

INSPECTION REPORT

OCKER HILL INFANT SCHOOL

Tipton, West Midlands

LEA area: Sandwell

Unique reference number: 103919

Headteacher: Mrs Ann Staten

Reporting inspector: Mr David Carrington
15414

Dates of inspection: 14th – 17th May 2001

Inspection number: 197548

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Gospel Oak Road Tipton West Midlands
Postcode:	DY4 0DS
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Nell Collett
Date of previous inspection:	22 nd September 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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9928	Mr A Dobson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
1189	Mrs S Brown	Team inspector	English Geography History Aspects of education for children in the Foundation Stage English as an additional language Equal opportunities Special educational needs	Quality and range of the curriculum
7593	Mr J Collier	Team inspector	Mathematics Music Physical education Religious education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Ocker Hill Infant School is situated about midway between Tipton and Wednesbury. It has a good reputation locally and is about the same size as most other infant schools, with 173 pupils. The pupils all come from the local area, which is a mix of private and rented houses and industry. There are also 72 part-time pupils in the nursery. Children start school at the beginning of the year in which they will be five years old and have broadly average skills and knowledge. The proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals and with special educational needs are about average, though the proportion with statements of special educational needs is below that usually found. There are 19 pupils who speak English as an additional language. Pupils leave at the age of seven, most to attend the nearby junior school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Ocker Hill Infant School is a very effective school where the interests of pupils are put first. Standards are above average, teaching and learning quality is good and the school is very well led and managed. All this is within a caring, family setting where attitudes, behaviour and relationships are strengths and most pupils are very keen to come to school. There are a number of things for continued improvement, but these are well within reach and everyone in school is committed to success. The school's potential for the future is promising and it gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher and assistant headteacher lead and manage the school very well and all staff form a strong team committed to improvement.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good and pupils make good progress in school.
- Standards are good by the age of seven, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils with special educational needs are very well provided for and this enables them to make good gains in knowledge and skills.
- Pupils' attitudes and relationships are very good; they behave well and develop into very pleasant children.
- The exciting curriculum gives the pupils a good start in their education.

What could be improved

- The presentation of written work is not as tidy as it could be.
- The open plan nature of the school means that noise invades lessons in other classes.
- Some pupils are repeatedly late for school and a high proportion take holidays in term time.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school is now a better place than it was when it was last inspected in 1997. There were four key issues identified at that time:

1. Improve standards in mathematics, especially in the understanding of number;
2. Improve staff knowledge and expertise in information technology and music;
3. Apply the marking policy more consistently;
4. Ensure governors approve policies for all subjects and for drug misuse and sex education.

The school has improved these things well. Because all staff are committed to improvement and work hard to succeed, standards have improved and the school has a bright future.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by seven-year-olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests (SATs).

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
reading	A	C	C	C
writing	A	E	B	B
mathematics	A	C	A	A

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
very low	E*

Similar schools are those with between 8% and 20% of pupils entitled to free school meals.

In the 2000 SATs, pupils reached well above average standards in mathematics, above average standards in writing and average standards in reading. These standards were the same when comparison is made against similar schools. There has been some variation in standards during recent years, with a dip in 1999 followed by good improvement in 2000. On the whole, standards have improved at a similar rate to those found in most other infant schools.

Inspectors judge that overall standards are above average, especially in English, mathematics and science. The school has boosted attainment in music and information and communication technology (ICT) because there has been firm commitment to improvement amongst staff. Pupils make good progress from broadly average skill and knowledge levels when they start school. This is especially the case for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils who speak English as an additional language do as well as the other pupils, and higher attaining pupils are given challenging work.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are very keen to learn and they enjoy their work and play. They try hard and achieve well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils are well behaved in lessons and at other times, though they can be too noisy when working. There have been no exclusions in recent years.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils get on very well with each other and there are very good levels of racial harmony. Pupils become responsible and sensible learners.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. The level of attendance is below that usually found. A significant number of pupils arrive late for school or take holidays in term time. In both cases, this reduces the progress that they make.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good

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

The quality of teaching is good and this results in settled, productive and profitable learning. About 70 per cent of the 49 lessons observed were of good teaching quality or better, including a relatively high proportion (20 per cent) of lessons that were of very good teaching quality. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Strengths and advances in teaching include the good teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and English and mathematics overall. Planning quality is good, pupils are well managed and lessons organised well. Foundation Stage children are taught well and they settle happily to their learning. Support staff and volunteers work very successfully with pupils and groups and teachers meet the individual needs of the pupils well.

Points for enhancement in teaching and learning are the provision of more opportunities for the youngest children to participate independently in creative activities, the reduction of noise levels when close concentration is needed and more emphasis on handwriting and neat presentation.

Pupils work hard in lessons, they produce good amounts of work and they can concentrate well. The older pupils have good knowledge of how well they are learning because teachers share targets for work with them, and review these at the end of lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The exciting curriculum is broad and balanced and it provides good opportunities for pupils to gain the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding especially in literacy and numeracy. The school has excellent links with the local community and volunteers working in school give very good help to pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The quality of provision is a strength of the school and the individual work programmes designed for the pupils are of excellent quality. Pupils with special needs make good progress in their learning.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The school manages the education of these pupils well, and they speak, read and write English as effectively as the other pupils by the time they leave school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The spiritual development of pupils is satisfactory, particularly in assemblies and "circle time" when pupils reflect on things that are personally important. The moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very well fostered.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Pupils are well looked after and their personal development and rate of learning are checked carefully. Systems of assessment in subjects other than English, mathematics and science are in need of improvement, though the school is working well to do this.
Partnership with parents	Very good. The school has been very active in building an effective partnership and provides good information for parents. Parents are very successfully encouraged to be involved in both the school and their children's learning

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher and assistant headteacher work in a very good partnership and draw out the strengths of the staff team very well. All staff are committed to improvement and are very concerned to give the pupils a good education.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are interested and involved in the work of the school. They know its strengths and weaknesses and take an effective role in shaping the school's future.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Senior managers and other members of staff have good understanding of the things that need improving and they work well together to bring this about. The information collected about standards is detailed and is used well to ensure that progress is good.
The strategic use of resources	Good. In general, there are no shortages of staff, accommodation or learning resources, although reception children do not have the same range of large play equipment as the nursery children. Resources are put to good use and funds are spent wisely. The school follows the principles of best value satisfactorily and gives good value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are high expectations of the pupils and they make good progress. • Teaching quality is good and pupils develop into responsible learners. • The school is well managed and staff are easy to approach if parents have concerns. • Parents are kept well informed about how their child is doing in school. • Their children like going to school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside lessons could be greater. • Amounts of homework.

The inspection team agrees with parents' views though they judge that the provision of activities outside lessons is satisfactory and that the amount of homework is well judged and makes a good contribution to learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. In 1997, the previous inspection team judged that overall standards in school were satisfactory with strengths in geography, history and religious education (RE). In the last four years, school managers have worked hard to raise standards and the present inspection team judges standards to be good overall. The rate of progress made by pupils has also improved in this time and is now better than expected.
2. The school has had most success in mathematics over the last few years. Standards in the mathematics SATs have more often than not been at levels well above those found nationally and compared to similar schools¹ were also well above average in 2000. The numeracy hour has been introduced well and pupils build knowledge and skills in basic mathematics at a good rate.
3. Standards in the English SATs have been at respectable levels over recent years. In writing, standards in SATs have risen from well below the level found in all schools in 1999 to above this level in 2000. Standards in writing have not yet returned to the peak reached in 1998, and during the present inspection some elements of writing were judged to require improvement. School managers have placed writing at the heart of their priorities and good progress is being made to ensure standards are the best they can be.
4. Standards in the reading SATs have remained at the level found nationally and in similar schools over the last two years. In 1998 they were well above the level found in all schools and the staff are working hard to return to that level. During the present inspection, standards in reading were judged to be average overall. Year 2 pupils have good technical skills but many lack fluency and expression. The literacy hour is having a good impact on standards of reading. Older pupils are enthusiastic readers but find it difficult to talk about favourite books and authors.
5. The results of the science teacher assessments in 2000 placed the school below the level found in all schools. The school was quick to analyse why standards in science had fallen to such levels and last autumn a revised curriculum with greater emphasis on practical investigation and independent recording of findings was put in place. This is paying dividends, and this year, standards in science are above average.
6. Standards in other subjects are generally good. More use is made of computers across the curriculum. Links between subjects have been strengthened with the increasing use of national guidelines that focus strongly on the development of knowledge and skills to support learning in all subjects. Good attention has been made to music and information and communication technology (ICT) and standards are now better than they were in 1997 and good in both subjects. The standards and rates of progress found in the other subjects are summarised in the following table and discussed at length in Part D of this report.

¹ Similar schools to Ocker Hill Infant School are those with between 8% and 20% of pupils entitled to free school meals.

Standards and rates of progress in Foundation Subjects.

	Key Stage 1	
Subject	Attainment	Progress
Art and design	Good	Good
Design and technology	Good	Good
Geography	Good	Good
History	Good	Good
Information & communications technology	Good	Good
Music	Good	Good
Physical education	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Religious education	Good	Good

7. When children start in the nursery, the level of knowledge and skill are average for the age group. Progress is good from that time until pupils leave school at the age of seven and pupils attain above the expected level by the end of the Foundation Stage. The ‘stepping stones’ that lead to the attainment of the national Early Learning Goals² are successfully navigated, though aspects of the creative development of children are limited because the activities are sometimes over-directed. By the start of Year 1, most children have reached the expected level of skills and knowledge.

8. The school is fully committed to educational inclusion³ and all pupils have the same opportunities to succeed. The school provides effectively for pupils of different ability levels. Those with special educational needs achieve very respectable standards, appropriate for their age and ability. They have positive attitudes to learning, enjoy their activities and work with enthusiasm. These pupils are generally well behaved, have good self-esteem and a desire to succeed.

9. Higher attaining pupils are also given good support. Teachers assess their capabilities carefully and match the work successfully to ensure that the brightest pupils are taxed by their tasks. Higher attaining pupils make good progress and an above average proportion of pupils gained level 3 in the 2000 SATs, apart from in writing where the figure was the same as that found nationally. This year, inspectors judge that an above average proportion of pupils are working at level 3, including writing, where improvements of the last year are already proving successful.

10. Pupils in the middle ability band do not miss out when efforts are focused on higher and lower attainers. The work set is carefully planned to ensure all pupils benefit and tasks are varied according to need. Support staff tend to work more with lower ability groups, but their good efforts release the teacher to devote more time to others in the class. This is successful in ensuring that the middle ability pupils maintain good progress.

11. During the inspection, boys and girls were observed to take equal interest in lessons and to work as hard as each other. On occasions, boys are noisier than the girls, as some are attention seeking and others over-exuberant. In the main, this does not noticeably affect the progress of boys any more than it does the girls. In the SATs over the last three years, girls have done rather better than boys in reading, but the boys have done better than the girls in writing and mathematics. Nationally, the girls have done better than boys in all three subjects. The school has made thorough analysis of the reasons for the differences in achievement of boys and girls and continues to monitor the progress of both carefully.

² The Early Learning Goals are the skills and knowledge that children should achieve by the end of the reception year.

³ Educational inclusion refers to the opportunities provided to ensure that all pupils, regardless of background, do as well as they can. It particularly refers to the degree of racial harmony in school.

12. The small number of pupils who come from homes where English is an additional language. This presents little difficulty in school as pupils are fluent in English and indeed some of these pupils are among the most able children in the school. These pupils learn English at good rates and speak, read and write the language as effectively as the other pupils.

13. Pupils from the diverse range of ethnic backgrounds have equal chances to succeed. The good level of racial harmony in school means that all pupils benefit from the opportunities to share their learning, discuss ideas and information and work together to find out more. Again, pupils of different ethnic backgrounds are to be found in all ability groups and all make good progress.

14. Standards and rates of progress are clearly strengths of the school. There are a number of aspects of work where improvement would boost standards further, but on the whole, pupils get a good deal in school and they show their capabilities well.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. The pupils' very positive attitudes to school, their good behaviour and very good relationships observed during the previous inspection are still very apparent in the school.

16. Parents report overwhelmingly that their children enjoy school. In the classroom, pupils settle down quickly and are very keen to learn. They are very attentive and well motivated. The good teaching brings out their enthusiasm resulting in an eagerness to participate and do well. Pupils work hard and show a good level of perseverance. They are not easily distracted. Pupils are very proud to talk about and show off their work; however the general quality of the handwriting and the neatness of the presentation could be improved.

17. Behaviour in the school is good, a fact appreciated by parents. Pupils are very well supervised at all times. The school rules are simple and well publicised. Pupils understand very well what is expected of them and take the acquisition of rewards seriously. Behaviour in lessons is good, although during group and individual work, classrooms are often noisy. The lack of noise insulation between classrooms produces a high ambient noise level, particularly the Year 1 and 2 area. This results in everyone speaking louder than normal and a general acceptance of a level of noise that is not conducive to good learning. Noise problems were highlighted by pupils in a recent survey by the school of their views. Movement around the school is orderly. Behaviour in assembly is good and pupils are respectful during prayers. Lunchtime supervisors ensure that dining is an orderly and civilised, although the acoustics of the room do not help easy conversation. Behaviour in the playground is very good. Pupils are friendly and there were no signs of oppressive behaviour during the inspection. Pupils know to speak to an adult if they have any problems. There have been no exclusions in recent years.

18. Relationships are very good. Pupils get on well with each other and the many adults in the school. The atmosphere is very friendly. Pupils are not cheeky. Boys and girls mix well together both in the classroom and the playground. There is a very good level of racial harmony. Pupils work very well together in groups and particularly in pairs. Pupils help each other and generally understand the importance of sharing and taking turns. They are happy to listen to each other's views. The way pupils treat other pupils with disabilities is impressive; they show care, understanding and respect to them.

19. Pupils become mature and responsible learners during their time in school. They are beginning to acquire very good skills for independent learning. Homework is taken seriously. They enjoy finding things out for themselves, for instance during the inspection, Year 2 pupils were very engaged on fact-finding about the Great Fire of London. Research is a regular part of the older

pupils' homework and is tackled enthusiastically. The many opportunities within the school for taking responsibility are accepted eagerly. There is a good range available, from class monitor duties for younger pupils to whole school roles for Year 2, for instance being responsible for the boxes of equipment used at playtimes. Pupils keep their classrooms very tidy. When the staff asked older pupils earlier this year for their views on the school, they showed a very mature appreciation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. By the time the pupils leave the school, they are sensible, responsible and pleasant individuals.

20. Attendance at the school is unsatisfactory. The most recent published rate (93.3 per cent) is well below the national average for primary schools. A significant minority of parents take their children on holiday during term time and this inevitably affects those children's education. Punctuality at the school is also unsatisfactory. On a sample day during the inspection over 10 per cent of pupils were more than five minutes late. The school considers this is reasonably typical. Lateness causes disruption to the start of the day and particularly to the act of collective worship. Registration is prompt and efficient. Lessons start on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21. The 1997 inspection report stated that teaching was good overall, though there were shortcomings in staff subject knowledge in information technology and music and the marking policy was not applied consistently. In addition, the teaching of speaking and listening in English was not as effective as the general level of teaching, though it was satisfactory overall.

22. Four years on, there has been good improvement in teaching. ICT, as information technology is now called, and music are taught well because subject knowledge and specialist expertise are tapped so successfully. The marking of work is much more helpful in showing pupils how to improve, though it still is not used sufficiently to alert pupils to the need for best handwriting and presentation at all times. Speaking and listening are now taught well; pupils listen carefully and understand what they hear and teachers put good emphasis on standard spoken English in order that pupils speak clearly. Because teaching is of good quality this produces good conditions for learning.

23. During the inspection, 49 lessons were observed. Of these, 20 per cent were of very good teaching quality, 49 per cent were good and 31 per cent satisfactory. There was no unsatisfactory teaching and teaching is good in both the Foundation Stage and infant years and in English and mathematics.

24. Within the overall good teaching in school, there are three aspects that could be further refined. This would take the overall quality of teaching and learning closer to very good.

- Children in the Foundation Stage are taught well overall, but on occasion the work to take them towards the Early Learning Goal for creative development is over-directed. Inspectors observed a number of lessons where the teacher, for example, chose materials and methods for pupils to produce artwork, and the children constructed their picture under the close supervision of an adult. Whilst this resulted in good quality work, it did not foster creativity as much as when children were given opportunities to investigate and experiment with the materials and techniques.
- Teachers have high expectations of their pupils. This is clearly seen in the expectation of behaviour, effort and knowledge. However, expectations of handwriting and the presentation of work could be higher, as some pupils' books contain work that, whilst accurate, is untidy. The marking of such work does not always flag the weakness or suggest how to improve.
- Much learning takes place in noisy conditions. This is in part due to the open-plan nature of the main school and noise passes easily between classes. However, in several lessons seen, pupils talked more loudly in an attempt to drown the noise next door. Teachers tend to allow such competitive working noise and this means that learning is not always as settled as it should be.
- Some plenary sessions are not used effectively enough to consolidate or extend learning.
- The focus on the development of skills in some PE lessons could be sharper.

25. These issues aside, teaching and learning have many strengths:

- Pupils build knowledge, skills and understanding at good rates because teachers focus firmly on these things in lessons and give good instruction and explanation;
- Good effort is given to work by the pupils because staff are alert to the needs of different groups of pupils and provide work that is interesting and well matched to ability;
- Pupils complete much work in lessons because time is used well and the pace of teaching and working is brisk;
- Pupils are enthusiastic and interested learners who listen and concentrate well because teachers make learning lively and fascinating;
- Learning, although noisy at times, is orderly, good natured and fun. This is due to good class management and organisation and the choice of stimulating activities by teachers;
- Pupils have good knowledge of how well they are learning by Year 2 because teachers explain and discuss progress in easily understood ways.

26. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils achieve well, making good gains in learning. This is because teachers know their pupils well and plan activities carefully, ensuring they are matched to pupils' needs. Pupils make good progress because individual education plans set targets for improvement, particularly in English but also in mathematics and other aspects of learning. The quality of these plans is excellent. Support staff are used very effectively and records of gains in skills, knowledge and understanding are carefully maintained.

27. Because staff subject knowledge and confidence have been improved well during the last four years, staff have adjusted well to the demands of the literacy and numeracy strategies. These have been adapted carefully to suit the needs of Ocker Hill Infant School pupils and there is much

success in the teaching and learning of basic skills of numeracy and literacy. Standards are improving as a result.

28. There is strong commitment in the school to raising standards for all children and issues of inclusion are addressed well through planning and support from staff. There is no specific additional support for pupils with English as an additional language. Staff place a very high priority on English and are skilled at promoting literacy and oracy skills throughout the school. As a result, these pupils make good progress in their English acquisition and similar gains in learning to other pupils in school. Good provision and a close match to pupils' needs means there is no significant difference in the attainment of these pupils.

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

29. The school provides a rich curriculum with a breadth of experiences for all its pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. As a result, pupils acquire a good breadth and depth of knowledge across the whole curriculum and all make good progress in their learning. This marks an improvement since the last inspection when aspects of mathematics, information technology and music had shortcomings. The school places great importance on equality of opportunity for all pupils. Religious education conforms to the locally agreed syllabus and makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development.

30. Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is good. Although there is no specific funded support allocated, teachers provide well for these pupils through careful planning with well-matched work and well focused support from classroom assistants. As a result, these pupils participate fully in all aspects of the curriculum and all of the school's activities. They make the same good progress as other pupils.

31. A major strength of the school is its provision for pupils with special educational needs. The curriculum for these pupils is very good. There are clear guidelines for responding to the needs of pupils with special educational needs. Pupils are given the same curricular opportunities as others, both inside and outside the classroom. They are supported very well within the classroom and when withdrawn in small groups by the special educational needs co-ordinator who links this work closely to targets identified in individual education plans. Targets are specific and are clearly understood by the pupils and the adults working with them. Pupils use them as a working document in order to help them improve. Pupils are fully involved in the reviewing of their targets and a reward system for achieving targets acts as a spur. Pupils are proud when they succeed, adding comments such as 'I know I am getting better' to their individual education plan. Assessments are made on a regular basis and accurately recorded to further inform the future teaching of these pupils. Targets in individual education plans are reviewed regularly.

32. The curriculum for the children in the Foundation Stage is good. Work is planned to the Early Learning Goals for children of this age, although there are inconsistencies in planning between the nursery and the reception classes. Planning in the nursery lacks the detail of the reception planning, focusing more on the activities rather than what is to be learnt. The inconsistent approaches result from a lack of joint planning in the Foundation Stage. Children in the Foundation Stage have access to a wide range of suitable activities and learning experiences prepare them well for the National Curriculum. However, the arrangements for outdoor activities in the reception classes, for physical development are unsatisfactory. They do not have regular use of the good nursery provision for this aspect of learning and there is no suitable equipment to promote physical development outside.

33. The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 and 2 gives them good opportunities to take part in a good range of interesting activities and meets statutory requirements well. The school has adapted the national guidance as schemes of work in subjects other than literacy, numeracy and religious education. These are currently being trialled before school-specific schemes are developed from them.

34. English and mathematics receive a generous share of teaching time allocations. Strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are being used very effectively and there are good opportunities for these skills to be reinforced across other areas of the curriculum. Appropriate time is allocated to other subjects to enable pupils to receive worthwhile and rewarding experiences.

35. Teachers plan well and match work to the specific needs of individual pupils and at the level at which they are working. Very good thought has been given to the language needs of all pupils, but particularly those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language and planning clearly identifies the vocabulary required. These factors help pupils to make good progress in their learning. A weakness in the otherwise good planning lies in the evaluation process. Often this is superficial and does not identify how the teaching and learning can be improved. Smarter evaluation would improve planning further and enable teachers to be even more specific in their objectives.

36. Extra-curricular provision is satisfactory, although some parents felt this could be improved. The school makes very good use of educational visits and visitors to support the curriculum. The visit from the optician in Year 2 for example, contributed to their work focusing on Vision Aid in Africa. The youngest pupils visit the park and safari park while older pupils visit the church as part of their work in religious education.

37. Although there is no written policy in place, the school focuses well on personal, social and health education. Circle time is used well to share thoughts and concerns and to build self-esteem. Pupils are encouraged to consider the feelings of others and to respect the beliefs and values of other people. Good attention is given to pupils' personal development in their learning in other subjects. Good thought has been given to developing confidence and independence in the classroom environment, including developing enquiry and investigation skills.

38. The school maintains excellent links with the community, particularly with the local church. The minister visits to take assemblies and pupils are regular visitors to the church to support their learning. Pupils are involved in regular fundraising events. Excellent links with Sandwell Volunteer Bureau result in a very good number of volunteers supporting in classrooms. They make a very good contribution to pupils' learning. There are good business partnership links with a local hotel and car sales showroom which have contributed to the rich curriculum and the provision of resources in school. The school has satisfactory links with its partner institutions.

39. The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and represents an improvement since the last inspection. However, within this provision, spiritual development is now satisfactory rather than good. Assemblies contain a quiet time for prayer and for thinking about what has been said but the moment passes quickly because teachers are keen to keep within time restraints. Similarly in lessons, opportunities that lend themselves to exploration of the complexities of the world are not always taken. Yet pupils are mature enough to wonder about the inexplicable and to explore their spiritual nature. A Year 2 pupil, for example, in discussion about miracles and about Jesus' resurrection says, "We don't know how they happened. God uses His power." Pupils are given opportunities in religious education lessons to think about such marvels and, in an art lesson, they show respect for the wonders of nature by handling the flowers that they are sketching very carefully. These occasions are the exception however.

40. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. Pupils understand the school rules quite clearly and classes also draw up particular rules that are appropriate for them. There is a very good, diverse array of rewards – certificates, badges and prizes – so that the emphasis is on praising positive effort rather than punishing the negative. Nevertheless, clear sanctions are in place and pupils understand that they will be applied when necessary. Assemblies, which have a weekly theme are planned well ahead and often have a moral input. 'Respect' was the focus during the inspection and reference was made to it throughout the week in a variety of contexts so that pupils clearly understood its meaning and its importance in dealing with each other. 'Circle time' discussions are also used well to explore moral issues. A particularly effective session in Year 1 focused precisely on being kind and one pupil's self-esteem was greatly boosted by the compassionate comments of her classmates.

41. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. Opportunities are often given in lessons for pupils to work together on activities and they do so amicably. Various responsibilities are allocated within classes and around the school and the duties are conscientiously carried out. A girl in a Year 1 class, for example, completes the weather board for the day without fuss and other pupils unselfconsciously say prayers in assembly. There is a real sociable feeling in a whole school assembly when certificates and badges are awarded, with twenty-five adults present. This contrasts with an earlier assembly when only three adults stay to participate. Charity collections are regularly undertaken and a creditable amount has recently been raised following a visit from the representative of a national children's charity. In connection with a science topic about eyes, Year 2 pupils have learnt about 'Vision Aid', which helps people in Uganda and other African countries who have diseases that affect their sight.

42. Provision for pupils' cultural development has significantly improved since the last inspection and is now very good. Religious education plays a full part in helping pupils to understand the diversity of faith traditions other than Christianity. Festivals such as Diwali are celebrated as well as Harvest, Christmas and Easter. The Sikh religion is explained and pupils remember vividly the cooking that they undertook. This helps them to appreciate the diversity of life-styles in our country. An awareness of other aspects of our culture is also very well promoted through the curriculum. Visits, for example to the Black Country Museum, help to give a sense of our history. Barnaby Bear's visit to Ireland helps Year 1 pupils to learn about the countries of the British Isles. In music, they listen to Haydn's 'Surprise Symphony' and in art, the older ones create stunning sand pictures inspired by native American traditions.

43. All staff are very supportive of pupils for whom English is an additional language and value and respect their culture and language. Good relationships with parents are promoted and staff have a good knowledge of pupils and their backgrounds. Everyone works hard to promote racial harmony and tolerance of different cultures and beliefs, particularly in religious education and through the recognition of festivals and celebrations throughout the year. The good role models provided by the staff results in a racially harmonious school where there are good relationships between all members of the community.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. The school has good procedures for the care of the pupils. The headteacher and staff know the pupils well, respect them as individuals and listen attentively to any concerns they may have. Pupils are very well supervised at all times. The school is a friendly and secure environment. The judgements are broadly similar to those at the previous inspection.

45. Procedures for child protection are good. The named person has been trained and all staff are regularly reminded of the school's procedures. Health and safety procedures are satisfactory. All the necessary safety checks are carried out, first aid cover is adequate and procedures for recording and notifying parents of any accident are good. Safety during practical lessons is correctly stressed; for instance during a science lesson in Year 2, the teacher ensured that a pupil with an allergy did not handle any seeds.

46. Procedures for monitoring attendance are good. Registers are well kept and regularly monitored. The computerised data is easily accessible. Attendance is now judged more rigorously than at the time of the previous inspection, and the unsatisfactory attendance rate has not been recognised as an issue by the school. Apart from certificates for good attendance, there is no evidence of any drive to improve the figures. Holidays in term time are significant yet parents are not made aware of the educational implications of these holidays. No targets exist for improving attendance. Too little attention has been given to improving punctuality, which is also unsatisfactory.

47. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. The school has taken the promotion of good behaviour extremely seriously and carried out an extensive consultation with staff, parents and pupils before developing the current procedures. The depth of this consultation process is impressive, even to ascertaining parents' views on the respect their children show to various categories of staff. The resulting procedures are very clear and effective. They have the support of all staff and are applied consistently. Pupils know exactly what is expected of them. Praise is used very effectively. Sanctions are well understood. Very good records are kept of inappropriate behaviour and parents informed when necessary.

48. Bullying and racism are not tolerated by the school, and are not a problem. The school has clear procedures for dealing with any incident. Assemblies and class discussions are used effectively to make pupils aware of the school's attitudes and procedures.

49. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is good although largely informal. This is a school where the staff have a very good knowledge of the pupils. In the pupils' annual reports, the section covering personal development is of high quality.

50. The school has good procedures for assessing pupils' progress and attainment in English, mathematics and science. For instance, formal assessment takes place every half term in literacy and numeracy and is measured against national expectations. As a result, targets have been established for each pupil in each of these subjects and the pupils know their targets. This good practice is beginning to emerge in other subjects such as ICT. In most foundation subjects there is a lack of any formal assessment. Where data is collected, it is used well to focus on learning, for instance by giving

additional reading support when necessary. However the lack of assessment data in the foundation subjects results in planning and any evaluation not being as sharply focused on the pupils' needs as in the core subjects.

51. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and is a strength of the school. All statutory requirements are met. Needs are identified early and outside agencies are used effectively. The care and support given by teaching and non-teaching staff is very good including one to one support for identified pupils with statements. Gains in academic and personal progress are recorded efficiently and details are reported to parents and guardians every term.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

52. Parents think highly of the school. It has a good reputation locally and is regularly over-subscribed. The school has maintained the very effective partnership with the parents apparent at the time of the previous inspection.

53. Parents particularly like the high expectations the school has of their children and the good progress they make, the good teaching, the approachable staff and the way their children develop whilst at the school. Parents think the school is well managed. The inspectors endorse these positive views.

54. A small number of parents had concerns about homework. However, the inspectors found the provision of homework to be good. Homework is very well organised throughout the school. The work set links well with what the children are learning in lessons. The emphasis on research is impressive for an infant school.

55. Some parents would like more activities outside lessons. The inspectors judge that the provision of activities outside lessons is very similar to most infant schools and is satisfactory.

56. Parents and guardians of pupils with special educational needs are actively involved at all stages of the Code of Practice and are fully involved in review procedures. Opportunities are provided at least termly to review progress. Parents are supportive of the work of the school.

57. The quality of information provided to parents is good overall. The prospectus and governors' annual reports are informative and comprehensive. Given the high incidence of holidays in term time, the prospectus would benefit from a clearer statement of the school's views on this subject. Information for parents new to the school is very good, consisting of a well written booklet, the school's code of conduct and guidance on how to read with a child. All parents are made very familiar with the school's policies on behaviour management. Newsletters are regular and informative. The termly information sheets on future work for each year group are of very good quality and allow parents to be very well involved in their children's learning. Information for parents on homework is very good. The quality of pupils' reports is satisfactory overall and they meet legal requirements. However there is an inconsistency in the amount of detail given for the core subjects, English is good, mathematics is thin. Comments in the foundation subjects are often too general and not specific to the child. It is not always clear to parents what a child has to do to improve. The quality of the section on personal development is very good. Opportunities for parents to meet their child's teacher are good, but many parents would welcome the spring term meeting earlier in the term.

58. The school takes the involvement of parents very seriously and the home-school agreement is well supported. Parents (together with many volunteers) provide valuable help in the classroom. This help is very well organised and has a significant impact on the pupils' learning. The active Parents and Friends Association is successful at organising social events and fund-raising. Parents are

consulted very well on major issues, for instance in the development of a new behaviour management policy.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

59. The many strengths of Ocker Hill Infant School are due to the diligence and determination of the headteacher and assistant headteacher. The 1997 inspection report identified school leadership as being good and identified that management systems supported improved standards. Not many weaknesses were put forward; these were mainly related to the level of resources, particularly in ICT. It was acknowledged at that time that a small number of staff carried many duties well. Since that time, leadership and management have been improved well and the identified weaknesses corrected.

60. Ocker Hill Infant School is one of the first schools to have an assistant headteacher rather than a deputy head. The partnership between the headteacher and her assistant headteacher is very good. Between them, they ensure the school is very well led and managed and that things get done in good time. Both are hard working and their personal qualities dovetail well together in ensuring that there is very good and shared educational direction. High standards are clearly the number one priority in school and resources, whether staff, time, money or equipment are directed at maximising progress in learning.

61. The very effective partnership between the headteacher and assistant headteacher does not dominate school management. Most other teachers have management responsibility for one subject or aspect of the school, at least. They have good delegated roles and make a strong contribution to the overall quality of management. Subject co-ordinators know the strengths and weaknesses of their subjects well. This has been achieved by a well-balanced combination of informal and formal monitoring. Following the identification of issues for development, there is concerted effort from all in school to complete the task of improvement. This is to be seen, for example to improvements made to staff knowledge and confidence in ICT and music, and better levels of resourcing in RE.

62. The quality of management of special educational needs is a strength of the school. The co-ordinator carries out her duties very effectively. The register of pupils with special educational needs is maintained efficiently. She has very good expertise which she shares with others and provides opportunities for colleagues to share concerns. She has a very clear vision for the development of special educational needs and a very good knowledge of the needs of individual pupils on the register. Outside agencies are involved as required and the governing body is kept well informed by the special educational needs co-ordinator, together with the headteacher and responsible governor who give good support.

63. The governors provide effective support and guidance for the school. Many governors are relatively new to the role and are still learning about the complex role of the governing body. They are doing this successfully and seek training and support where necessary. They have satisfactory understanding of what the school does well and not so well and, through their committees, involvement in compiling the good school development plan and visits to school, are able to influence the setting of priorities and track improvement competently. Governors undertake all their statutory duties properly and ensure that the school gives due regard to the principles of best value by seeking to compare its performance with other schools in order that it is competitive.

64. All staff and the governors are party to effective monitoring and evaluation of how well the school is doing. The headteacher and assistant headteacher take the lead in these matters and between them, have an acute understanding of what needs to be done next to sustain strengths and bring about improvement. The evaluation of progress and standards is thorough and the process of setting targets for individual attainment and for classes as a whole is well developed and very effective. The quality

of the curriculum, teaching and learning and levels of attainment have all moved ahead, and continue to do so.

65. School managers have adopted very sensible and relevant priorities for improvement. Action to meet these has been unstinting and successful. Finance has been matched well to these priorities. The school has been affected significantly by the reduction in the size of school admissions and the budget is finely balanced. The school is using its reserves to meet the level of staffing and other resourcing that its priorities demand. Last year the school spent more than it received. This is set to be repeated this year. Whilst the management of the budget is good and additional funding for particular uses, such as the education of pupils with special needs, is used very well, the school is likely to have just a few hundred pounds in its reserves. Governors and senior managers are alert to this possibility and are actively exploring ways to use existing resources more efficiently, reduce staffing costs by assigning the assistant headteacher to teach the reception class next year and tap into funds to support effective education in urban areas.

66. There are good levels of staffing, with an especially valuable contribution made by support staff, parents and volunteers. The quality of learning resources is good and there are no shortages; ICT has been particularly well resourced in the last four years and standards have risen in the subject. The accommodation is satisfactory for the demands placed upon it. Noise transmission is high and this affects pupils' concentration and the presentation of work. However, the caretaker and cleaning staff keep the buildings in immaculate condition and staff display work with considerable flair to make the learning environment attractive and stimulating.

67. The school is very good at meeting its aims. This is due to sensitive yet firm leadership and management. The prospects for continuing improvement are good. This very effective school gives good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

68. Ocker Hill Infant School is a successful place of learning where most things are done well or very well. In order to take the school closer to excellence, the headteacher, staff team and governors should:

(1) **Introduce measures to ensure that the presentation of written work is neat and tidy by:**

Developing handwriting more effectively;
Adopting consistent approaches to setting out work;
Using marking consistently and rigorously to improve the presentation of work.

(Paragraphs: 16, 22, 24, 66, 83, 85, 89, 97, 112 and 116)

(2) **Take effective steps to reduce the transmission of noise from one classroom to the next by:**

Seeking ways to reduce noise by modifying the accommodation;
Insisting on quiet working whenever this is necessary for effective learning.

(Paragraphs: 11, 17, 24, 25, 66, 84, 91, 97, 108 and 111)

(3) **Improve punctuality and take more positive steps to discourage the taking of holidays during term time by:**

Setting targets for punctuality for individual pupils and each class;
Widening the reward system to include punctuality;
Making parents more aware of the implications of holidays during term time.

(Paragraphs: 20, 46 and 57)

Lesser issues for the governors to include in their action plan are:

- **The development of greater independence and creativity in learning amongst the youngest children.**

(Paragraphs: 7, 24, 70, 72, 76 and 77)

- **The development of provision for outdoor play for all children in the Foundation Stage.**

(Paragraphs: 32, 71, 72 and 76)

- **Extending the good practice in assessment in English, mathematics and science to other subjects.**

(Paragraphs: 50, 70, 104, 109, 112, 116, 121, 125, 128 and 131)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	49
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	27

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	20	49	31	0	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

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	36	173
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		24

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	43

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	19

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	5.9
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.7
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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	32	32	64

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	26	29	32
	Girls	30	29	30
	Total	56	58	62
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (87)	91 (79)	97 (90)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	24	30	26
	Girls	29	30	29
	Total	53	60	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	83 (86)	94 (86)	86 (93)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	9
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	111
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 – Y2

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.6
Average class size	28.8

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	4.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	132.5

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	36

Total number of education support staff	2.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	73.5

Number of pupils per FTE adult	10.3
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
	£
Total income	431860
Total expenditure	438428
Expenditure per pupil	1993
Balance brought forward from previous year	29198
Balance carried forward to next year	22630

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	245
Number of questionnaires returned	78

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school	67	32	1	0	0
My child is making good progress in school	68	28	3	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good	41	51	6	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home	45	36	13	1	4
The teaching is good	76	23	1	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on	52	35	13	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem	72	24	3	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best	76	23	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents	49	42	8	1	0
The school is well led and managed	60	35	4	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible	62	34	1	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons	25	35	19	7	15

The inspection team agrees with parents on the things they find good about the school and would reassure them that homework levels and the range of activities outside lessons are both appropriate for infant pupils. In addition, the information provided to parents stands good comparison with other schools.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

69. Children are admitted to the nursery on a part-time basis at the start of the school year, following their third birthday. They join the reception classes at the start of the school year in which they become five years old. At the time of the inspection there were 72 children attending the nursery part-time and 47 children in the two reception classes. Early assessment information in the nursery indicates a broadly average range of ability. In the reception classes, analysis of assessment information on entry to reception indicates the same broad spread of ability, although marginally more children are at the upper ability end of the range.

70. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage, including teaching, is good. Children in the nursery settle quickly and enjoy the range of experiences offered. They maintain steady progress during this time. Teachers in the reception classes build well on these early skills, so that by the time they enter Year 1, many of the children are already working at National Curriculum Level 1, and all are well prepared for this. One reason for the accelerated learning in the reception classes is good planning and highly effective teamwork, including many voluntary helpers which ensures a brisk pace to learning. Staff have high expectations and develop lively, enquiring children. Very careful records are maintained in reception and work is regularly assessed and annotated so that the progress children make is thoroughly recorded. As a result, tasks set are matched carefully to ensure the right level of challenge for all, and children make good gains in their knowledge and understanding. In the nursery, children make sound gains in learning, but over-direction by the adults at times stifles individual creativity and expression, and does not promote independence. Planning in the nursery and reception classes reflects the Early Learning Goals and in the reception classes takes account of the National Curriculum where appropriate. The quality and range of learning opportunities is good, but the pace is sometimes too leisurely in the nursery and this affects the progress made. Not all activities are sufficiently challenging and the planning is less effective in identifying what is to be learnt, particularly during free choice activities, than it is in describing the activities to be undertaken. There are secure early assessment procedures in place in the nursery and reception classes, but on-going assessment procedures and record keeping are inconsistent across the phase. The use of assessment information to determine the next steps of learning is good in both the nursery and reception classes.

71. Learning resources are good in both nursery and reception classes, except for outdoor play provision, which is good in the nursery but unsatisfactory in the reception classes. Stimulating learning environments encourage the children to be interested and to learn.

Personal, social and emotional development

72. Teaching in this area of development is good. Children build confidence and self-esteem. They have positive attitudes to learning and enjoy coming to school. They learn to behave well and make friends, to share and to take turns. They enjoy good relationships with the adults who work with them, listening carefully to instructions and carrying these out without fuss. They know that teachers have high expectations for behaviour and attitudes and they respond appropriately. Many are keen to respond to questions. In circle time, children in the reception class share their targets with each other and discuss their progress towards these. Although at an early stage of development, most respond when questioned and know if they are improving. They move confidently about the classroom and playground. Children in the reception year show good independence when changing for dance. Opportunity for children in the nursery to use the school hall for physical development is lacking, although they make good use of their outdoor area. Children having special educational needs are identified early. The very good support provided in the reception classes in particular helps them to

gain confidence and independence and enables them to participate well in all of the activities. Voluntary help is much more limited in the nursery, but where support is provided, this is good. Most children make good progress in this area of their development and have achieved the level expected by the time they enter Year 1 with many exceeding this level.

Communication, language and literacy

73. Most children are confident when speaking to adults, or the rest of the class because they are given many opportunities to do so. In the nursery, for example, the well supported role-play at the seaside provided very good opportunities through the seaside shop where children ‘purchased’ ice creams and drinks and the boat at sea where they used the magnetic fishing game and counted their catch. In a literacy session in a reception class, children walked in pairs building common words at speed and shared in the reading aloud of the Big Book text. Many joined in with remembered words and repetitive phrases. This learning was fun and early reading skills, as well as speaking and listening skills were fostered effectively. Following on from the text of *The Bear and the Picnic Lunch* children enjoyed role-play of a picnic, setting out their table cloths and picnics for the bears and discussing the food they were enjoying. Basic writing skills are well taught with careful attention to pencil control in the nursery, and this is developed appropriately in the reception classes. A few children are already producing unaided writing at Level 1 of the National Curriculum. Teachers make learning of high frequency words fun, reinforcing sound and letter recognition, and the overall quality of teaching is good in this Early Learning Goal. The most able readers know how to tackle new words. Early phonic skills are secure and the children make sense of their reading. All children enjoy books and demonstrate good book handling skills. Many know all their initial letter sounds and some are beginning to blend initial sounds to build upwards, when writing. The majority make good progress in developing skills in this area of learning and many will exceed the levels expected by the time they start in Year 1.

Mathematical development

74. Children in the nursery count confidently to 6 and some beyond. They colour and match objects to these numbers and practise forming these numbers correctly. They are able to continue simple repeating patterns of shapes and can recognise which is the odd one out. In the reception classes, children count and write numbers to 10, with the higher attainers counting and writing numbers to 20. They use coins to make amounts to 10p and higher attainers complete simple money sums to 10p, including giving change. The good role-play in the nursery seaside shop and in ‘McDonalds’ in the reception class increases children’s knowledge of basic shapes. They know ‘square’, ‘triangle’ and ‘rectangle’. In the reception classes, teachers build on this knowledge well, identifying the properties of shapes and the names of three-dimensional shapes. The most able pupils name key features of shapes, referring to the number of sides and corners. Children explore sand and water acquiring good mathematical language such as ‘full’, ‘empty’, ‘more’ and ‘less’. Reception children use shapes and colours to create repeating patterns and most can talk about their pattern. Teaching in this area is good and teachers and support staff work closely together, including the many voluntary helpers who are well briefed by teachers. This level of support is more limited in the nursery with very few voluntary helpers and no parental support in class, making groups larger. This is one important reason why children in the reception classes made good gains and achieve above the levels expected for their age.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

75. The many practical opportunities help children to make good progress in this area of learning from the average attainment on entry to school. Yet again, the good support from a volunteer helper provides enrichment in the reception classes. The caretaker’s wife, a regular support in school, gives generously of her time to enable baking activities to take place. These are very well prepared sessions

with good opportunities used to reinforce hygiene. Children are encouraged to participate, helping to weigh and mix ingredients and extending their scientific knowledge and understanding in the process. They could explain that the chocolate was solid but would melt when heated and become solid again on cooling. There were moments of delight as they sprinkled ‘hundreds and thousands’ on their cakes and one child exclaimed ‘they smell lovely!’ as the cakes came out of the oven. In the nursery, children use their senses to feel stones from the seashore. They notice the holes, comment on the smoothness and that they smell of seaweed. In the reception class the senses are used to taste and describe a range of different foods. Teaching points are clearly made so that children are aware of which sense they are using, although there is less attention given to the health and safety aspect of this lesson. Children develop their awareness of the passage of time as they study old and new bears, putting them in a simple order of age. Children are spellbound in this lesson as the teacher recounts her adventures with ‘Pink Ted’ when she was a little girl. There is very good attention to language development, as well as to caring attitudes as children handle the old bear lovingly. High expectations and well presented information help children to develop a sense of chronology. Plenary sessions are used very well to check understanding of comparisons and time lines. Children are developing good skills in information and communication technology, controlling the mouse well, with a good awareness of early keyboard skills. Overall teaching quality of knowledge and understanding of the world is good. Adults support children well in developing these skills. All children make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world and many have already achieved the expected levels due to the good experience provided for them.

Physical development

76. Provision for this aspect of learning is good in the nursery where a good outdoor space with grassed area and a range of wheeled vehicles enable many skills to be developed. The lack of climbing provision limits the opportunities to develop aspects of physical development. Children enjoy driving and pedalling vehicles along the marked roadways, filling up with fuel and observing signs and zebra crossings. The lack of such provision and opportunities in the reception classes inhibits their progress in the aspect of development. However, they make good use of the hall space to develop physical skills. Pupils change independently into appropriate kit. They respond promptly to signals from the teacher to stop and are developing a good awareness of the space around them. The very effective support for a statemented child enables him to participate fully with much enthusiasm and enjoyment. Most children demonstrate their ability to run, skip, creep and balance, increasing their control as they practise these skills. There is good attention to safety. Skills develop steadily but opportunity for structured outdoor play would increase the opportunities for skill development, problem-solving and creativity. Fine motor skills develop steadily and many control pencils, crayons, scissors and brushes well. Most children make good progress and have good co-ordination and control of their bodies by the time they start in Year 1 because teaching quality is good.

Creative development

77. There are many opportunities for children to paint, print and use collage materials in the nursery and reception classes. Sometimes activities are over-directed for the youngest children inhibiting their individual creativity. There are limited opportunities for children to select their brush size or mix paint. In one nursery session, marbled background paper was ready prepared by the adults for sea pictures with ready cut shapes of fish and seahorses which limited their own creative ideas.

78. In the reception classes, children study Van Gogh’s painting of sunflowers and answer questions posed by the support assistant. This good creative and cultural development enables children to observe a vase of real sunflowers and identify the main attributes. Children are encouraged to look carefully. They concentrate and listen well, producing good results in pastels, charcoal and paint. Children enjoy singing and music making. In the nursery, instruments are chosen

for children, missing opportunities to enable them to make choices, and name the instrument. They hold instruments correctly and know how to play them, but there is little attention to rhythm except for one tambourine. Singing is expressive and children recall actions appropriately. They enjoy a wide repertoire of songs and rhyme in the Foundation Stage and gain experience of a range of untuned percussion. Standards in creative development are above average. By the time children start in Year 1 many are on course to exceed the Early Learning Goals.

ENGLISH

79. Results in the 2000 SATs show that standards by the age of seven are average in reading and above average in writing. Results at the higher level 3 are similar to the national average for reading and writing, although the number attaining the higher level in writing were lower than for reading. When compared to similar schools, results in writing were above average but were average for reading. There is no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys, although boys do outperform girls in writing. One factor influencing this may be the good account taken of boys' interests in the curriculum with many practical 'hands-on' experiences, and investigative opportunities that contribute to their successful achievements. Inspection findings show that standards in speaking and listening are above average by the age of seven. Trends over time show standards have improved at a similar rate to most other infant schools. The positive picture found at the time of the previous inspection has been maintained.

80. Inspection findings show that children enter the school with broadly average standards in speaking and listening, reading and writing. In the Foundation Stage teachers build effectively on those early skills to enable the children to make good progress towards the Early Learning Goals. In Years 1 and 2, the good progress is maintained so that by the age of seven, standards in English are above average for speaking and listening and writing. They are average for reading. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress.

81. By the age of seven, most pupils speak confidently and articulately. They have an increasing vocabulary and a good grasp of Standard English. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers and each other, take turns to speak in discussions and are eager to contribute to discussions and respond to questions. They are particularly adept at asking questions because they are interested in their work and often highly motivated. Teachers build on this well to develop enquiry and questioning skills. The result is that many pupils are able to pose sensible, relevant questions to seek further knowledge and understanding.

82. By the age of seven, standards of reading are average. Although most pupils have a good grasp of letter sounds and tackle unfamiliar words, many lack fluency and expression. There is not enough emphasis placed upon developing fluency and expression. Reading records are not detailed enough to provide individual support through diagnostic comments. Higher attaining pupils could be better challenged with more demanding texts and greater discussion and review of their reading. Fewer pupils were familiar with authors or could talk about a favourite author, for example. The school is aware of the need to give more attention to reading and has identified this as a priority. Although pupils read regularly in whole class and group sessions during the literacy hour, opportunities for reading aloud to an audience are more limited.

83. Writing standards are above average by the age of seven, with a higher proportion of pupils gaining the expected level than is normally found. This is less marked at the higher levels, although attainment is still above average. Teachers present pupils with a wide range of writing experiences. Pupils often write imaginative and interesting stories. Lively story openings such as 'The Magical Cake' when one pupil began 'Hey, wait for me cake I need you for my tea,' and another began 'You'll never guess what happened to me...' are common. In the poem 'shop chat' pupils

demonstrated their confident use of language in rhyming words, ‘My shop sells brackets and laces, bugs and slugs...’. They make lists and write descriptions of favourite characters in stories. Pupils in Year 2 write for information, such as the work on birds. They are introduced to higher skills such as note making and write simple playscripts, instructions, for example to make a puppet, accounts of visits and poetry. There is much evidence of writing purposefully in other areas of the curriculum. In history, for example, pupils write about ‘The Great Fire of London’ and use their skills to produce time lines, extracting relevant information from the Internet to help them. Within the literacy hour, many opportunities are provided. Opportunities are provided for developmental writing outside of the literacy hour. The effective use of this additional English time is a major reason why writing results are better than those for reading. Pupils use an increasing choice of interesting vocabulary and develop their sentence structure well. Spelling, which was identified as a weakness previously by the school, is improving and many pupils spell accurately familiar words and make very good attempts at more complex vocabulary. Punctuation is used well. Most pupils used capital letters and full stops accurately. Higher attainers use speech marks, question marks and exclamation marks with good understanding. A weakness in these otherwise good standards is the attention given to handwriting and presentation. Pupils do not consistently use joined handwriting and formation is often careless and untidy. This prevents some pupils from achieving higher standards. There is insufficient attention to improving these skills in the marking of pupils’ work. Pupils use dictionaries and glossaries confidently within literacy sessions. The literacy strategy is, without doubt, another major influence on the quality of pupils’ writing.

84. Teaching of English is good. The best lessons proceed at a brisk pace and teachers have high expectations. Pupils know what they are doing and the purpose of the lesson because learning objectives are shared clearly at the start of lessons. Teachers refer to individual and class targets, which often relate to improving writing. Skills such as note-taking and skimming for information are well taught, as are most basic skills in literacy. Staff use each part of the literacy hour effectively and independent tasks are interesting and well organised. Additional support, including considerable voluntary help, is very well targeted and this enables all pupils to achieve well. Special educational needs pupils are particularly well supported by teachers and other adults. Teachers use questions effectively to extend pupils’ knowledge and check on understanding. Pupils behave well and work with application and enthusiasm because they are interested in their work. This was evident in a Year 2 lesson where pupils worked in pairs on a non-fiction text extracting relevant information, posing relevant questions and making good use of the text to check their answers. Pupils in this lesson showed a high level of independence working with sustained interest and concentration. Their understanding of terms such as ‘skimming’, ‘glossary’ and ‘index’ was apparent. They were enthusiastic learners eager to find out more. Pupils with English as an additional language have few problems, achieving as well as other pupils. Some of these pupils are among the most able pupils in the school. The high noise level, as a result of the nature of the building, is a distraction for pupils at times and does disturb concentration. Teachers make good use of plenary sessions to involve pupils in self-assessment. As a result, pupils are developing good skills in evaluating the success of learning objectives and how well they have understood. Homework is used well to support learning and is valued to teachers. A weakness in the otherwise good planning is the evaluation of lessons. Often this is superficial, and, as with reading records does not identify carefully what needs to be improved, in order to raise standards even further.

85. English is very well managed by the co-ordinator who supports teachers and pupils very well. Together with the headteacher, she has accurately assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the current provision as a result of the analysis of assessment information, which is used to plan for further improvement. In addition, careful monitoring of teaching and learning by the headteacher and co-ordinator has identified areas for development such as handwriting and presentation of work. The curriculum for English is good, with particular strengths in writing and speaking and listening. Staff have access to an annotated portfolio of assessed work that has been moderated by all staff.

MATHEMATICS

86. The results of national tests in 2000 showed that attainment was well above average when compared with all schools nationally and with schools of a similar type. This represents a dramatic improvement since the last inspection. Results have steadily improved since then albeit with a dip in 1999. Boys have generally achieved better results than girls over the last three years. Inspection evidence suggests that this year, results will be above, rather than well above average. There are more pupils with special educational needs this year. Fewer pupils will therefore achieve the expected Level 2 standard although the number expected to gain the higher level 3 is likely to remain high. This represents good progress through the school since most pupils enter with average skills in mathematics.

87. The National Numeracy Strategy has been effectively introduced and teachers are confident in delivering the programme of work. Lessons are thoroughly planned in accordance with recommendations and the learning that is to take place is clearly identified. Most teachers explain to pupils what they should have achieved by the end of the lesson and this helps to focus them on their learning. However, in the concluding ten minutes of the lesson – ‘the plenary’ – not all teachers use the time productively to consolidate or extend learning. One teacher simply shows examples of pupils’ work and learning is not advanced. In contrast, another teacher has assessed a difficulty during the lesson – that pupils are not clear about how to mentally add ten to a number - and takes the opportunity to practise the procedure using a 100-square. The co-ordinator has recognised that the plenary is not always used well and has suitable plans to address the issue. Teachers are aware of the opportunities in other subjects to promote mathematical skills. Information and communication technology is used well, for example, to enter data and produce graphs and pie-charts to show ‘favourite lessons’ in a Year 2 class.

88. In contrast to the last inspection, pupils now have a clear understanding of number and standards are above average. Pupils regularly practise mental calculations at the beginning of every lesson. Year 2 pupils rise to a challenging activity and identify that $82+20=112$ is incorrect. They explain their strategy for working it out – “I put the big number in my head and count on”. Most of them use correct mathematical terms when explaining strategies and this indicates that basic skills have been well taught. They have good understanding of other aspects of mathematics, naming common two and three-dimensional shapes, for example and weighing a kilogram of sand. The above average pupils understand how to shade $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$ of a shape and that, in a number like 96, one digit represents tens and the other units. Average pupils are similarly adept at working with numbers to 100 but they often need apparatus to help them with their calculations. Below average pupils work confidently with smaller numbers and benefit from the support of the teacher or other adult. The school is fortunate in having a good number of paid and unpaid assistants who give invaluable assistance in numeracy lessons. They are usually deployed to help the below average pupils, enabling them to make the same good progress as others. Pupils with special mathematical needs have specific targets on their individual education plans, such as ‘understand ordinal number – first to fifth’ and work is suitably planned so that the targets are achieved and good progress promoted.

89. All teachers plan work that is matched to the differing needs of pupils and this promotes good progress. In a Year 1 lesson, for example, the above average pupils are expected to find two and then three numbers that add to 30 while the next group works with numbers to 20 and the third group with numbers to 10. A pupil who is not fluent in English because it is not his first language is praised for identifying several numbers that add to ten and his work indicates good progress too. Most pupils throughout the school produce a reasonable amount of work but it is not always neatly presented in their books. Teachers are not setting high enough standards for accurate, neat work. In their marking, comments, such as ‘Good work’, are often inappropriate when no account is taken of the squares in the book to write numbers. Nearly all work is properly marked but it is rare to find comments that indicate to pupils what they have to do to make even better progress.

90. Good account is taken of the need to apply mathematics to solve everyday problems. Homework plays an important part in this and supports the work in school and advances learning. One piece of work for the oldest pupils focuses on solving problems associated with their pocket money. In lessons, Year 1 pupils estimate how many birds there are in a picture and use a graph to answer questions about the class' favourite colours. A particularly ambitious project with the oldest pupils last year involved a visit to a local car dealership where teachers had prepared various practical tasks. For example, calculating the total cost of the car parts needed for a particular repair job or reading the dials on an oil tank. It is hoped that the present Year 2 will experience this trip and have a similar opportunity to put their knowledge to practical use.

91. Pupils have positive attitudes to mathematics. They respond particularly well to the practical work that teachers offer. In a Year 1 lesson, for example, pupils play a game where twelve of them walk round the class and, on a signal from the teacher, each has to walk to one of three 'dens'. The other pupils count how many are in each den and create an addition sum where the total is 12. In less successful lessons, occasional fidgety behaviour is due to an overlong spoken introduction. Teachers in this school have a particular problem in that there is no solid partition between adjoining classes. Discussions are often made more difficult when noise from the adjoining room becomes intrusive. In activity sessions, teachers do not always insist on quiet working and some pupils find it hard to concentrate and remain focused on their work. Nevertheless, teachers generally maintain a brisk pace to their lessons, use resources well and have a warm relationship with pupils, enabling them to keep good control of the lessons. They have good knowledge of the subject and are adept at using technical terms, such as 'number bonds', expecting pupils to use them too.

92. The subject is managed effectively by an enthusiastic and experienced co-ordinator. She has worked alongside teachers and clearly knows the strengths and weaknesses of the subject. The local numeracy adviser has observed all teachers teaching. There is a satisfactory system for regularly tracking pupils' progress through half-termly written assessments and these are also used to identify areas of weakness so that they can be addressed in future planning. Numeracy targets are set for each class and, sometimes, for specific groups within the class. Pupils clearly know what the targets are and are becoming adept at assessing whether they have achieved them. This is promoted when they evaluate whether they have achieved the particular learning objective at the end of a lesson by using a hand signal that indicates full understanding, the need for more help, or complete uncertainty. Each teacher has a good supply of resources and has access to a useful portfolio of worksheets that have been moderated by all staff to represent achievement at different levels of attainment as indicated in the National Curriculum.

SCIENCE

93. Standards in science were identified as satisfactory in the previous inspection report. In addition, the subject was taught well and pupils made good progress at that time. To some degree, this was still the case in 2000. In the teacher assessments last year, standards were not as strong as in reading, writing and mathematics and were below the level found nationally. This disappointing performance was singled out by school managers as the chief priority for improvement. By September 2000, the curriculum for science had been overhauled to focus more firmly on practical investigation, prediction and fair testing and the recording of findings. This has paid dividends and standards are now above average.

94. Not only have standards risen well, progress has been influenced by changed teaching and learning and is good overall. Teachers provide good challenge in the work for pupils in all ability bands. It is evident that a significant proportion of Year 2 pupils, about 45 per cent, are working at higher levels than expected. Whilst just over 10 per cent of Year 2

pupils remain at level 1, all pupils work hard and their knowledge and skill level improves well. The practical base to the curriculum promotes understanding very effectively.

95. The emphasis on investigation is proving successful in lifting standards. A Year 1 class, for example, set up an investigation to check what would happen if cut chrysanthemums were placed in vase containing water and coloured crepe paper. Once this had been done, the pupils made predictions of what they would see the following day. Some talked of taller stems, broader blooms or more pronounced scent. One high attaining pupil suggested the flowers would turn black. The pupils recorded their investigation carefully and arrived early the next day, eager to see what had happened. Flowers tinged yellow, red or blue were the subject of surprise and pleasure. The pupils went on to explain what they thought had happened, and the teacher linked this to the mechanics of plants taking up water and food at the roots and through the stems. Not only was attainment above the expected level as pupils discussed and wrote about their investigation, their spiritual awareness had been fostered effectively.

96. Similar, exciting, thought provoking science lessons were seen in other classes, including Year 2 who sectioned fruit, drew it and wrote about the seeds they found within and the growth of these into fruit bearing plants. Pupils build good basic science knowledge and understanding through such experiences and they talk confidently to adults about their discoveries.

97. The subject knowledge and confidence of teachers to plan and deliver practical science lessons has improved well. The level of expectation is generally good, though there remains room for improvement in tolerance levels of noisy working and the setting out of work in a neat, well presented style. There is some exciting learning taking place in science and pupils rise to this by behaving well, trying hard and concentrating hard. Teaching and learning are both of good quality and this has good impact on progress.

98. The national guidelines for science are being used very successfully to plan learning that involves all pupils, regardless of background. Thus, pupils with special educational needs have tasks that are related well to their individual level of working, support staff, parents and other volunteers support them very well and their knowledge and skills in science are built well. The practical, investigative approach to science in school very successfully captures the imagination of higher attaining pupils and they are intrigued to go one step further to find reasons for what they see and to give concise, analytical evaluations of the results.

99. Science is a well managed subject. The co-ordinator knows the strengths and weaknesses of the subject well and has been influential in bringing improvement. She has worked hard to ensure that the changes introduced last September have been implemented properly and she keeps a careful check on standards and progress to make sure things are progressing as expected. Provision and standards in science have been turned around, the decline in standards arrested and the promise of future, maintained, improvement is good.

ART AND DESIGN

100. Good improvement to art and design followed the outcome of the 1997 inspection report. The curriculum and standards, both then identified as having weaknesses, have been strengthened and the quality of artwork around school is good.

101. Pupils make good progress in their art and design work. Many pupils have a good eye for detail and they capture this in their patterns, pictures and models. They also take good pains to try out different effects with different media and tools and build a good range

of techniques to achieve creative results. In one very well organised and managed Year 2 art and design lesson, pupils studied different flowers and plants carefully and sought to create good visual effects in their pencil sketches, pastel drawings and computer graphics. It was very evident that the pupils in this lesson listened carefully to advice for honing their skills. One pupil, for example, worked hard to ensure his pastel flower was not over-smudged as he tried to blend the colour with his finger. He identified the need to start from the top of the sheet and work down the page in order to reduce the amount of smudging.

102. Art and design is taught well. Teachers have good subject knowledge, as shown in their careful focus on the use of a range of materials, techniques and styles and the balance of two and three-dimensional work produced. There is much enthusiastic teaching, expectations are set high and classes are managed and organised well. This all results in the good development of skills in lessons. Older pupils realise, for example, that effects achieved in one medium, cannot always be accomplished in another. The very good level of support provided by learning assistants, parents and volunteers means that skills development is accelerated. In some art and design lessons, it is evident that the teacher could not achieve the breadth of experience and quality results without the invaluable assistance of these people.

103. The curriculum for art and design has been improved considerably in the last four years. Partly this is due to the effective use made of the national guidelines for the subject and partly due to the good resolve of staff to improve where improvement was needed. The amount of three-dimensional and computer based art work has increased and pupils' cultural development has been strengthened by the focus on the work of well known artists from western and other traditions. There are very high quality displays of work in Indian and North American idioms.

104. Although there is no named co-ordinator for art and design, management of the subject is secure. There has been good improvement to the subject so far, though the headteacher and assistant headteacher know that better systems of assessment and the direct monitoring of the quality of education and standards are the next steps to continued improvement. Art and design is one of a number of success stories in school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

105. As with art and design, good improvement has been made to design and technology (DT) since the previous inspection. In 1997, the design and evaluation elements of the work were not well represented in the curriculum and whilst overall standards were satisfactory, it was evident that they could be better still. The school accepted the challenge for improvement set down in that inspection report and today, provision and standards are now good.

106. The revised curriculum, as set out in the national guidelines adopted by the school, places firm emphasis on the distinct elements of DT. Thus, good experience is given in planning, designing, evaluating and improving the items made. No longer is the focus mainly on manufacture. In addition, pupils are given ample opportunity to build skills using a wide range of materials and tools. Attainment in food technology is well above the expected level. The school uses the expertise of volunteers very successfully in this and the quality of baked cakes is almost professional. What is more, the cakes actually look like the planned version, right down to the last chocolate bean used for decoration and effect!

107. Pupils talk very convincingly of their experiences and how these are helping them to build skills and knowledge. They also know the reasons to take care, be safe and hygienic in what they do. They wield tools carefully, and as they do, they broaden their vocabulary.

Young pupils talk of "...mixing ingredients in a figure of eight until they reach dropping consistency." Older ones discuss the forces needed to move playground equipment and plan the ideal playground based on a survey of favourite apparatus. The oldest pupils explain how they would change their designs to make things better.

108. Teachers plan effective activities to take learning forward. Expectation levels are good on the whole, though noise levels when working can be extreme, Pupils are managed well and there is firm focus on the teaching of skills and knowledge. The pupils return this effort by working hard, behaving well and learning to handle a variety of materials and implements most effectively. There is much enjoyment and enthusiasm for DT amongst staff and pupils alike.

109. Management of DT is effective. The subject has been advanced by an enthusiastic and dedicated co-ordinator. She accepts the need for more rigorous assessment of skills and knowledge and the headteacher and assistant headteacher are in agreement that direct monitoring is now required to ensure that the advances of the past are sustained. There are no shortages of resources for the subject and the displays and photographs of finished work show clearly how DT has moved on.

GEOGRAPHY

110. The good standards found at the previous inspection have been maintained. Standards in geography by the age of seven are above average. From all the evidence seen, teaching is good. Pupils' good writing skills, together with their good enquiry skills, are put to good use in geography lessons and this contributes effectively to the higher than average standards.

111. By the age of seven, pupils are familiar with maps and plans. In Year 1 they follow the travels of 'Barnaby Bear', as different children and teachers take him on their travels. In Year 2, pupils compare buildings at the sea-side and explore transport on the Isle of Struay. Good links are made with other cultures as pupils learn about Vision Aid and eye defects in Africa. There are also good links with other subjects that increase pupils' knowledge and understanding effectively. For example, connections are made with science, studying the eyes, and good use is made of the Internet to locate information on Africa. Teachers make effective use of visitors, such as the optician to provide first-hand information and develop their questioning skills well through this. In discussion, pupils have a good understanding of the work of Vision Aid and the problems experienced with eyesight in Africa. Many understand terms such as 're-cycled' and they are sympathetic in their writing to the needs of less fortunate people in Africa. They can find Africa on the globe and have some understanding of life in this country. Earlier work in Year 1 introduces pupils well to the use of maps and globes and they are able to plan routes, for example to Pembroke Dock, and explore Barnaby's travels in Ireland. Photographs, posters and other evidence are used well by teachers to help pupils deepen their understanding. Pupils devise questionnaires and by the age of seven, pupils' ability to ask relevant questions is good. The good emphasis on correct geographical vocabulary makes a good contribution to pupils' literacy skills. Pupils work together well in groups and pairs and enjoy finding out for themselves. The emphasis placed on practical work is one of the reasons why pupils enjoy geography and make good progress. Well developed observational skills enable them to compare and contrast. Through the use of maps, books, diagrams and the Internet, pupils learn how to extract relevant information. Teachers and support staff work closely together to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make similar gains in their learning to other pupils. The design of the building leads to high noise levels and this is distracting in some lessons and affects the progress made.

112. Although planning is good, occasionally tasks are not sufficiently demanding, particularly for higher attaining pupils. When this is the case, they do not achieve as well as they could do. Presentation of work is a weakness, as is the lack of assessment opportunities to inform future

planning. Marking of pupils' work does not always indicate what needs to be done to improve. These are missed opportunities to improve standards further. The co-ordinator supports colleagues well and has a good knowledge of the subject. She is aware of its strengths and weaknesses and is monitoring the trialling of the new national guidelines and teachers' evaluations to inform the compilation of a school-specific scheme of work.

HISTORY

113. The good standards found in the previous inspection have been maintained. Standards in history by the age of seven are above average because teaching is good and promotes pupils' good achievement. Teachers have good subject knowledge, lessons are lively and interesting and resources are well prepared and well used. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language show a similar good rate of progress to other pupils. They receive very good support from class teachers and well-briefed support staff. Higher attaining pupils achieve well because they are well challenged.

114. Pupils in Year 1 are introduced to a simple time line. They understand that we all grow older and know that a photograph can give information about the past. They compare and contrast school days long ago with present day school. By Year 2, pupils are developing early skills of investigation and questioning well. They have knowledge of famous people from the past such as Florence Nightingale and are able to compare, for example, clothes worn by nurses in the past with the present day. Pupils in Year 2 study the Plague and the Great Fire of London. They are highly motivated by these topics and work enthusiastically, showing good recall of facts and very good questioning skills.

115. Teaching of history is good. Teachers' enthusiasm inspires pupils to learn. In a good lesson on the great fire of London pupils worked together well in groups to construct a time line of events from photographic evidence. Good discussions, arguments and reasons were put forward before pupils agreed on their final order of events. Many pupils showed depth of thought and the ability to pose very good questions such as 'Why did Samuel Pepys worry about his cheese and his gold when he needed to get away quickly?' A number of pupils had sought information on the Internet and in books at home, a further measure of their enjoyment and interest. The lesson proceeded at a brisk pace with a high level of pupil participation. The teacher introduced appropriate vocabulary such as 'eye-witness' extending pupils' literacy skills well. She provided good support for pupils with special educational needs enabling them to complete the task successfully and share their findings in the plenary session. Pupils demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of evidence and identify different sources of evidence to find out about the past. Time lines in classrooms reinforce pupils' increasing understanding of the passage of time. Some pupils were able to give the date of the start of the Great Fire of London and were able to identify important events before and after this, referring to the time lines to help them.

116. The co-ordinator for history manages the subject well. She is interested and has good expertise in the subject. She has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject. There are missed opportunities to improve the subject further through more effective marking and monitoring of pupils' work, the development of assessment opportunities and a more consistent regard for the presentation of work.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

117. Information technology, as the subject was then called, was a subject in need of considerable improvement in 1997. Although all aspects of the subject were broadly satisfactory, including standards, progress and teaching, it was evident that the level and quality of resources and teachers' uncertainty about the subject were holding back a more effective level of provision.

118. The school has moved well in the last four years to make the necessary improvements. Standards are now above what is expected for pupils at the end of their time in infant school and they make good progress. All strands of the subject are included in the work, including the communication element. Pupils are adept at logging on to the Internet and searching and researching information for a range of subjects including history, geography and science. CD-ROM resources are also used well to extend pupils' independent research and this contributes well to their realisation and knowledge of the power of computers to inform, handle and present data and text, and assist in the production of elaborate designs for artwork. Pupils also learn well how the microchip can be used to control machines when they program *Roamer*, a robot-like toy vehicle, to follow complex routes across the floor.

119. Teaching quality is good and focuses squarely on the development of skills and knowledge. Strong contribution to the quality of teaching and learning is made by the parents and volunteers who assist in class. In some cases, they have high levels of skill and knowledge and these are tapped successfully by the school to give all pupils the necessary opportunity to handle software that supports learning across the curriculum. Teachers and other adults give careful explanations and demonstrations to prepare pupils for their turn to control the computer. Some tasks are highly challenging, particularly in information retrieval and data handling. Good class management, organisation and planning all add to the effectiveness of lessons.

120. The curriculum is firmly rooted in the national guidelines for ICT and this ensures the development of skills and knowledge is to the fore. Since opportunities to use the technology are now more regular and better structured, pupils benefit not just in terms of enhanced standards in ICT, but also because studies in subjects such as mathematics and English are enlivened by the visual and audio capabilities of the computer. Thus, pupils become well motivated and enthusiastic learners. This extends to those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language.

121. The co-ordinator has the humour, determination and enthusiasm necessary to bring improvement to ICT. That the subject has moved on so well is testament to her success. However, the co-ordinator is far from complacent. She is already looking to improve the assessment of skill and knowledge and to monitor work in other classes to ensure standards and quality of education are at their best. She is also keen to find ways to give pupils even more opportunities to use computers within a very tight budget. ICT has improved well, standards are good and prospects for continued improvement are promising.

MUSIC

122. Provision for music has significantly improved since the last report, so much so that the standards seen in lessons during the inspection are above those found in the majority of schools. A specialist musician is now employed by the school for half a day every week and she takes classes in rotation. Teachers remain in the class and by observing her they are becoming more knowledgeable and confident about taking their own music lessons.

123. Singing by the whole school in assemblies is good. It is tuneful, rhythmical and lively but pupils take account of the mood of the song, paying attention to the words so that they can be heard clearly. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils sing a two-part song effectively, holding their own part securely. In this lesson, they create a composition that represents an impending storm. They work well together to decide on sounds that they will use to represent rain, wind, thunder and lightning and follow the conductor closely, playing only when she points to their particular weather symbol. The teacher's enthusiasm conveys itself to the pupils and she keeps up a very brisk pace, developing the lesson so that there is a noticeable improvement in performance by the end. She uses correct musical terms and

pupils already know what 'tempo' means. As a result of the very good teaching, they also learn that 'texture' in music refers to the different ways sounds are combined to produce an effect. This represents very good progress in the lesson and generally good progress over time. All elements of music are properly covered. In this lesson, for example, a listening activity is included. Their own teacher helps them to identify the different sorts of weather represented by the music in a composition by Neil Turner.

124. A good lesson with pupils in Year 1 is also characterised by the good progress that all pupils make, including those with special educational needs who join in enthusiastically with all the activities. A pupil whose first language is not English sits open-mouthed at first as a new song about a churchyard is taught but eventually joins in with the spooky 'oo-oo-oo, ah-ah-ah' sounds that create the eerie chorus. Pupils learn this difficult song quickly, using their knowledge of high and low sounds to recognise the pattern of the tune. In a listening activity, they react appropriately to the surprise that Haydn has prepared for them in his 'Surprise Symphony', jumping up when the loud chord occurs. In this lesson too the teacher has good control of the activities and uses resources well. She has high expectations for a good quality performance and insists that pupils follow her hand signals when 'taking your voice for a walk' – going higher or lower or staying at the same pitch.

125. The nationally recommended programme of work is being tried this year and is about to be evaluated in the light of the school's particular needs. The visiting musician is acting as consultant in this process and is clearly helping teachers to acquire greater expertise and confidence, as required by the last inspection report. Resources are now well used in lessons and are adequate. There is a good range of tuned and untuned percussion instruments that are easily accessible. The school has yet to decide upon an assessment system that will track pupils' attainment and progress.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

126. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection and are still in line with those expected of seven-year-olds across the country. Only two lessons could be observed, covering dance and games but gymnastic activities are also a regular feature of the work. In dance, pupils react appropriately to different tunes from 'Joseph and his Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat' and work with a partner to develop a dance that reflects the vigorous, gentle or flowing nature of the music. The teacher conducts an entirely satisfactory lesson with appropriate warm-up and cool-down activities. She also provides an opportunity for pupils to observe each other, evaluate the performance and pick out ideas that will improve their own dance. Progress is limited however because, by the end of the lesson, only a few have refined their original movements. The music is played in its entirety and many pupils find it difficult to remember their movements for each section. They therefore introduce completely new ones each time the music is played.

127. Year 1 pupils find it difficult to use the hall space well, clustering together rather than spacing themselves for their games lesson. However, they have reasonable control of a ball, passing it round their body by hand and bouncing it. In pairs, they throw and catch with little difficulty until the gap widens between them. The teacher plans and delivers the lesson satisfactorily so that pupils are increasingly challenged with more difficult tasks but there is insufficient attention to skills teaching and no time is allowed for pupils to demonstrate their achievements for the class to watch. In both the lessons seen, however, pupils are engaged, quite rightly, in physical activity for the majority of the time.

128. Teaching and learning in these lessons is satisfactory and progress over time is sound for all pupils, including those with special educational needs who relish the practical nature of the subject. PE is well managed. There are adequate resources and many are of good quality. The co-ordinator is aware that teachers need help to teach dance more effectively and there are plans for training. The nationally recommended programme of work is being tried but will be amended to suit the particular

needs of the school when it is evaluated later this term. There is no system for assessing the attainment and progress of individual pupils but the co-ordinator has taught all classes herself to gauge the standards that have been reached in gymnastics.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

129. Since the last inspection, standards have been maintained and remain above those expected for seven-year-olds in the locally Agreed Syllabus. Pupils have very good recall of the events of Jesus' life and understand that miracles, such as feeding five thousand people with two fish and five loaves, cannot be explained. They know that the Bible is a special book for Christians and name the four Gospel writers. Some events have made a particular impact on them. One boy is particularly puzzled by the fact that Jesus, while dying on the cross, asked God to forgive those who had done this to Him. This demonstrates a mature approach in that pupils are wondering about the meaning of what they learn, searching for explanations and exploring the spiritual dimension of their development. Their knowledge of Old Testament stories is good too, for example, Adam and Eve, Noah and Joseph (who was hated by his brothers "because he was his father's favourite"). However, their understanding of Sikhism is less secure though an impressive display indicates that the beliefs and traditions have been thoroughly explored.

130. Progress is good. The programme of work covers a wide range of topics and is correctly based on the Agreed Syllabus. Year 1 pupils, for example, are currently looking at co-operation and sharing. As a result of some imaginative teaching that involves practical problem solving (working in pairs, they have to unscrew the top of a bottle but can only use one hand each) they come to a clear understanding of what co-operation means. The same teacher takes all lessons in Years 1 and 2 and she promotes a high degree of interest in the subject and is a skilful practitioner. Pupils say that lessons are fun and this is because she packs a variety of activities into a short time and moves the lesson along at a very brisk pace. She is a skilled storyteller and has Year 2 pupils in the palm of her hand as she dramatically re-creates the story of the man let down through the roof for Jesus to heal. Pupils' learning is very effectively reinforced by a question-and-answer session where two boys take on the rôles of the sick man and one of the men who carried him on his bed through the streets. The rest of the class ask questions such as, "Were you scared when you were lowered through the roof?" The answers display a very mature attitude and a very high standard of understanding. The session contributes significantly to the development of speaking and listening skills as well as to a deepening understanding of the story.

131. The subject is managed effectively. Resources, including artefacts, have improved since the last inspection and are now adequate to deliver the curriculum but information and communication technology is not used to support work. Very good use is made of the local church and a recent visit by Year 2 pupils has made a lasting impression on them. They know about the physical layout, the names of various features in the church, such as the font and its significance in the ceremony of baptism. Class teachers have followed up this visit by using it as a stimulus for report writing that supports the development of literacy skills. Pupils with special educational needs have produced a church dictionary giving their own definitions of the features of the church and in this way have made good progress. Year 2 pupils have produced a book of prayers that is sometimes used in assemblies. The subject therefore contributes significantly to the everyday life of the school and to the pupils' personal development. There is however no school system for assessing the standards and progress that individual pupils achieve.