do occur the pupils make sensible alternative attempts. These standards stem from the systematic teaching of phonics throughout the key stage. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have experience of writing in a variety of different forms and for different purposes. They compose letters, record science experiments, produce reports and write headlines. They write biographies and have experience of persuasive writing. This rich diet of experiences has produced pupils who are confident in the techniques of writing. Pupils' work is well ordered and they use paragraphs and speech marks accurately. They understand how to enliven a story to capture their audience's attention by using suspense.
73. The overall quality of teaching is good. In Key Stage 1 teachers generally have a very secure understanding of the subject. Planning is rigorous and, overall, work is differentiated to challenge and support pupils. Lesson objectives are clearly shared with the pupils and progress against them is measured throughout the lesson and during the plenary session. High standards of work are expected and produced by the pupils who want to please their teachers and achieve self-fulfilment. Pupils have justifiable pride in their work. The very positive relationships between adults and

pupils support and encourage the pupils to achieve high standards. In Key Stage 2, the lessons observed were at least satisfactory and one was excellent. The best lessons are characterised by the teacher's enthusiastic and secure subject knowledge, which inspire pupils to explore literature on many levels. Pupils are constantly challenged to look beyond the literal and extend their vocabulary and understanding of literary conventions. Lessons are well researched, move at a lively pace and engage pupils' attention. In one outstanding lesson in Year 5, all pupils were fully engaged for an hour. They listened well, progressed at an excellent rate and were eager to find out what they would be doing in the next lesson. Some weaknesses were observed in some lessons. For example, an over-reliance on the published scheme inhibits the freedom of teachers to challenge and provide creative extension activities for the more able pupils.

74. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in all classes. Pupils have clear individual education plans and these are well known to classroom assistants, thus helping to shape the support offered. There are well-established routines and interactions that support pupils. Their contributions to learning are woven seamlessly into the lesson. Classroom assistants take a full and active part in teaching and there is evidence of assessment taking place. Best practice observed during the inspection challenged pupils to help themselves and improve their work rather than giving them answers. Pupils in a Year 1 class were looking at the sequence of events from a story. The classroom assistant asked pertinent questions of a less-able group to help them order their retelling of a story. In a Year 5 lesson, the assistant encouraged pupils to use dictionaries and thesauruses to support their work. In many classes, the assistants used computers to help children record and research their work.
75. All aspects of English are assessed in detail throughout the year. Many of the assessment practices are taken directly from the scheme of work favoured by the school. Assessment in English is to be further developed in terms of manageability. The school aims to streamline its procedures, thereby reducing administration whilst maintaining rigour and effectiveness. Day-to-day marking is not always consistent with whole school policy. In the best examples, marking acknowledges what the pupils do well but also points out how the pupils can develop work further. Pupils have useful target cards inside their English books that indicate what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils are very actively involved in setting and pursuing these targets. One boy in Year 5 pointed out that these targets were there to help them overcome difficulties in written work across the curriculum not just in English. It is this sense of ownership of targets that helps pupils attain high standards throughout the school. End of year reports to parents and carers are comprehensive and also indicate targets for future development.
76. Management of English is good. The co-ordinator, in post for two years, has attended courses to support further development of the subject. There have been opportunities for her to lead in-service training on 'Grammar for Writing' from the National Literacy Strategy. This training has very evidently impacted on the work of the pupils, as seen during the inspection. She has assisted the staff in identifying what pupils need to be taught to make systematic progress in speaking and listening. She has a strong grasp of standards of attainment in the subject and is aware of what needs to be done to develop the subject further. There is a detailed literacy policy in place and a named link-governor for the subject. The co-ordinator has analysed colleagues' planning and scrutinised work samples. Comments are fed back to colleagues to ensure consistency in standards and to assist good practice. There has not been the opportunity for her to observe colleagues teach or to ensure that good practice is shared



among staff. This is an area noted in the school improvement plan and will be tackled later in the year.

## **MATHEMATICS**

77. Standards in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 were, unusually, lower last year than in previous years. The results for 2001 were average when compared with the national picture but below those of similar schools. Prior to this, results had been well above average. The reason for the apparent decline was that although every pupil attained the average level (level 2), the percentage attaining the higher level (level 3) was low. The school experienced significant problems with staffing for the classes in question and this had a detrimental effect on pupils' performance. The most recent unpublished results show that standards have greatly improved and a very high percentage of pupils have achieved the higher level.
78. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have remained consistently high over recent years. In comparison with both schools nationally and those in similar contexts, results in 2001 were well above average. Only a few pupils failed to reach the expected level (level 4) and almost half the year group gained the higher level (level 5). The work of the present Year 6 pupils indicates a similar picture and almost all pupils are on course to attain at least the level expected and many are likely to do even better.
79. Pupils throughout the school are gaining a sound understanding of the different aspects of the subject. Their ability to calculate mentally is good and they progressively develop a range of strategies for solving numerical problems. By the end of Key Stage 2, most of them are familiar with different forms of numbers; fractions, decimals, percentages and know the relationship between them. They carry out written calculations with accuracy and most show a good understanding of the processes involved. Pupils know about different units of measures and the high-attainers can quickly convert between units. In a lower ability Year 6 lesson, pupils were learning how to read and plot in four quadrants and almost all of them picked up the relationship between the quadrants with ease. Work in pupils' books shows that the school is using the National Numeracy Framework effectively to ensure the different aspects of mathematics are systematically and progressively covered. An area that is underdeveloped is the topic of reasoning and generalising about numbers and shapes. At present, opportunities for pupils to work in an investigative way are limited.
80. Pupils present their work well, they take pride in what they can do and have positive attitudes to the subject. A discussion with the lower-attaining pupils in Year 6 indicated that they have a very positive picture of themselves as learners.
81. Teaching is good overall and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. Teachers' planning is sound and the daily lesson plans available for the inspection reflected a good grasp of the guidance in the National Numeracy Strategy. Objectives are clear and pupils know what they are doing. Work is linked from day to day and teachers recall on previous lessons before moving on. Teachers manage their classes well and set high expectations for their work and behaviour. There is a relaxed yet purposeful atmosphere in classrooms and teachers maintain good pace in their teaching. A high proportion of the time is devoted to direct teaching, where explanations and instructions are clear and demonstration helps pupils to follow the ideas presented. Questioning is good when it is targeted to the various levels of

ability in the class and effective strategies are employed to involve everyone. Mathematical vocabulary is taught systematically and is integral to lessons so that pupils understand and use terms accurately. There is a good range of visual resources to reinforce and support pupils' learning; in some classes more use could be made of these to demonstrate the main points of the lesson. Teachers are beginning to integrate ICT into lessons; pupils work on subject-related computer activities on and teachers are experimenting with the use of a newly-purchased interactive whiteboard to enhance their lessons. Arrangements for homework are generally sound although on occasion older pupils are unable to complete it because it is set at too high a level and they have not fully understood the ideas covered in the lesson.

82. A new co-ordinator has recently been appointed to take forward the action-plan prepared by the previous post holder. She has a good understanding of what needs to be done to raise further the quality of teaching and develop those aspects of the curriculum that are satisfactory rather than good.

## SCIENCE

83. Standards in science have improved since the last inspection. In 2001, the school's performance in science teacher assessments was above the national average. In relation to similar schools, standards overall were average although not as many pupils were assessed at the higher level. Current indications for the 2002 results are similar.
84. In the 2001 Key Stage 2 tests, compared with schools nationally, results were well above average both for the percentage attaining the average and the above average levels. Pupils' work indicates that the 2002 results will be similar.
85. By the end of Year 2 most pupils know that growth is affected by water, the growing medium and temperature. They are beginning to understand what fair testing means and know that in experiments, most things must stay the same if results are to be meaningful. In studying friction pupils are able to explain that objects will move more quickly over smooth rather than rough surfaces when pushed.
86. No science lessons were seen in Year 6 in the week of the inspection but the scrutiny of work shows that pupils can explain how muscles work to enable bodies to move and can describe how blood moves around the body. They understand how the lungs and the heart work to refresh the levels of oxygen in blood that is being returned to the lungs. Pupils' work is very well presented and shows that they are able to do a variety of investigations where they can predict what might happen, test it, record their results in a variety of ways and draw conclusions. An example of this is an experiment devised to test out what happens to water as it evaporates.
87. There have been many improvements in science teaching since the last inspection. The focus on teaching investigative skills has ensured that pupils are developing practical skills to carry out experiments confidently and are able to solve problems in a systematic way. Planning is much better and all aspects of the subject are now covered well. Teachers use concept maps to check what pupils already know before a new topic is started to help them plan lessons that build on pupils' previous knowledge.

88. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. Only one lesson was observed in Key Stage 1, but scrutiny of work showed that the pupils are being well taught. In Key Stage 2, in many lessons, teaching is very good. Teachers use very good resources to stimulate pupils' interest and give them choices in using the equipment so that they can try out their own ideas. Good whole-class teaching sessions are characterised by questions that encourage children to predict what they think will happen. These ideas are discussed fully and then tested out. Practical sessions are imaginative and allow pupils to draw on their own experiences. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils chose different size balls to represent the earth, sun and moon and experimented with the relationship between the movements of the planets in space. They worked very well in groups and discussion was thoughtful and relevant. Exciting teaching maintains a high level of interest for pupils who challenge each other's thoughts and predictions. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils who are confident to speak out in class discussion and are not afraid to put forward their own ideas. Teachers use a variety of ongoing assessments during lessons to check pupils understanding and inform their teaching. Good use is made of environmental resources such as the school pond and Rayleigh Mount, to deepen and broaden pupils' scientific experiences.
89. Co ordination of science is good. All the issues identified in the last inspection have been addressed. Teachers' planning and pupils' work is monitored on a regular basis. Class teachers are confident in teaching science and the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, especially practical investigations. The coordinator is working effectively with staff and the new science coordinator who is due to take over in September, to ensure continued improvement in science provision in the school.

## **ART**

90. At the time of the last inspection, standards in art were average at the end of both key stages. This inspection finds that standards in art at the end of Year 2 remain average but standards at the end of Year 6 are below those expected. No lessons were seen during the inspection but evidence from planning, discussions with staff and pupils and the work samples seen confirm that the subject is regularly taught and the curriculum is appropriately covered. Displays around the school reflect the value placed on pupils' achievements but demonstrate a limited range of skills and techniques and are mainly two-dimensional. The use of sketchbooks has helped some pupils develop and explore their ideas. However, there is insufficient monitoring of their use to ensure consistency or measure standards. Some work is of a low standard. Art does not have sufficient impact on pupils' creative or cultural development.
91. In Key Stage 1 when matching colours to real objects, pupils used primary and secondary colours well. They work with a range of materials and techniques, successfully developing what has been introduced in the Foundation Stage. In Year 1, pupils created natural sculptures in response to the work of Andy Goldsworthy. They investigated and used a variety of materials to communicate their meanings. Detailed chalk drawings of trees in bloom in the style of Monet, demonstrated pupils' attention to detail and use of colour tone. Techniques such as drawing, painting and pastel work are well developed but there is little work in three dimensions. Too few opportunities are offered for pupils' to evaluate their own work or that of others to say what they feel about it, or how they might develop it.

92. Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils explore ideas using paint, pastel, collage and clay. Some draw and paint in response to music and stories. Pupils in Year 4 made paintings in the style of Seurat, using cotton buds to copy the pointillist technique. In Year 6, pupils produced their own pastel drawings representing feelings. They are taught to make patterns through paint and printmaking. For example in Year 5 pupils produced monoprints using potatoes and tiles. However, teaching does not build upon the skills pupils acquire and consequently the quality of pupils' artwork does not improve sufficiently. There is not enough difference between the standard of work at the beginning and end of the key stage. Few opportunities are provided for pupils to collaborate on large scale two and three-dimensional projects. This limits the range and breadth of the art curriculum.
93. Analysis of pupils' work and displays point to satisfactory teaching across the school with some unsatisfactory examples in Key Stage 2. Teachers plan for art and identify objectives but there is insufficient emphasis on the skills to be taught. A small range of resources enables pupils to develop their control of tools and techniques but is too limited to develop depth in the art curriculum. Pupils are not given enough opportunity to select their materials, use a variety of methods and approaches, or evaluate and refine their ideas. Pupils are introduced to the styles and techniques of artists and craftspeople. For example, in Year 6 pupils researched the work of a contemporary artist and used his abstract style to make their own drawings. In discussion, pupils are enthusiastic about art, but feel that they do not have enough opportunity for creative work in lesson time.
94. The management of teaching and learning in art has the capacity to improve. The newly appointed co-ordinator has good subject knowledge and is beginning to share this knowledge and experience with staff informally. She plans to provide a detailed scheme of work to improve pupils' progress in art. More thought needs to be given to the work of non-European artists, living artists and visits to galleries and museums. The art curriculum is limited by insufficient breadth of opportunity. A visit to the National Gallery is made in Year 5, but overall the art curriculum lacks enrichment by visitors, visits and a multi-cultural perspective.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

95. Standards in design and technology are in line with those found nationally at the end of Year 2 and at the end of Year 6. Inspection evidence indicates that both teaching and standards have continued to improve since the last inspection. This is as a result of changes and improvements in the programme offered to pupils and improved resources for learning. Although few lessons were seen during the inspection, evidence from planning, discussions with staff and pupils and the work samples seen confirm that the subject is regularly taught, the curriculum is appropriately covered and teaching is satisfactory across the school.
96. Year 2 pupils used their design and making skills confidently to produce character puppets linked to a story. A range of resources, like textured material, felt, buttons and sequins, provided a choice for pupils to represent the features of their particular character. They shaped their materials, assembled the components and joined the parts with glue and stitching. Simple finishing techniques were used to improve the appearance of their puppet. Younger pupils in Year 1 used a pulley system to wind a cartoon strip based on a favourite nursery rhyme. They attached the mechanism to a box and used paint and collage to illustrate their rhyme. In Year 2 pupils are introduced to the principles of pneumatics, use clay to design and make an eggcup

and learn about food hygiene by making sandwiches. They are able to generate ideas for their projects, make a plan and list their tools and materials.

97. By Year 6 pupils attain standards that are in line with national expectations. Pupils in a Year 6 lesson were able to develop and plan their ideas for making a toy using a cam or crank mechanism. They put together a list of what they want their design to achieve and drew and labelled a diagram, many working to scale. In Year 5 pupils made bowls from balloons and papier-mache. The finished product was suitable for its purpose and was decorated with repeat patterns based on Islamic faith designs. Pupils are taught to recognise that the quality of a product depends upon how well it is made. Pupils are not always provided with opportunities to test and evaluate their work to make suggestions about how they could improve or modify their designs.
98. Teaching and learning is sound in both key stages and successfully extends and refines what has been introduced earlier. An analysis of records, discussions with pupils, written evidence and products show that the range of resources has improved and pupils are able to select the appropriate tools and techniques for making their product. Planning is now in sufficient detail about the skills to be taught. Teachers' subject knowledge and confidence has been improved through training and the joint development of a scheme of work that provides opportunities for pupils to experience the full range of the design and technology curriculum. Individual pupils are well supported by teachers and teaching assistants and make satisfactory progress in lessons.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

99. When the school was last inspected, the standards that pupils attained in geography at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6 were in line with national expectations. This is still the case in Year 2, but in Year 6 standards have declined, largely because pupils have not covered the full range of the programmes of study in the geography national curriculum. In all other Key Stage 2 classes, standards are at least in line with national expectations, and the work of the geography co-ordinator's Year 5 class sets a benchmark for the school.
100. By Year 2, scrutiny of work indicates that pupils can make observations about those features that give places their character, for example, in drawing pictures of a seaside town. They show an awareness of place beyond the immediate locality, and can place London, England, Scotland, Wales and Eire on a map of the British Isles. Following the travels of Barnaby Bear across Britain and the world enhances their awareness of place. Pupils in Year 2 define various geographical features as human or physical, are able to consider the effect of weather on everyday life in Norway and Spain. They ask sensible questions about physical features and their effect on life in an unfamiliar geographical context. In their study of a fictional Scottish island, one pupil asked in a letter if the island ever floods, and if people enjoy all the rowing in their boats. Year 2 pupils have downloaded information and pictures from relevant internet sites to support their geographical study effectively. Some teachers rely too much on worksheets, which limits the investigative aspect of the geography curriculum.
101. By Year 6, work scrutiny indicates pupils have undertaken large and small-scale map work of Britain. This is the strongest feature of their geographical work, and reflects the accent that the co-ordinator has placed upon developing geographical skills and enquiry across the school. Pupils have studied and are able to describe the water cycle. Generally, however, the breadth of their study in geography is too narrow

and the work produced too superficial. There is a heavy reliance on worksheets, some of which are low level and do not promote the skills of geographical enquiry and analysis expected at this age. In one piece of work that preceded the Year 6 residential journey to Llangollen, pupils were asked to describe their expectations of this town and its locality. Many wrote only about the youth hostel, rather than focusing on the physical features of the area. There was no consideration of the effect these could have on the population in terms of work and leisure patterns or comparing and contrasting these with their own locality. Teachers in Year 6 have not used geography as a context for extended writing.

102. Work in Year 5 presents a much more positive picture of attainment. There is much extended work, which demonstrates geographical enquiry and skills expected of pupils of this age. For example, one Year 5 class considered in great depth the effect of a new development upon various interested groups in the community, examining the advantages and disadvantages from each standpoint
103. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. A good pace, which keeps pupils interested and alert, marks effective teaching and good subject knowledge is combined with good use of appropriate geographical vocabulary. Such teaching ensures pupils show good attitudes to the subject, are reasonably productive, and support each other well. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress. Where aspects of teaching are less strong, opportunities are missed to develop skills of geographical analysis, too much time is wasted colouring in, and too little time is devoted to drawing conclusions from work undertaken.
104. The work of the co-ordinator is good within present constraints. She is clearly hardworking, but at present does not monitor the teaching of geography or undertake work scrutiny, so is not able to take a view on attainment, progress or coverage of the subject. The school improvement, development and monitoring plan indicates that these important activities will begin to take place in 2003- 2004, when geography becomes a focus area. The co-ordinator has examined the QCA scheme of work in depth and modified it where appropriate to support staff in their planning and teaching. She has made it her priority to ensure that the subject is satisfactorily resourced and has been successful in this area. Resources are effectively used, including appropriate internet sites.

## **HISTORY**

105. Evidence gathered from work scrutiny, lesson observations and talking with pupils indicates that standards are in line with national expectations in both Year 2 and Year 6. The range of historical skills and competencies is similar to those found by the last inspection.
106. By Year 2, scrutiny of work indicates that pupils use and understand simple terms about the passing of time. They understand aspects of the past beyond living memory. For example in their study of Remembrance Day, Year 2 pupils demonstrate understanding that this occasion was originally held to mark the armistice of the First World War. They know that books, newspapers, letters and pictures can tell us about the past, and show understanding of the historical figures studied and the conditions in which they worked. Pupils are beginning to communicate and organise historical knowledge in a variety of ways. Pupils produced, for instance, informative leaflets about the Fire of London. Year 2 made a

list of the characteristics of Florence Nightingale, demonstrating that they recognise that there are reasons why people in history acted as they did.

107. By Year 6 pupils show factual knowledge and understanding about aspects of Britain. They use this to identify changes in lifestyle since 1948 in such areas as cinema and television, music, housing and fashion. They give reasons for, and the results of, such changes. One Year 6 class undertook a detailed analysis of radio output from this period and compared it with that of today. They gave considered thought to the reasons for the changes they found. Pupils select and combine information from, for example, appropriate internet sites, CD ROMs and textbooks. Many are able to make inferences and deductions from information they have researched. Pupils use dates accurately and increasingly use these to structure their notes or extended writing. Work is generally well presented and pupils are productive.
108. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, although one unsatisfactory lesson was seen in Year 6. In good lessons, teachers use careful questioning to elicit knowledge from pupils and then build on this. Tasks are well chosen and clearly explained so that pupils are given good opportunities to develop skills of research and analysis. The lessons have clear learning objectives, with tasks well matched to pupils' differing abilities. Teachers and learning assistants offer support to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs make at least sound progress.
109. Pupils respond well to such teaching, working with enthusiasm. They make sensible suggestions as to areas they might research further, make historical links, and take pride in the work they produce. Unsatisfactory teaching in one lesson was owing to the lack of good subject knowledge, resulting in a confusion of aims so that pupils were unable to meet the lesson objective.
110. There has been no history co-ordinator in post since early this year. The headteacher has oversight of the subject. Planning in the subject is good, with links specified to literacy and numeracy. A scheme of work, based on the QCA scheme, ensures that concepts, skills and knowledge are taught progressively throughout the school. The subject is due for review in 2002 – 2003, when there will be an opportunity for the new co-ordinator to consider assessment and monitoring of the subject that is, at present, underdeveloped. The headteacher holds discussions with staff about curriculum coverage and progression, and has used these, together with a scrutiny of display, to come to a correct view of attainment across the school. Resources are sound, and appropriate internet sites and CD ROMs are effectively used to support learning. The school makes good use of the local education authority's topic and artefact library.
111. The history curriculum is enriched by various special events. Year 3 pupils have experienced a 'Roman Day' this year, and a 'Victorian' teacher worked with Year 5. Children later used a spreadsheet to record punishments in the 'Victorian' classroom. The school has also become one of the National Trust's 'Guardian Schools'. This involves visits to Rayleigh Mount, a local historical site, where pupils learn about the importance of conserving, valuing and enjoying part of Britain's historical heritage. Links to history are also made in other curriculum areas. In a Year 4 music lesson, for instance, the teacher introduced layering harmony, explaining its place in Tudor music.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

112. At the time of the last inspection, the school was not fulfilling statutory requirements in information and communication technology. Attainment and progress in both key stages were judged to be unsatisfactory. Teachers' subject knowledge and confidence in this area were weak. Planning and assessment did not help pupils to make progress and insufficient time was allocated to the subject.
113. The school has made excellent progress in addressing these issues. The standards that pupils achieve at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6 are now in line with national expectations, and the school is poised to improve these still further. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. This subject is now a strength of the school.
114. By Year 2, pupils use computers confidently. For example, Year 2 pupils used the keyboard to correct punctuation on a piece of text prepared by the teacher. They changed lower case to upper case letters and highlighted text. Year 2 also designed attractive Mothers' Day cards using a publishing package, used an appropriate paint package to produce a self-portrait, and collated information on hair colour to produce a pictogram. For homework, pupils collected different pieces of information about their homes and used these to build a database, from which they then produced block graphs and pie charts to present different information graphically. In one lesson observed they planned a sequence of instructions for a floor turtle to produce movements forwards, backwards and left and right. Pupils in Year 2 are able to save and retrieve their work independently.
115. By Year 6, pupils use their information and communication technology skills to present information in a variety of ways. They demonstrate an awareness of the need for quality in their presentations, and amend and combine different forms of information from different sources. They use information and communication technology to support work in other curricular areas. For example, Year 6 imported pictures from relevant internet sites into a history text they were producing on 'Britain since 1948'. Year 5 used technology systems to sense physical data, using a light meter to record the different strengths of light through various materials. In Year 5 pupils were designing and building a database about the planets in the solar system to support their work in Science. They access materials from CD ROMs, and use internet sites suggested by the geography co-ordinator to research human and physical geography. Pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 can compare the use of information and communication technology with other methods and discuss its use in the wider world. They exchange ideas and information between classes using internal e-mail.
116. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. In a lesson taught by the co-ordinator they were very good. Teachers throughout the school are enthusiastic about information and communication technology and, now that resources have significantly improved, they are able to provide regular opportunities for pupils to use the equipment. Detailed planning containing appropriate differentiation, combined with considered organisation of lessons in the computer suite by teachers and the information and communication technology technician, lead to a very good quality and range of learning opportunities for children. Where teaching is very good, teachers have very secure subject knowledge, which they transmit confidently to pupils using and clarifying appropriate technical vocabulary. Their instructions are very explicit, so pupils know exactly what they have to do. Teachers strike a good balance between sensitive guidance and encouraging independence in the use of equipment. They demonstrate a very good range of questioning techniques, which keep pupils alert, enthusiastic and learning. Tasks are suitably challenging so pupils maintain interest



and learn well. Pupils work very well together. They support each other's learning and demonstrate tasks to each other, and ask for adult help when required. Pupils are especially well supported by the good ratio of adults to pupils seen in some classes. The support of parent volunteers, as well as expert help from the information and communication technology technician, enables pupils, including those with special educational needs, to make at least good progress in the computer suite.

117. The school is currently using the QCA scheme of work for ICT. The consistent use of this scheme has enabled the school to plan successfully so the pupils make very good progress. The school improvement, development and management plan details the intention of the co-ordinator to adapt this scheme for local use, which should raise standards still further.
118. The work of the co-ordinator is very good and the school makes effective use of his expertise. He collects all medium term plans regularly to check progression through the scheme of work. He has had some non-contact time during the past year, which he has used wisely, reviewing assessment sheets from other class teachers in order to check pupil progress and attainment. He has a clear and accurate view of attainment, gained through these activities, as well as from perusing the folders for each cohort of children kept electronically. The assessment systems he has developed are very good across the school. The co-ordinator has led in-service training sessions for teaching staff to develop teachers' confidence and subject knowledge. Observations and conversations with staff show his work in this area has made a very positive impact. He has developed a school website, which is used by parents to find out more about the work of the school. For example, during the residential trip to Llangollen, Year 6 pupils word-processed a daily diary, which was then posted on the website for parents to access.
119. The co-ordinator is ably supported in his work by a technician, who provides weekly training for teaching assistants in both key stages. These sessions are well attended. Timetabling difficulties mean that these useful sessions are not, at present, available to foundation stage teaching assistants. The information and communication technology technician also manages lunchtime clubs for pupils in Key Stage 2 that are very well attended and increase pupils' enthusiasm for, and competence in the subject. The far-sighted decision by the headteacher to fund a limited period of non-contact time for the information and communication technology technician ensures that pupil progress is not hampered by technical difficulties.
120. The subject is very well resourced, and a sound start has been made on using peripherals such as a scanner and digital camera. A recently acquired interactive whiteboard is beginning to support pupils' learning across several subject areas. More training for staff in this area is detailed in the school improvement, development and leadership plan, and is necessary if it is to become a widely used and effective learning tool.

## **MUSIC**

121. In the current Year 2 and Year 6, standards are above the national expectation. Standards have continued to improve since the last inspection and some excellent teaching was observed. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress throughout the school.

122. The quality of pupils' singing in Year 2 is above that expected from the age group. They sing a variety of songs tunefully and with expression. In a Year 1 lesson pupils used instruments to respond to the characters in Jack and the Beanstalk. The pupils chose from a selection of percussion instruments and used their voices to retell the story through puppets. Pupils were able to work together and improvise to combine and organise musical ideas within a musical structure. All the pupils were fully involved as the teacher conducted the orchestra. Pupils then listened carefully to a piece of music from Peer Gynt and were able to describe the character illustrated by the composer in the piece. In Year 4 pupils composed and performed descriptive sound effects to accompany the poem 'The Owl and the Pussycat.' Pupils were able to compose an ostinato using percussion and tuned instruments. More able pupils performed the owl's dialogue using recitative and composed a melody for the owl's song. In Year 6 pupils improvised and performed their own music to illustrate the seasons. They were able to reflect on their own, and each others performance, and suggest improvements. Each group achieved a rhythmic and melodic finished piece.
123. The quality of teaching and learning is good with some very good, and sometimes excellent features. Lessons are well planned and well supported by a range of high quality resources. Teaching is best where lesson objectives are clear. Teacher intervention was used well in Years 1 and 4, to ask challenging questions and ensure lessons move on at a swift pace. Musical vocabulary is introduced and reinforced through practical music making. Excellent teaching was seen in Year 4 where the teacher inspired the pupils to build on existing skills, by skilfully encouraging them to attempt further challenges. For example, placing the ostinato under the melody. Pupils are motivated and interested in their work. They are able to work together and listen and respond to the suggestions and views of others. They sustain concentration, refining and developing their work. Pupils who play instruments or sing in the choir support other pupils confidently and sensitively.
124. The co-ordinator has worked hard to build upon the good practice in the school. Pupils' experience has been enhanced by the provision of more opportunities to make music and perform music in the school and community. For example, pupils audition for Brentwood Cathedral Choir and the orchestra performs at the annual festival. The choir and orchestra are an integral part of the life of the school and contribute to the cultural and social development of all pupils. There is a music policy and resources from a published scheme are used to supplement the school's scheme. There is a wide range of good quality musical instruments that enhances pupils' opportunities to perform. The range of instruments representing other cultures has been improved and this has enhanced opportunities for pupils' cultural development. Music lessons and singing practice contribute to pupils' spiritual development. Standards in music are further enhanced by visiting teachers of brass, wind and string instruments.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

125. The inspection findings are very similar to those in the last report though standards were overall judged slightly higher in games and slightly lower in swimming. At the end of Key Stage 1 standards in physical education are average but in swimming they are well above average. Apart from swimming, no physical education lessons took place in Year 6 during the inspection. There was a good range of after-school athletics and games clubs however and many pupils, of all levels of attainment, attended them. Children begin to learn to swim in the reception

class. Their skills develop very well from year to year and the standard achieved is well above average. Achievement in Year 5 games indicates that standards are likely to be at least average by the end of Year 6.

126. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have satisfactory games skills and play small-sided games with a partner, throwing, bouncing, batting and catching a ball. A number of the pupils strike the ball with a racquet and catch it unerringly but most are still developing these skills. They are very enthusiastic learners who participate fully in lessons and work energetically. In swimming, they are confident in the pool and by the end of Year 2 many can swim 25 metres unaided. This is the level expected for the end of Key Stage 2. At the end of Key Stage 2, in games and athletics, the pupils have developed appropriate dexterity and control of their movements and equipment. Higher attainers throw accurately over a distance and catch with confidence. They use a bat confidently in cricket and have good hand-eye co-ordination. In swimming, many have sufficiently developed skills to swim 5 metres underwater and use an appropriate range of swimming strokes. In both key stages pupils have an appropriate awareness of the benefits of exercise to a healthy lifestyle. They are aware that it is essential to warm up before physical exercise.
127. Teaching is good, though one unsatisfactory lesson was seen in a Key Stage 2 class. In a Key Stage 1 games lesson, good teaching enabled the pupils to practise and refine their skills. The lesson struck a very good balance between instruction, demonstration and opportunity for the pupils to improve. Pupils' learning is greatly enhanced by the work of specialist teachers of swimming and cricket. In the Year 5 cricket lesson, expert tuition held the pupils' rapt attention while skills were explained and demonstrated. Pupils clearly enjoyed the lesson and responded enthusiastically working hard to develop a range of techniques. Swimming lessons were taught skilfully, with direct and effective teaching of breathing techniques and different strokes. The teaching gets the best out of the pupils who are keen to respond to high expectations and the challenges set.
128. A Year 4 athletics lesson was unsatisfactory because the activity chosen did not challenge the pupils physically. They spent too much of the lesson listening to the teacher and revising work on the effects of exercise on the body at the expense of physical activity. The task of working in a group as a team was too limited and led to very low levels of activity and achievement.
129. After-school provision is good and makes a positive contribution to the pupils' development and opportunity to exercise. Provision is also enhanced by the opportunity to take part in sporting competition with other schools. During the inspection a good number of Key Stage 2 pupils did well in an athletics tournament. Parents help by giving considerable support to the physical education curriculum. They assist teachers by coaching and supporting at clubs, supervise and help the younger pupils as they undress and dress for swimming and accompany groups to tournaments and fixtures.