

INSPECTION REPORT

HAMILTON INFANTS SCHOOL

Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent

LEA area: Stoke-on-Trent

Unique reference number: 123994

Headteacher: Mrs Julie Scott

Reporting inspector: Tony Painter
21512

Dates of inspection: 25th – 28th February 2002

Inspection number: 198182

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 – 7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Barthomley Road Birches Head Stoke-on-Trent Staffordshire
Postcode:	ST1 6NW
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Reverend B Eaton
Date of previous inspection:	20 th October 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Tony Painter 21512	Registered inspector	Science Information and communication technology Music The Foundation Stage	What kind of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
Margaret Manning 8943	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Jean Peek 25281	Team inspector	Equal opportunities English as an additional language English Geography History Religious education	How well are pupils taught?
Carole Jarvis 27276	Team inspector	Special education needs Mathematics Art and design Design and technology Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a community infant school for pupils between three and seven years. With 180 pupils on roll, it is slightly smaller than it was at the time of the last inspection. Most pupils come from mainly white backgrounds in the area of mixed housing around the school. Only two come from families where English is an additional language and both are fluent in English. The proportion of pupils in receipt of free school meals, at 13 per cent, is below average. The attainment of children joining the school is in line with that expected of children of their age. Thirty-seven pupils are on the register of special educational needs, which is average. None of these has a Statement of Special Educational Need.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This effective school gives good value for money. Very strong leadership and management have led the school to make good improvements, ensuring a good quality of education for all pupils. Teaching is good throughout the school and the very good relationships ensure that pupils have very positive attitudes to lessons and learning. This is leading to above average standards of attainment.

What the school does well

- Very good leadership and management set out a clear framework for the continued improvement of the school.
- The school has established a very good atmosphere that encourages pupils' learning throughout the curriculum.
- The very good provision for pupils' personal development makes them want to learn, to try hard and do their best.
- Confident teaching and effective resources enable pupils to achieve good standards in many subjects, particularly in mathematics.
- Very strong partnerships with parents very effectively support pupils' learning.
- Good provision for pupils with special educational needs enables them to achieve well.

What could be improved

- The proportion of pupils achieving higher levels of attainment in writing is not high enough.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in October 1997, when serious weaknesses were identified in the school's management. Since that time, good improvement has taken place and the present leadership and management are very good. A very effective atmosphere of respect is promoting learning well. Very good communications have been set up at all levels and increasing responsibility is being placed with governors and subject co-ordinators to identify and ensure improvements. As a result, the school's development planning process is now very good. This has helped the school to make a number of improvements in provision for pupils leading to improved standards. A good curriculum has been established, effectively enriched by an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors. This is enabling pupils to learn well.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

Children enter the nursery class with attainment that is broadly average. They make good progress through the nursery and reception classes and almost all reach or exceed the expected standards by the time they begin the National Curriculum. By the time pupils leave the school, their attainment is above average with particular strengths in mathematics. These standards are broadly reflected in the good results of the National Curriculum tests at age seven, in line with those of similar schools. Although the most recent results have been a little lower, these reflect groups of pupils with lower overall attainment. In addition, the school suffered some staffing problems that weakened their performance. However, the school's tracking shows that these pupils achieved at least satisfactorily through the school, with many exceeding their individual targets. Pupils currently in Year 2 are on track to achieve higher standards, in line with the school's ambitious but achievable targets.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils very much enjoy coming to school and taking part in all of the activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour around the school and in lessons is good.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is very good and their relationships with teachers and other pupils are very good.
Attendance	Attendance is good and pupils arrive in good time for school.

The school has established a very positive atmosphere that encourages pupils to have good attitudes and show good levels of respect for each other.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2
Quality of teaching	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 and learning throughout the school is good and meets the needs of all pupils. Literacy and numeracy are taught well, although teachers do not give enough opportunities for pupils to use these developing skills in other subjects. All teachers plan lessons well, making good use of national guidance and their knowledge of pupils' earlier learning. This is particularly seen in the teaching of mathematics, which is very good. Effective use of a good range of resources makes lessons throughout the curriculum interesting and helps pupils to learn well. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and use these successfully to manage lessons effectively. Support staff make a very positive contribution to pupils' learning, particularly in their good support for the learning of pupils with special educational needs. They are effectively involved in a good range of extra activities. The teaching of English is good, although the school has correctly identified the need to develop further the teaching of writing skills for more able pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	A good curriculum meets the needs and interests of pupils well. A wide range of visits and visitors enriches it.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The good provision for these pupils helps them to achieve well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes very good provision to help pupils to become mature and responsible. A very good range of extra-curricular activities widens their experiences and helps them to learn and play together.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school looks after its pupils very well in a safe and happy environment.

The school has established very good relationships with parents through very effective communications. These relationships are a strength of the school's work and help all pupils to do well.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher gives very effective leadership and strong management is helping the school to improve. The deputy headteacher and subject co-ordinators are increasingly effectively involved.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Their increased involvement with subjects and classes ensures that they fulfil their responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There is good use of school data and very effective monitoring by the headteacher and all staff with responsibilities. This is giving a clear and accurate view of the school that is effectively used to determine priorities for development.
The strategic use of resources	All resources available to the school are used effectively. Good systems for allocating spending are in place.

The school has particularly effective systems for consulting governors, staff and parents on the school's priorities. These are helping to create very purposeful improvements and effective systems for evaluating them. The principles of best value for money are well applied through appropriate tendering procedures and an awareness of the impact on improving standards, teaching and learning. The staffing, accommodation and resources are good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Twelve parents attended a pre-inspection meeting and 98 (54 per cent) replied to a questionnaire. In addition, a number of informal discussions with parents took place during the inspection.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children like coming to school.• Teachers' high expectations and good teaching ensure pupils make good progress and grow in maturity.• The school is well managed and led.• All staff are approachable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No significant points were raised.

The inspection team fully agrees with the positive points raised by parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children enter the school with a range of attainment that is overall average. Children in the nursery and reception classes have a rich curriculum with a wide range of interesting activities. Good teaching in all the areas of learning is having a positive effect on children's attainment. By the time they begin working on the National Curriculum, almost all pupils achieve the standards generally found in pupils of that age. The attainment of some pupils is above this level.
2. Pupils make good progress in the infant classes. Teacher's assessments of pupils' attainment in science at age seven show overall attainment that is above average. The school's results in the National Curriculum tests and tasks at the age of seven have varied, but have generally been above the national averages. Small variations in results have resulted primarily from the different abilities of the groups of pupils involved. Results in 2001 were above average in mathematics, but had declined in writing and reading to average and below average respectively. These results reflect the generally lower attainment of that group of pupils and the school's data shows that most made satisfactory progress in the infant classes. This group's results have been adversely affected by the staffing problems that the school had when these pupils were in their reception and Year 1 classes. The school is undertaking analysis of all results and is now setting higher and more challenging targets for pupils' attainment. As a result, standards are rising through the school. Observations during the inspection suggest that the higher targets are achievable.
3. Pupils identified by the school as having special educational needs make good progress. Support assistants work effectively in classrooms, for example giving individual help in literacy and numeracy lessons. This ensures that pupils understand what they need to do and are able to take part in all activities.
4. The inspection finds some signs of improving standards in the school, notably in mathematics where high expectations and challenging work ensure pupils achieve well through the school. Teachers use national guidance in English and mathematics more effectively to target work to improve pupils' learning in literacy and numeracy. Pupils' opportunities to apply their developing literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects are more limited. They improve their literacy skills when writing their own versions of stories in subjects such as religious education. Some use their developing mathematics skills effectively in lessons such as science and information and communication technology.
5. Pupils achieve above average standards in English by the age of seven with a high proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected levels. This is an improvement on last year's National Curriculum test results. Improvements in standards result from several successful strategies to raise standards and improve teaching. As a result, pupils successfully gain basic skills of spelling, punctuation and handwriting through the school. Teachers are effective in getting pupils to be keen to write, but the proportion achieving the higher levels is too low. The main reasons that restrict these pupils reaching higher standards are their limited opportunities to apply their developing writing skills to a wide range of writing tasks. In addition, few pupils consistently use joined-up handwriting and some punctuation skills remain weak. A structured approach to reading is giving pupils good skills of expression and comprehension by the age of seven.
6. The school has built on the relative strengths in mathematics and pupils achieve standards that are well above average by the time they leave the school. The successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy contributes to teachers' knowledge and understanding of mathematics and good teaching. High expectations and challenging work ensure pupils achieve well as they move through the school. Careful assessments of pupils' attainments, clear explanations of new concepts and well-matched tasks ensure

pupils of all abilities achieve well. New systems of target setting are positive in indicating how pupils can achieve even higher standards.

7. Attainment in science is above the nationally expected levels by the time pupils leave the school. In 2001, teachers assessed that an above average proportion of pupils reached both the national average and the higher Level 3. However, the assessments showed no pupils achieving the higher Level 3 in scientific enquiry, which is well below average. Teachers have responded successfully to this analysis and have introduced more opportunities for pupils to develop their investigational skills. These moves are having a positive effect on pupils currently in the school and consolidating the higher attainment.
8. The standards in other subjects such as information and communication technology, religious education, physical education and design and technology are average with signs of improving standards resulting from the clearer approach to the curriculum. In information and communication technology, for example, new equipment and more confident teaching is giving pupils opportunities to learn a wide range of skills. Pupils have increasing confidence and apply this successfully to work in many subjects. Attainment in music, art and design, history and geography is above the expected standards by the age of seven, maintaining the levels of attainment in the last report. In all these subjects, effective curriculum planning ensures that pupils have a good range of experiences. Good teaching ensures that pupils' learning builds effectively on earlier lessons and maintains good standards.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Pupils have very good attitudes to school, maintaining the high standards indicated in the last report. They like coming and taking part in all the activities it provides for them. Parents feel overwhelmingly that their children are happy to go to school and that their behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy entertaining others such as when they sing in the choir or ring tunes on their hand bells in a whole school music event during the inspection. Children in the nursery are eager to start at the beginning of the day and settle down happily.
10. Around school and in lessons pupils behave well. They are polite and friendly to visitors and show respect to their teachers. Mostly they remember to walk quietly in the corridors and they play well together in the playground. When they were kept indoors because of bad weather during the inspection, they behaved sensibly at break times. Behaviour in lessons is good and is never less than satisfactory, but pupils can get a little restless and inattentive occasionally. This happened, for example, when too many were ready to cook their cakes in the microwave at the same time in a science lesson and they had nothing to do but wait. The school rarely needs to take action over incidents of unacceptable behaviour and all pupils get on well together.
11. Pupils with special educational needs have positive attitudes to learning as they have good support to help them achieve well. Classroom assistants encourage them to persevere and build their self-esteem through effective use of praise. Their behaviour is usually good.
12. Pupils' personal development is very good. The youngest children in the nursery respond well when they are given responsibilities such as setting the tables for their lunch. Children in the reception class are capable of working independently. This was seen when those who had finished the main activity in a literacy lesson on making lists moved on to listening to story tapes, operating the machines themselves. They have very good relationships with each other and with all adults in school. Many older pupils volunteer to act as *buddies* and take their responsibilities to help others very seriously. Pupils also show great interest in the religions and beliefs of other people. An excellent example of

this was seen in a lesson when Year 2 pupils questioned a Muslim mother about Islam, showing great curiosity and respect.

13. Attendance at school is good, now being just above the national average. Records show a slight but steady improvement since the time of the last inspection. Pupils and children arrive at school promptly so that lessons can start in good time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14. Throughout the school, the quality of teaching and learning is good in most subjects. It is good in mathematics, English, science, religious education, geography, music and art and design. It is satisfactory in design and technology, physical education and information and communication technology. It is not possible to make a judgement in history where no direct teaching was observed. Teaching is satisfactory or better in all lessons and this results in effective learning throughout the school. Teaching was very good in a fifth of lessons, good in a half and satisfactory in the remainder. Since the previous inspection, the amount of very good teaching has improved and the overall good quality has been maintained. All parents say that teaching is good and that their children make good progress. They are pleased with the way that the school identifies children with special educational needs and supports them effectively so that their needs are met and their achievement is good.
15. A strength of teaching is that the staff work as a very effective team so that morale is high. This important improvement has made teaching and learning more consistent throughout the school. The strong leadership now provided by the new management team understands the importance of fully involving teachers in decision making for the school development plan.
16. Teaching of children in the nursery and reception classes is good and has a positive effect on their learning. The very good relationships that teachers, nursery nurses and classroom assistants have with the children foster their confidence well. Clearly established classroom routines and very good management of behaviour ensure that lessons are successful. Children come to school happily and enjoy learning because staff use effective methods and make learning fun. They frequently praise children's efforts and achievements and they use a wide range of well-organised resources effectively to stimulate children's interest. For example, a reading cave successfully attracts reception children to look at books and promotes early reading skills very effectively. Staff teach the basic skills well, such as number work in mathematical development and writing skills, so that children are well prepared for learning in Key Stage 1.
17. Teaching and learning of pupils in Years 1 and 2 are good. A strength is teachers' planning. They plan lessons very effectively together in year group teams, carefully building on to pupils' previous learning. They consistently tell pupils what they are going to learn at the start of lessons and check at the end whether pupils have made sufficient progress and achieved the learning objectives. This means that pupils' learning is very focused. Thorough planning ensures that the role of skilled classroom assistants to support pupils, including those with special educational needs, is clearly understood and identified. Classroom assistants make a very valuable contribution to pupils' learning not only in lessons, but also by organising after-school activities, such as the reading and writing club and taking responsibility for the library. For instance, a group of Year 1 pupils made very good progress in a withdrawal English lesson called *The Snappy Club*. Learning was made fun with constant repetition to improve pupils' understanding of sentence construction.
18. Another strength is that teachers' management of pupils is very effective, leading to good behaviour so that little learning time is wasted. Teachers use lesson time productively by ensuring that pupils work at a brisk pace. They organise them effectively to take responsibility for tasks within the classroom, such as tidying up and giving out equipment. For example, the teacher encouraged Year 1 pupils successfully with 'Who can be first to start work?' by using friendly rivalry between the groups, such as the *Lively Lions* and *Perfect Panthers*. The relationships between staff and pupils are very good. They ensure that all pupils, whatever their backgrounds, are fully involved in lessons and feel valued, reinforcing the school's motto *Everyone at Hamilton is Special*. This greatly enhances the quality of pupils' learning.
19. The teaching of pupils who have special educational needs is good. The early identification of pupils needs enables teachers to address any possible problems quickly. The good quality,

individual educational plans contain clear and measurable targets, for example to read certain letter sounds. Teachers are fully aware of the needs of their pupils and identify those who have particular gifts and talents. In lessons, pupils with special educational needs get good support both from teachers and support assistants to enable them to make good progress towards targets in their education plans. Quiet explanations enable pupils to understand new learning and encourage them to take a full part in lessons. Although teachers plan work that matches pupils' abilities, planning does not often directly refer to pupils' education plans. However, teachers know their pupils well, are involved in preparing education plans and enable pupils to achieve well.

20. Teachers make good use of a wide range of resources, such as puppets and attractive books, to improve pupils' learning and to keep interest levels high. Their use of computers to support learning across the curriculum is improving as they develop experience. For instance, the new mini-computers for practising writing skills are so popular that pupils wanted to continue writing at home. Year 1 pupils enjoyed trying to draw a map of an island in geography. Teachers make very effective use of visitors to inspire and increase pupils' understanding, for example, of African art, music and dance. They value and encourage pupils to do their best work by making good quality, attractive displays throughout the school, such as the banners of printed fabric in an African style.
21. Teachers show good knowledge and understanding of the different subjects of the curriculum in the way they present and discuss subjects. They answer pupils' questions accurately and teach with confidence, so pupils make good progress. For instance, a clear explanation of the style of the artist Picasso helped pupils to understand that he painted portraits with the features re-arranged. Good use is made of the specialist skills of the visiting physical education and music teachers to raise standards in these subjects.
22. All teachers have secure knowledge of the national numeracy and literacy strategies. They use them confidently and effectively to improve pupils' learning. The local education authority has recognised the advanced skills of two teachers and has awarded them 'leading numeracy teacher' and 'expert literacy teacher' status. Teachers' skills have improved because the school is a member of the Beacon Partnership of local schools. They have visited other schools to observe good teaching and in turn have shared their own good teaching practice with visiting teachers. They are technically competent in teaching the basic skills of mathematics and most English skills, such as phonics. They are less skilled at teaching handwriting. For instance, teachers do not consistently teach pupils joined writing so they cannot reach high writing standards.
23. The quality of literacy teaching is good overall. For example, strengths in a very good Year 2 literacy lesson were that the teacher used a challenging, enjoyable text with attractive pictures about a dog. The resources effectively captured the interest of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. The teacher questioned pupils skilfully to check their understanding of what makes a 'stable home', guiding them successfully to re-read and refer to the text for information. They made very good progress in understanding how to write a list of the character's needs by working together in pairs. Less effective aspects of literacy teaching are the teaching of punctuation and sentence structure at higher levels to Year 2 pupils. This means that too few pupils achieve as high a standard as they could and reach above average levels in writing.
24. The quality of numeracy teaching and learning is a strength of the school and leads to very good standards. For example, in a very good Year 2 mathematics lesson, very good planning of activities ensured that all pupils received work at the correct level of challenge. The teacher explained pupils' tasks clearly so that they quickly settled to work independently. The teacher and classroom assistant effectively supported pupils so they made rapid progress in understanding how to solve number problems at appropriate levels of difficulty.
25. Teachers use a range of appropriate teaching methods to help pupils acquire new knowledge. They persist in trying out different approaches when pupils find something difficult to grasp until they understand. For instance, in religious education, a teacher linked new learning for most pupils about the Muslim faith to their knowledge and experiences of the Christian faith. Teachers use questions skilfully to develop pupils' ideas and encourage them, particularly those who are reticent, to respond in ways that boost their self-esteem. They always take care to include all pupils, including those with special educational needs, in whole class teaching by asking questions at the correct level of challenge. This motivates pupils to want to learn. For example, in Year 2 geography lessons, teachers had carefully planned the questions they were going to ask during a

story to check pupils' understanding and to guide them to identify geographical features of the town and country. They encouraged less able pupils effectively to find out information from the book by using picture cues. A less effective method is the overuse of worksheets in subjects such as English and history to record pupils' work. This restricts opportunities to develop pupils' writing and a range of other skills, such as dramatisation to promote speaking and listening skills.

26. Teachers assess pupils' work thoroughly in lessons and effectively encourage pupils to overcome difficulties and try something that at first the pupil may have thought was too hard. For example, a Year 2 pupil who is usually reluctant to write, was inspired to write a long letter with the reasons that he could give a dog a good home. The written marking of pupils' work varies in consistency. It is most effective when it is thorough and deserved, for example when teachers praise pupils' efforts or give them guidance in how they can improve their work. It is least effective when teachers overuse praise, such as *excellent* for English writing that is clearly not the pupil's best work and contains unnecessary mistakes.
27. Teachers use homework effectively to extend what is learned in school, for instance by finding out additional information. They often inspire pupils to continue work at home. For example, reception children show good creative effort in the box models they have made at home. Pupils with special needs and gifted pupils are effectively encouraged to reinforce their learning targets by extra work at home.

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

28. The school provides a broad range of interesting learning opportunities that meet the aptitudes and ages of pupils well. The curriculum covers all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, as well as meeting the national guidance for children in the Foundation Stage¹. There has been a significant improvement in the planning systems since the last inspection. The school now has guidance for every subject that enables teachers to plan suitable work for each year group and extend pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding effectively. Careful planning, termly, weekly and daily, and based on subject guidance and pupils' achievements, identifies clearly what pupils are to learn and provides good opportunities for assessments. Planning makes good use of the guidelines of the National Strategies for literacy and numeracy, as well as the school's own guidance. This contributes effectively to pupils' good achievements and particularly the high standards in mathematics. Teachers make effective links between subjects, such as using the computer to write instructions to make a puppet in design technology, or using the style of Quentin Blake, a book illustrator, to create their own book covers. Pupils use information and communication technology to identify numbers and solve number problems, or paint pictures in art and design. However, there are not enough planned opportunities for pupils to use a variety of types of writing, such as stories, poems and descriptions, across the curriculum. This contributes to the lower standards in writing of higher-attaining pupils. There is a good curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage that makes good use of the national guidance for teaching children of this age. Effective partnership between the teachers in the nursery and reception classes is enabling a smoother transition from one to the other and supports children's learning well. This is an improvement from the position outlined in the last report. The range of activities in all classes covers all the areas of learning and helps all children to learn effectively.
31. The emphasis on valuing every member of the school ensures there are very good levels of inclusion. All pupils have full and equal access to learning opportunities and other experiences on offer. For example, so many pupils want to attend the art club that they all have opportunities to attend for a few weeks at a time. Careful planning ensures pupils having lessons outside the classroom, miss different lessons on different days. Joint physical education lessons with a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties help show Year 2 pupils that everyone can be involved. Thorough documentation of pupils' progress and very effective management contribute to the good provision for pupils with special educational needs. All pupils have clear education plans with well-defined targets, detailed work programmes and criteria for successful achievement. Careful assessments and very effective support, particularly by classroom assistants and the special educational needs assistant, ensure pupils' rate of learning is good throughout the school.
32. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The carefully planned and organised lunchtime activities, such as skipping, hoops, games, stories and rhymes, contribute particularly well to pupils' social development while consolidating learning in physical education or English, for example. Clubs have a positive effect in raising standards. For example, the choir and hand-bell clubs enhance the music curriculum and the art club increases pupils' interest in art. Visitors to school, such as artists, poets, dancers and teachers from other schools, further enrich the curriculum and promote pupils' interest in learning and their enthusiasm for school. Educational visits to the library, the physical education centre or Gladstone Museum, for example, broaden pupils' experiences and extend their learning.

¹ [The Foundation Stage begins when children reach the age of three and ends at the end of the reception class. It is a distinct stage in preparing children for later schooling and is based on six areas of learning. These mainly refer to communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, and personal, social and emotional development, but also includes knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development](#)

33. The school's motto *Everyone is Special* is central to its ethos and promotes a strong, caring community where everyone is valued. This extends to the very good links with the world outside school and encourages a strong community spirit. Pupils learn about people in their own city through visits and visitors to the school. They are encouraged to think of others when raising funds for the British Heart foundation or creating a garden in remembrance of a community member. Adults from the community attend a range of courses that benefit themselves and their families. The mother and toddler group, run by volunteers from the local church, shares the facilities of the school one morning a week. Good partnerships with other educational establishments benefit pupils academically and socially. They have opportunities to join pupils from nearby schools to visit Keele and Manchester Universities for science and literacy days. Year 2 pupils visit the junior school to meet their new teachers, which prepares them well for the move to their next school. Staff join teachers from other schools to share ideas and expertise, therefore contributing further to a varied curriculum.
34. Provision for pupils' personal development is very good. A caring, welcoming atmosphere and very supportive relationships between staff and pupils builds pupils' self-esteem and contributes to their developing maturity. The respect and value shown to pupils by all adults in the school helps them develop respect for one another and their surroundings. Pupils are involved in evaluating aspects of school life and identifying areas that they would like to be improved. A carefully planned programme for personal, social and health education enable pupils to consider issues relating to their health, growth and personal safety. The school organises a week every term when pupils experience a range of activities to develop their personal, social and health education. For example, nursery children learn the importance of hygiene, reception children learn about looking after their teeth, Year 1 pupils study healthy eating and Year 2 pupils begin to understand about harmful substances. They go swimming, raise money through sponsored skipping and experience dance, music or art from other cultures.
35. The positive ethos of the school forms the framework of the very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. This helps create the caring school community and results in pupils' good behaviour and very good relationships. A Christian foundation forms the basis for pupils' spiritual development. Thoughtfully planned themes for daily acts of collective worship extend pupils' understanding of other people's values and beliefs. Visitors from local church communities and Harvest, Christmas and Easter services held in the local church deepen this understanding. The school's emphasis on valuing every pupil and their achievements provides pupils with opportunities to feel special. Whole school activities, such as the celebration concert, provide moments when pupils can experience the joy of singing together and listening to one another.
36. Adults act as very good role models to pupils through their very good relationships with each other and the pupils. This helps to foster mutual respect and care for one another. Pupils have a strong sense of the difference between right and wrong throughout the school and agree their class rules together. A very good system of rewards and sanctions successfully promotes good behaviour and pupils' enthusiasm for school. Pupils are eager to gain rewards. Assemblies and displays around school celebrate their achievements and attitudes to one another. Staff provide pupils with many opportunities to work and play together. They are expected to share resources, such as art materials, and support each other's learning. Teachers encourage pupils to think of others, so that they are eager to help around school and act as *buddies* to younger pupils. Joint activities with pupils from other schools, activity weeks in school and an interesting range of extra-curricular opportunities extend pupils' social skills well.
37. The school has addressed the weaknesses in the quality of provision for multi-cultural education identified in the last inspection and now provides a wide range of opportunities

for pupils to learn about other cultures. Pupils learn about other faiths in religious education lessons. Numerous visitors from different faiths and cultures extend pupils' multi-cultural awareness through presenting talks, art, dance, music and poetry workshops. For example, Miso-shi worked with pupils to use different printing skills on fabrics, showed them African dances and played African music. Visits to places of historical or geographical interest and museums, such as the Gladstone museum, provide opportunities for pupils to learn about their own cultural heritage.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

38. The school looks after the pupils and children in its care very well. It has made a safe and happy place for them to learn. Parents know that their children are happy at school.
39. The arrangements for all aspects of health and safety and for child protection are very good. This is a significant improvement since the situation at the time of the last inspection when they were satisfactory. All procedures are well documented and all the staff are familiar with them. In particular, lunchtime supervisors are very well trained in their responsibilities from play and the management of behaviour to first aid. Where pupils go on visits off site, careful checks are made. Proper provision is made for ensuring child protection and all staff are made familiar with the school's policy for this.
40. The procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good. Registers are checked weekly and the data entered on a computer. If problems occur with the attendance of individual pupils, a print-out is kept in the register so a closer watch can be kept on the situation. The educational welfare officer comes in to check the attendance figures each term and to keep an eye on any problems. Parents are quite conscientious about contacting the school by letter or phone call if their child is to be away for any reason. The school awards certificates for particularly good attendance and this helps to encourage good habits.
41. Teachers carefully monitor pupils' behaviour and the headteacher keeps records of any action taken as a result. Certificates in the Friday 'Gold Assemblies' reward good efforts and behaviour and similarly the younger children are awarded 'Teddis' in their assemblies. Wet playtimes, such as those during the inspection, were orderly because of the very well planned activities that keep pupils purposefully occupied. Incidents such as bullying are rare, but the school has appropriate strategies to improve any such negative behaviour. Parents are encouraged to support the school in its promotion of good behaviour by being consulted over its policies. They are sent copies of the behaviour and self-esteem policies in addition to signing the home-school agreement.
42. Assessment of pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers identify pupils who are experiencing difficulties at the earliest possible opportunity, from the nursery onwards. Regular monitoring of pupils and termly reviews identify whether pupils can come off the register or if they need further help. The co-ordinator for pupils with special educational needs uses a good range of procedures for assessing pupils' progress. Classroom assistants and the special educational needs assistant keep detailed records of pupils' achievements in lessons and withdrawal sessions. The school draws on the expertise of specialist services for diagnostic testing and further guidance on resources and activities.
43. The school keeps good records of pupils' progress in their personal profiles. These include reports to parents and reading records. Records of the tests children take when they enter the nursery and again at the end of their time in the reception class are included. Simple assessments are made of skills acquired such as those in information and communication technology. The separate assessments made in the core subjects of English and mathematics are more comprehensive and in English are particularly good

and thorough. The use the school makes of such assessments to plan the curriculum is good. In spite of this, it is not precise enough to help brighter pupils who currently are not achieving high enough standards in writing. Pupils' personal profiles are passed on as pupils move up the school so that the new teacher is aware of what they can do and how they behave. This follows on from the very good support of children before they enter the nursery.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

44. Parents' views of the school are extremely positive. They are very supportive of everything that the school does for their children. This is an improvement since the last inspection, though even then their views were generally good. Parents particularly feel that teaching is good and that the school has high expectations of their children. Parents are comfortable asking the school about any questions or problems and are confident that the headteacher manages the school well. There was a high level of response to the questionnaire.
45. The quality of information parents receive continues to be very good. The school has built on the very good arrangements for informing parents that were in place before, such as the parents' evenings three times a year. Informative newsletters go out when there is any special news. The headteacher sends out a letter to parents when she has been into see their class being taught, confirming that the children are happy in their learning. Parents have very good opportunities to find out about the curriculum and are very well consulted about policies, such as the 'Self Esteem' policy. The school keeps parents very well informed about the work their children should be doing as they move up a class. They have opportunities to talk to the new teacher at the final parents' meeting of the previous year. Reports give parents a good picture of what their children are attaining. They often tell them some ways in which they can improve in important subjects like English and mathematics. Parents of children entering the nursery are given packs of activity sheets that they can work through with their children. These help children to become familiar with nursery work before they start. Teachers are always available at the beginning and end of the day as they go out on the playground to meet the parents.
46. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are informed immediately of teachers early concerns when pupils have trouble with learning or behaviour. They are involved in reviews and encouraged to help their children with special tasks to be carried out at home.
47. Parents have a very good impact on the work of the school. Several who started as volunteers in class have become trained as classroom assistants. They work with groups of pupils under the direction of the class teacher and are invaluable in the support they give. Pupils' reading is supported at home and many parents put comments in their children's reading diaries. Parents also support the school well through the Parents', Teachers' and Friends' association, raising money for the benefit of the pupils, and they provide help with decorating the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

48. The quality of leadership and management is very good. The school has made very good improvement since the last report when serious weaknesses in management were identified. Strong and inspirational leadership from the new headteacher has established a clear educational direction for the school. Recognising the weaknesses in communications at all levels, she has established strong structures to enable staff, governors and parents to contribute to the schools' development. Very clear overall aims steer developments well, are referred to frequently and are reflected in all the work of the school.

49. The headteacher's strong emphasis on personal relationships and valuing individuals has established a very secure atmosphere in the school. The school's motto, *Everyone is Special*, is clearly used to indicate the importance of very good relationships. This has the positive effect of promoting much good teamwork and the commitment to improve. As a result, all staff work together well to improve all aspects of the school's work to achieve high standards. The overall result is a positive and supportive ethos that encourages governors, staff and pupils to do well. The headteacher's management of the many staffing problems during her first years in the school was very effective. This has contributed to the stability that has now been established.
50. The monitoring undertaken by the headteacher is substantial and well organised. It gives a clear and accurate picture of the school and identifies priorities well. Increasingly effective analysis of school data is identifying strengths and weaknesses of pupils' achievements. The deputy headteacher and subject co-ordinators play an increasing role in managing the school's work. Their monitoring of planning, scrutiny of pupils' work and some observations of lessons give clear data about how well the school is doing in each of the subjects. This information is used to identify potential priorities for wider discussion and to establish action plans for subjects.
51. Governors are well informed and have a good understanding of their role to question and challenge the school. They take an increasingly wide range of additional roles such as links with classes and subjects to ensure their information is secure. Although these roles are relatively new, all governors see them as potentially useful and undertake them enthusiastically. These structures are giving governors a clearer view of the school and are helping them to ensure that the school fulfils all its statutory duties.
52. The school establishes a strong framework of priorities through a very effective system of consultation and prioritising. This allows all staff, governors and parents to contribute their views of how effectively the school is working. Pupils' opinions are also gained through activities within their personal, social and health education. This wide consultation results in a detailed school development plan that guides all staff effectively. Action taken on the priorities is evaluated well as a strong part of the development process.
53. The professional development of staff is well managed and the school's systems for performance management are effective. Training opportunities for staff address personal priorities and are linked well to the overall needs of the school. As a result, all staff are well trained and there are effective strategies for inducting new staff into the school. Good links with the local Beacon school partners are offering further effective training opportunities as the schools share their best practice in many areas of work. Opportunities for governors to undertake training are effective and contribute to the good work of the governing body.
54. Financial management is good with spending linked closely to the identified priorities in the school. New systems ensure that all spending is specifically targeted and that the intended outcomes are clearly stated. Governors keep a close eye on spending at regular intervals through the year. Developments and spending are evaluated carefully against intended improvements, particularly in pupils' achievements. This ensures that best value is obtained for all the resources at the school's disposal.
55. The management of special educational needs is strong. Good documentation, meticulously kept, contributes to the good provision. The co-ordinator supports other staff in identification of pupils' needs and the writing of education plans. She liaises effectively with the junior school to ensure pupils' records enable their needs to continue to be met. Close work with the special educational needs assistant evaluates the impact of special education needs support in school.

56. The level of staffing in the school is good and between them there is a good range of age and experience. There are sufficient staff with appropriate qualifications including two nursery nurses and a newly qualified teacher. There are also plenty of well trained staff to support teachers in the classroom.
57. The accommodation is good and there is sufficient space for all the activities to take place. A good feature is the provision of quiet rooms off the classrooms where small groups of pupils can be taught. The mobile classrooms lack a water supply, but the school overcomes this restriction well and they are otherwise pleasant teaching areas. All areas are bright and attractive and provide a good learning environment.
58. Resources for learning are good and are linked with raising standards in all subjects. There are sufficient computers in all classrooms. The library is just being developed as a central learning area in addition to the collections of books kept in classrooms and it is very well organised.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

59. The school has made good progress from the time of the last report and has established a clear framework for improvement. As a part of this continuing process, the headteacher, staff and governors should now:
- (1) improve the provision for developing writing, particularly of higher attaining pupils, by:
- creating a more structured approach to teaching basic skills such as handwriting and punctuation;
 - giving pupils greater opportunities to use their developing skills in different types of writing across the curriculum.
- (paragraphs 4-5, 22-23, 25-26, 28, 43 and 71-82)

The following less important weakness should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- (a) ensure that pupils' work, particularly on worksheets, is coherently organised to aid teachers' assessments and monitoring of pupils' progress.
(paragraphs 25, 80, 87, 103 and 106)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

38

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

24

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	0	8	19	11	0	0	0
Percentage	0	21	50	29	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	30	150
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	4	20

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	37

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.0
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	31	24	55

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	22	27	29
	Girls	22	23	23
	Total	44	50	52
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	80 (83)	91 (89)	95 (91)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	27	29	29
	Girls	22	23	24
	Total	49	52	53
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	89 (85)	95 (89)	96 (98)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	4
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	142
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y2

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.4
Average class size	25

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	90

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	N/a
Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	67
Number of pupils per FTE adult	13.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/1
	£
Total income	349,830
Total expenditure	337,558
Expenditure per pupil	1,855
Balance brought forward from previous year	19,647
Balance carried forward to next year	31,919

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 54.4%

Number of questionnaires sent out	180
Number of questionnaires returned	98

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	81	18	1	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	79	19	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	73	24	1	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	54	34	5	0	3
The teaching is good.	85	15	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	69	29	1	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	84	15	0	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	84	16	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	68	29	1	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	80	19	0	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	81	18	1	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	36	5	0	6

Rows may not add up to 100 because of rounding or because not all parents felt able to answer all of the questions.

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

60. Children start in the nursery at the age of three and transfer to the reception classes in the September before their fifth birthday. Children enter the nursery with a range of abilities, but their overall attainment is average in all areas of learning. The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good and gives children a good start to their education. By the time children are beginning the National Curriculum, most have attained the early learning goals² in all areas of learning. This maintains the positive findings of the last report, although there have been significant improvements that are beginning to raise attainment further. For example, all staff from the nursery and reception classes are working more closely together to ensure that children's learning builds effectively over time. They have introduced a coherent planning system that makes good use of national guidance for teaching children of this age and introducing more effective assessment systems. Children with special educational needs are identified at an early stage. Good provision and effective support ensure they make good progress. These actions are improving the quality of teaching.

Personal, social and emotional development

61. This is a strength throughout the Foundation Stage because the teaching is good. Teachers have very good systems for introducing children to the nursery through initial visits and contact with homes. These ensure that children develop confidence and look forward to starting their schooling. Children in the nursery settle quickly and play happily together. They share toys and equipment well and learn to take turns when necessary. Children's response to learning is often very good and they develop confidence to begin to choose their own activities. They develop greater independence in dressing and caring for themselves. When the adults ask for attention, the children stop at once and listen carefully to the next instructions. They carry out instructions quickly and willingly. Activities such as milk and dinnertime make a substantial contribution to children's personal development in the nursery. Children have a good range of responsibilities, such as preparing tables, which they carry out willingly and successfully. The meal is taken in a good atmosphere of 'family' care and children enjoy socialising together.
62. The adults in the nursery and reception classes are kind and caring, but they also establish high expectations of work and behaviour. As a result, there are good relationships and purposeful activity in all the classrooms. In the reception classes, children are very keen to learn and are eager to answer the teachers' questions. They develop good relationships with each other and apply themselves well to their tasks. They share and take turns well. Teachers do not always make good use of the snack time to encourage discussions. However, teachers in these classes use their good management and control of children to encourage children to reflect on their feelings in discussions. This encourages them to give opinions and promotes their personal development. For example, children think carefully about what they would miss if the school disappeared and suggest many things including their friends and their teachers. Effective teaching ensures that reception children are attentive and eager to learn.

Communication, language and literacy

63. The teaching of this aspect of children's learning is good, particularly in the reception classes. Nursery children enjoy joining in with an increasing range of nursery and other

² These are the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage. These mainly refer to achievements children make in connection with communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; and personal, social and emotional development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical and creative development. There are many goals for each area of learning; for example, in language and literacy pupils should be able to write their own name and other things such as labels and begin to write simple sentences.

simple rhymes. They show a good range of emotions and are keen to respond appropriately, for example being very quiet when joining in with a rhyme when 'Teddy is sleeping'. Adults explain new words well and many children are keen to use them. Their vocabulary improves, but a number of nursery children are still indistinct in their speaking. An attractive reading area in the nursery encourages children to look at books, although most prefer to have an adult read to them. Writing areas such as the 'office' and the 'toy shop' are well provided with materials to encourage children to use 'writing' in their role-play. Adults do not sufficiently use these areas enough to challenge children and promote their learning.

64. In the reception classes, teachers make very good use of elements of the National Literacy Strategy to plan early reading and writing activities for children. Younger reception children begin to identify some rhyming words when they make up new verses for *Hickory Dickory Dock*. Through sharing books and using well-produced resources, teachers encourage all children to recognise letters and their sounds. Children increasingly recognise their letters and can suggest simple words that begin, and sometimes end, with the correct sounds. A good range of word and letter games promotes children's learning well. Higher attaining children are beginning to put sentences together and make good attempts at writing their own words such as 'samwjis' for sandwiches. Children gain confidence in writing through good opportunities to write in reception role-play areas, such as recording where their flight will be going. Language and literacy are supported effectively with use of suitable computer programs. Good relationships and sympathetic questioning encourage children to answer with increasing confidence.

Mathematical development

65. Good teaching in both nursery and reception classes ensures that children make good gains in their mathematical development. Adults in the nursery guide children effectively to recognise and use numbers in their play, such as singing songs such as *Five Brown Buns*. Teachers keep good records of children's learning and this helps to match tasks well to children's needs. Nursery children recognise and name a good variety of shapes and use the names correctly when they talk about their work. Children in the reception classes build effectively on this earlier work when they look at three-dimensional shapes. They correctly name a number of shapes such as cubes, cylinders and spheres. They identify the shapes of the faces using the correct terms. Teachers plan a good variety of activities that allow children to build their skills and understanding. All adults question children well, using the specialist target vocabulary effectively to extend children's learning.
66. Reception teachers effectively promote children's understanding of numbers through lessons that make good use of aspects of the national guidance for numeracy. As a result, many children count confidently to 100 and most can count forwards and backwards to 20. They recognise numbers in a number square and some begin to identify patterns, showing good levels of curiosity. The teachers' very good relationships with children encourage them to have confidence when trying to answer questions.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

67. Satisfactory teaching enables children to make sound progress in the nursery. The children show interest in making things using a good range of materials and relate these to their lives. For example, a child shows a 'pancake' she has made from playdough and explains, 'my Dad can toss pancakes'. Others build confidently with a range of construction materials. Children learn about living things and recognise the need to care for them properly. They willingly take responsibility for feeding the fish. While thinking about air, children compare balloons filled with water and air in the water tray. They identify differences and explain that those filled with air float on the surface. Those filled with water are heavy and float at the bottom. The adults in the nursery identify some activities that they will focus on and often develop children's learning well in these. For example, they lead activities involving parachutes in the outside area that extend children's learning and experiences effectively. In some other activities, however, children would benefit from greater attention by adults in questioning and challenging learning.

68. Children in the reception classes learn well because teachers provide a good range of challenges for children. They gain greater skills in cutting and making using a variety of materials. Effective links with homes are seen in the interesting junk models of modern technology the children have brought in. Through sympathetic discussion, children develop good understanding of how they grow and they identify important aspects of their lives. Their knowledge of the local area is secure and they identify nearby places on a large map they have made. Children have good understanding of modern technology such as cameras, tape recorders and computers. They use computers for a good range of games and other programs that support their learning in most areas of learning. They develop good skills in using CD-ROMs and opening and using simple programs.

Physical development

69. There are satisfactory opportunities for nursery children to develop physically in the outside area. Although the weather during the inspection was poor, the adults made good use of the covered area to undertake activities such as parachute games. Inside, children use playdough and simple tools such as scissors to cut shape and form, developing their co-ordination and fine skills soundly. Reception teachers make effective use of the school hall to develop children's skills, for example in listening to music and responding in movements. They practise and improve their actions, developing performance skills. Children increasingly recognise the effects of exercise on their bodies.

Creative development

70. Good teaching enables children to develop well through the Foundation Stage, particularly in the reception classes. Nursery children sing simple songs with pleasure and respond well to the words. They enjoy using actions to suit the songs. They draw and paint with increasing control and give sound explanations of their pictures. Role-play areas in the nursery encourage children to play, but their stories are often not well developed. More adult involvement and questioning would challenge children to use their imaginations. In the reception classes, good teaching promotes children's learning well. Children learn to use a good range of media in increasingly imaginative ways. Teachers introduce children to the work of famous artists such as Matisse. The children looked closely at the picture and made good guesses of the title, justifying their answers. The children enjoy employing Matisse's collage techniques when working together on a large picture. Imaginative role-play areas encourage children to play together and the teachers ensure that children are given simple but effective targets to focus their play. For example, some children in *the rocket* write down where they are flying to and they join together to *count down to blast-off*. Good use of a specialist music teacher gives all children in the Foundation Stage a good start to their musical skills as they accompany themselves with simple instruments.

ENGLISH

71. Standards in English overall at the end of Year 2 are above average. Achievement for most pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good because they receive good teaching. However, more able pupils in Year 2 could reach higher standards in writing. The school closely monitors the performances of boys and girls and there are no significant differences in these. It has implemented successful strategies, such as improving reading resources to make them more interesting for boys.
72. Although statistics for national tests show that standards are below those of the previous inspection, this does not reflect the full picture. They show that there is a variation from year to year due to differences between groups of pupils. For example, pupils now read a much broader range of books. The school is on track to attain its challenging target of 95 per cent of pupils reaching at least average levels in English. Higher attaining pupils achieve good standards in reading, but few are predicted to gain the higher Level 3 in writing.
73. Standards in speaking and listening are average overall for seven-year-olds. Many children begin school with indistinct speech, but reach sound standards by the age of seven. However, pupils' listening skills are good because teachers often praise good listening and use effective strategies to help pupils listen carefully. For example, pupils from the reception class onwards know that they must look at the speaker. Teachers use questions skilfully to check that they listen with understanding. For instance, they ask them to repeat back their set task. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to speak in class and in front of large audiences, such as whole school assemblies. As a result, all pupils make good progress and speak confidently and clearly. In Year 1, for example, a pupil sat on the story chair and told the class the story of Cinderella in perfect detail. In discussions, more able pupils in Year 2 ask thoughtful, relevant questions, for example, when asking a visiting Muslim woman about her faith. However, few pupils speak using a sufficiently rich, varied vocabulary to reach above average levels. Classroom assistants use their very good relationships to successfully encourage special needs pupils to answer questions and ensure that they are fully involved in whole class discussions. This helps pupils develop their self-esteem well, because they know that their contributions will be highly valued and praised.
74. Standards of reading are good for seven-year olds. Pupils enter Year 1 from the reception classes with good reading attitudes. They are interested in books and are keen to learn. Teachers continue to promote their interest very effectively by choosing interesting texts. They provide many opportunities for pupils to listen to and enjoy stories across the curriculum. For example, in geography, pupils in Year 2 learned about life on a Scottish island from a story. The teaching of reading for information is good. Pupils have a good understanding of how non-fiction texts are organised. By Year 2, pupils find information independently using their knowledge of contents, index, alphabetical order and illustrations. Teachers use effective methods such as pointing to the text in Year 1 with a 'magic wand' to reinforce that print goes from left to right. They effectively improve pupils' reading for understanding by the skilful use of questions and giving clear explanations. For example, in Year 2, pupils read together with their reading partner and made good progress in understanding what is meant by a list of *strict criteria*. Teachers ensure pupils in both year groups use a good range of skills to help them tackle unfamiliar words, such as picture clues and their knowledge of phonics.
75. Teachers develop pupils' confidence in writing very effectively so that pupils write at a good length for their age. For example, Year 2 pupils described their visit to Gladstone Pottery in good quality writing, written in chapters. Pupils enter Year 1 eager to 'have a go' at writing. They enjoy rewriting stories, such as Goldilocks and the Three Bears, in considerable detail. They know that stories have a beginning, such as 'Once upon a time',

middle and an end. They usually organise and sequence their ideas and events appropriately. Pupils' spelling is of a good standard and has improved due to the recent school priority to develop pupils' use of phonics and rhymes. Year 2 pupils usually spell simple words correctly. They make plausible attempts to spell more complex words such as 'snuggely' for snugly.

76. Pupils' skills of punctuation and handwriting are developed less well. In these aspects, teachers' expectations are not high enough. Pupils do not consistently write in correctly punctuated sentences that start with a capital letter and end with a full stop. In Year 2, more able pupils are prevented from reaching higher levels because they are not taught how to join letters correctly in their writing. Pupils form individual letters correctly, but teachers do not place enough emphasis on teaching handwriting skills. As a result, pupils do not write clearly enough, for example with a good distinction between tall and small letters.
77. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards achieving their individual English targets. The targets are appropriate and are fully shared with pupils and parents. Staff have good relationships with pupils and know their needs well. They ensure that they receive good quality support, either individually or in small ability groups. For example, a classroom assistant enabled a small group of Year 2 pupils to make good progress in understanding how to write a letter. They wrote with support directly on to a computer in turns with a clear focus on the content of the letter. Their full involvement in the task meant they printed off the letter and signed it with pride.
78. The quality of teaching is good overall with some very good teaching, for example from the teacher awarded 'expert literacy teacher' status. A strength in teaching is that all teachers have a good understanding of the literacy strategy and use it flexibly and confidently to improve pupils' literacy skills. This is the result of effective monitoring, additional training and guidance. Teachers plan thoroughly together using a wide range of resources effectively. They always share the learning focus with their pupils and check at the end of lessons to find out if it has been achieved. Puppets such as 'Snappy Crocodile' and attractive new books quickly capture pupils' attention. Teachers are increasingly using new technology more effectively. For example, the recently purchased mini-computers are very popular with pupils and improving their writing skills. Pupils enjoy practising their spelling skills and write with increasing confidence directly on a computer keyboard. Teachers use questions skilfully to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding and take care to include all pupils.
79. Teachers are constantly evaluating their practice and looking for ways to improve their methods. For instance, they have invited a poet into school to inspire pupils to write poetry. Last year they took Year 2 pupils to Manchester and Keele Universities for writing workshops. They have improved and replaced the main reading scheme and introduced new reading diaries since the previous inspection to improve pupils' reading attitudes and skills.
80. Less effective are the teaching of punctuation and handwriting to enable pupils to reach high levels in writing. Too much of pupils' writing is completed on work sheets that are not clearly organised to make it easy to monitor progress. The range of pupils' further writing in other subjects of the curriculum such as history could be increased. Teachers mark pupils' work positively, but other aspects lack consistency. For example, pupils are not always given enough guidance in how to improve their work.
81. The subject is very strongly led by an experienced 'expert literacy teacher' with a clear commitment to raising standards. For instance, the school has successfully introduced several recent strategies to tackle the priorities teachers have identified. Underachieving pupils in Year 1 receive additional very good quality teaching from a trained classroom

assistant. They make good progress in their withdrawal group sessions to develop reading and writing skills following a teaching programme with lots of repetition and reinforcement of learning. The 'Story Friends' scheme provides extra individual support from two adult reading volunteers to improve pupils' reading skills. Year 2 pupils make good progress and show good standards in an after-school reading and writing club run by classroom assistants. This gives good opportunities for pupils to tackle more extended writing. For example, a more able group planned and drafted their stories effectively, guided by headings such as *setting* and *adjectives*. One gripping story began, 'In the dark windy night on a bleak grassy moor...'. The newly opened library organised by a classroom assistant is a great attraction for pupils. They reacted with an amazed 'wow!' to the opening and could not wait to borrow books and read them at home. The lunchtime story club is well supported. Pupils enthusiastically donate books from home to increase the number of books.

82. The co-ordinator has improved assessment procedures, which are now very good. They are used effectively to identify areas for future improvement, such as reading comprehension. Teachers systematically assess pupils' standards against nationally agreed levels and monitor pupils' progress to see if achievements are high enough. They have introduced individual targets for improvement, but their quality varies in different classes. Plans to link these to learning statements are appropriate.

MATHEMATICS

83. The school has improved on the high standards that were found at the time of the last inspection. By the end of Year 2, pupils attain standards that are well above average, improving further on the recent good National Curriculum test results. The successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has contributed effectively to teachers' knowledge and understanding of mathematics and to their good teaching. An awareness of pupils' weaker attainment in using and applying mathematics led to a greater focus on teaching mathematics through problem solving. As a result, standards in this aspect of mathematics are rising. High expectations and challenging work ensure pupils achieve well as they move through the school. Well-targeted support, particularly by classroom assistants, enables pupils with special educational needs to make good progress.
84. Pupils enjoy all aspects of their lessons and show enthusiasm for learning mathematics. This contributes to the good progress they make throughout the school. Year 1 pupils improve their speed and accuracy when doing mental arithmetic through challenging warm-up sessions. They achieve well when they add three numbers together with increasing confidence. Teaching effectively challenges higher attaining pupils to achieve further through more demanding questions. By the end of Year 2, pupils confidently understand place value to 1,000, put three-digit numbers in the correct order and say what is one more or one less. They multiply by 2, 5 and 10 and add and subtract 20 from larger numbers. Higher attaining pupils also multiply by 3 and 4 and begin to work out associated division facts. Pupils draw reflective symmetrical patterns accurately and identify minutes when telling the time. They tally results when collecting information, make bar charts and interpret information well. Challenging activities encourage pupils to use a range of strategies to solve problems of addition or subtraction. Pupils begin to offer suggestions of how to use different methods to reach the same answer. Praise by teachers gives them confidence and encourages them to articulate their thinking.
85. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers use the format of the National Numeracy Strategy to plan their lessons and identify clearly what each group of pupils is to learn. They use the introductory oral session well to challenge pupils' mental arithmetic skills and reinforce number facts. Pupils respond well and become fully involved, which improves their mental agility. Good use of mathematical vocabulary ensures pupils understand and use it successfully. For example, Year 2 pupils know different ways of

saying *add* or *subtract*, such as *count on*, *count back*, *total*, *minus*, *take away*. Teachers use a good range of resources to support pupils' learning and to stimulate their interest. They ask probing questions, targeted at pupils of different abilities to involve them all. This encourages them to answer confidently. Careful assessments of pupils' attainments, clear explanations of new concepts and well-matched tasks ensure pupils of all abilities achieve well.

86. Classroom assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning. They are clear what they are to do and challenge pupils through effective questioning. They support pupils with special educational needs well to ensure they take an active part in lessons. Teachers know their pupils well and promote very good relationships. Pupils are eager to answer questions or to be chosen to help with number games and examples. Lively pace in lessons and interesting activities encourage pupils to work hard, concentrate effectively and foster their very good attitudes to mathematics.
87. Teachers provide some opportunities for pupils to explain their mathematical thinking, but these are sometimes limited. This reduces the opportunities when pupils can learn from one another. However, good questioning such as 'Which number is going to be first, and why?' encourages pupils to think out their answers carefully. Teachers use marking to praise pupils' achievements and build their self-esteem, but rarely point out what pupils need to do next. However, teachers have begun to set targets for pupils, although these are in the early stages of development. The large numbers of worksheets, while supporting pupils' learning, are not filed in such a way as to indicate pupils' progress to pupils, teachers or parents. Pupils use information and communication technology to support their learning in mathematics in tasks such as sorting and classifying. However, pupils have only limited opportunities to use their mathematical skills in other subjects.

SCIENCE

88. Attainment is above the nationally expected levels by the time pupils leave the school, an improvement on the levels of attainment described in the last report. The most recent National Curriculum teacher assessments, in 2001, showed above average numbers of pupils achieving the nationally expected Level 2 and the higher Level 3. However, the teachers' assessments showed no pupils achieving the higher Level 3 in aspects of scientific enquiry, well below average. Teachers have responded positively to this analysis and have introduced more opportunities for pupils to develop their investigational skills. These moves are having a good effect on pupils currently in the school and consolidating the higher attainment. Year 1 pupils, for example, identified important aspects of an investigation into growing seeds and began to make predictions of what would happen. Some higher-attaining pupils began to identify elements of the investigation that made the test a fair one. The teachers' careful questioning made pupils think hard and helped them to learn well.
89. All Year 2 pupils identify ways to make an investigation into melting ice as fair as possible. They write up their experiments using worksheets that help pupils to think carefully about what is happening and encourage them to make sensible predictions. As a result, lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, learn well, although they are not always independent in their work. Pupils know the lifecycles of seeds and frogs and what people need to do to grow and have a healthy lifestyle. They understand how an electrical circuit is necessary to light a bulb and higher attaining pupils describe how a bulb works. All pupils compare the properties of materials, classifying them correctly into *natural* and *man-made* materials. Higher attaining pupils take this further and begin to write at length about changes that take place in materials and whether they can be reversed. In Year 2 lessons, this knowledge was appropriately applied when pupils looked carefully at the stages of making a cake. They increased their range of vocabulary and expression as they sought to describe the substances at each of the stages.

90. The teaching of science is good and this ensures that all pupils achieve well. Teachers make very effective use of support staff, particularly in practical activities. This helps all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to learn well. Teachers ensure that pupils systematically gain good scientific vocabulary. Their methodical questioning ensures that pupils learn to use the new terms correctly. Pupils are excited and enthused by science lessons, but teachers' good management skills ensure they behave well, taking turns and sharing when necessary. They listen carefully to teachers' clear explanations and are quick to begin activities when set to work. Pupils make increasing use of information and communication technology in their work, although this is not a strong aspect of science work.
91. Good co-ordination of the subject is helping to improve the standards of attainment. A small group of teachers looks carefully at the development of the subject throughout the school. They monitor teachers' planning regularly and have observed how teachers put this into practice. There are close links with the governing body through a governor with responsibility for the subject. Good analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in the school has identified necessary improvements. As a result, the school has made improvements to the science curriculum, making effective use of national guidance for the subject. These improvements have been supported through the purchase of better resources to help teachers in their work.

ART AND DESIGN

92. Attainment is above nationally expected levels, as it was at the time of the last inspection. The school has adopted national guidance to use alongside their own guidelines. This ensures teachers plan work that builds successfully on pupils' previous learning. Regular, effective monitoring of teachers' planning and examples of pupils' work by the co-ordinator enables her to assess standards and identify areas for development. These are improvements since the last inspection.
93. Teachers provide good opportunities for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to experience a range of materials and artists. Pupils develop many good skills, for example in painting, drawing and elements of sculpture. Consequently, they all make good progress through the school. Pupils experiment with different techniques, such as pleating, twisting, tearing or cutting paper, to achieve different effects so that they can use them in their individual work. They develop observational skills well. For example, Year 1 pupils make detailed drawings of plants and Year 2 pupils draw each other's portraits, showing a good awareness of features. Pupils study art and artists from different times and cultures and use these ideas in their own art. For example, by the end of Year 2, pupils confidently use felt pens, pencil and wax crayons to create book covers in the style of Quentin Blake. They use batik to print fabric with African designs and they discuss the work of famous artists, such as Picasso, knowledgeably.
94. Pupils benefit from working alongside visiting artists to produce individual and group artworks. For example, pupils painted pictures of themselves to create a mural. The visiting artist Miso-shi, a Ghanaian, introduced pupils to a range of techniques and the styles of art found in Ghana. They learned how to tie-dye, paint and print fabrics to make banners and wall hangings. The organisation and use of these visitors enables pupils to work extensively on art, which helps to raise standards and contributes to pupils' social and cultural development well.
95. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils, which encourage them to enjoy art and design and appreciate the humour in some artworks. Pupils use and demonstrate their understanding of art vocabulary because teachers use and explain it well. Teachers' probing questioning enables pupils to explain

their learning clearly, such as the techniques used by different artists. Clear explanations and instructions, including sharing difficulties they experienced with style or techniques, ensure pupils understand what is expected of them. Well-planned and organised lessons with good support from teachers and classroom assistants encourage pupils to work enthusiastically, independently and sensibly.

96. Teachers develop pupils' skills well and encourage them to use them in their own ideas. For example, Year 2 pupils created their own ideas to paint designs on plates. Good use of visual images such as woven rugs and baskets or photographs of artworks provide pupils with opportunities to appreciate the work of famous artists and artisans. Pupils use sketchbooks for some art lessons, but teachers do not encourage them to collect ideas to act as a stimulus.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

97. Pupils achieve average standards by the age of seven, the same as at the time of the last inspection. However, the school has addressed the weaknesses identified in pupils' design and evaluation skills. Standards in designing and making skills are now similar because teachers expect pupils to plan their designs before making them. Teachers provide a good range of artefacts for pupils to consider before planning their designs. They have opportunities to build models with construction kits before designing and making artefacts. For example, Year 1 pupils built a number of playground activities from kits. The school has also introduced new planning based on national guidelines to support their own guidance. This enables teachers to know more clearly what pupils are to learn each year. These are improvements since the last inspection.
98. Pupils make sound progress developing their skills and using a range of materials and tools. For example, Year 1 pupils use folding and push-up mechanisms successfully to make Christmas cards. Year 2 pupils extend their understanding of moving mechanisms by making sliding figures on pictures and using split pins to make moving joints on puppets. Pupils select materials and tools, draw or list them on their design sheets and begin to write instructions for making artefacts. They use their developing skills in numeracy and information technology in their designing and making. Pupils begin to evaluate their own and other people's work and understand that products can be changed.
99. Although only one lesson was seen during the inspection, evidence shows that teaching and learning are sound. Teachers use the new planning guidance to build on pupils' earlier learning. They plan lessons that extend pupils' skills soundly and provide opportunities for them to develop their own ideas. A wide range of resources enables pupils to select the most appropriate for their designs. Good use of classroom assistants supports pupils with special educational needs and ensures they achieve well. However, planning does not always identify activities or skills to meet the needs of brighter pupils. This results in most pupils attaining the expected levels for their age but few have opportunities to reach higher levels.

GEOGRAPHY

100. The overall standards in geography are above average because almost all reach the expected levels for pupils aged seven. All pupils show good achievement in developing geography skills and knowledge, due to good teaching and learning. This includes pupils with special educational needs who receive good quality support. Standards are similar to those at the previous inspection.
101. Teachers plan effectively, making good use of national guidance. They use effective methods to make the subject interesting and increase pupils' understanding. For example, following an inspiring visit of a lady from Ghana, they set Year 2 pupils an investigation

using atlases to find out the location of the continent of Africa and the country of Ghana. Pupils successfully identified and labelled oceans and different types of landscapes on their own maps of Africa. Throughout the school, pupils enjoy carrying out geographical enquiries. Year 1 pupils, for example, were very intrigued by a plan of the school and enjoyed identifying and labelling the different rooms.

102. Teachers use stories effectively to interest pupils and increase their knowledge of different locations. A story about a town mouse and a country mouse helped Year 2 pupils identify different human and physical geographical features. This work built effectively on their previous knowledge of the features of islands. They agreed in discussion that the country has less people, less houses and less traffic, making it quieter than in the town, but that not everyone likes this. Teachers are skilled at asking planned questions to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are fully involved in discussion and finding out the answers. At the very end of the lesson, their teacher asked them to use and apply their own knowledge of the locality. Pupils developed their ideas effectively when they suddenly realised that there are features of the country that can also be seen in the town. They recognised that 'Down by the canal you find blackberries' and that it is possible to see animals such as squirrels and foxes.
103. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers make very good links between geography and other subjects to improve pupils' skills. For example, they are developing use of the computer to help pupils draw a map of an imaginary island. They effectively develop pupils' awareness of places beyond their own locality by creating high quality displays showing that they value pupils' best work. By including objects, such as African woodcarvings, clay pots and fabrics, pupils' knowledge of different cultures extends effectively. Through this, their understanding of the influence of natural resources on people's lives is also improved. A less effective feature of teaching is that the pace of learning slows when pupils are asked to sit on the carpet for too long for listening and speaking activities. Their concentration fades especially in the session just before lunch. Pupils' written work lacks organisation in a loose-leaf folder that makes it difficult to review the progress made over time.

HISTORY

104. No history lessons were planned during the inspection. Pupils' work and discussions show that standards are above those expected nationally because almost all pupils reach the expected levels and many exceed them. Standards are similar to those at the previous inspection. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well.
105. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 recognise differences between the present and the past. For instance, Year 2 pupils put a series of pictures of bicycles in order from the oldest to the newest. They make good progress in their knowledge of famous people and events in the past. They enjoyed, for example, talking about the Great Fire of London and Florence Nightingale. However, teachers rely too heavily on worksheets for Year 2 pupils to record their work. This restricts opportunities for pupils to develop a range of skills, such as different types of writing. For example, to write from different points of view, or to draw houses with the features found at the time of the Great Fire.
106. There is insufficient inspection evidence to make an overall judgement of the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers approach history in a lively manner and pass on their enthusiasm to their pupils by arranging visits to places such as a Victorian pottery factory. This effectively increases pupils' knowledge of local traditions and life in the past because it brings history to life. Pupils enjoyed finding out, for example, about the work of a 'sagger-maker's bottom-knocker'. Teachers set individual research projects for Year 2 pupils, including homework, to extend their learning. For example, pupils had to find out about a famous local person, such as Reginald Mitchell the inventor of the Spitfire

aeroplane. This effectively challenges the more able pupils. The present collection of pupils' work is not well organised as a series of loose sheets in a combined history and geography folder. This makes it difficult for pupils to take pride and review the progress they have made in their past work.

107. The co-ordinator provides enthusiastic leadership. Since the previous inspection, planning has improved. The school is adapting national planning appropriately to make it more relevant to the needs of its pupils by including more local history. Teachers now ensure that planning builds effectively on pupils' previous learning. Plans to establish samples of pupils' work are a useful way to improve teachers' knowledge of standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

108. Pupils' standards of attainment by the time they leave the school are around those expected of seven-year-olds. This maintains the standards seen at the last inspection. However, the school has recently expanded its provision for the subject and this is having a positive effect. There are good plans for further developments, including additional training for teachers to use a wider range of software. These should improve the quality of teaching and raise standards further. Pupils with special educational needs receive appropriate support when necessary to ensure they make progress with other pupils.
109. Pupils use a good range of equipment and show good familiarity with items such as cassette tapes and players. Year 1 pupils are carefully taught to correctly identify the parts of a computer such as the keyboard, monitor and mouse. They can demonstrate simple actions such as moving items across the screen with increasing accuracy and control. Most understand how to use a CD-ROM and confidently find the pages they want. They understand how to control the computer and enter information through the mouse or keyboard. They use a good range of applications in their work, often using these in other subjects, for example in developing quick addition skills in mathematics. Year 2 pupils enter text with increasing accuracy and can make alterations, for instance, to the font and colour. They use these skills to enter a series of instructions for making a paper plate puppet in a good link with their work in design and technology. Pupils collect simple information about pets or favourite snacks and enter this in simple tables. They use the information to create graphs in different forms, developing their mathematical understanding well. They create pictures using an increasing range of drawing tools. Most know how to print their own work, for example, when finding maps and pages from CD-ROMs.
110. All pupils have good attitudes to the subject. They show increasing confidence with computers and recognise ways that they can be used. Pupils listen carefully to teachers' explanations and are keen to demonstrate their growing skills. Although some individual lessons are good, teaching is satisfactory overall and helps pupils to learn at a steady pace. Teachers are giving pupils an increasing range of activities and are developing effective ways of using computers in the classrooms. For example, teachers plan and give clear explanations to whole classes, making effective use of national guidance. These lessons give pupils a secure range of skills that they can apply in other work. These sessions are followed by regular opportunities for pupils to develop their individual skills during the week. Teachers have good methods of tracking who has used computers and the success of their work.
111. The co-ordinator has a good understanding of the strengths of the school's provision and manages the subject well. She has effectively arranged good training for teachers to increase their knowledge, skills and confidence. This has been successful in enabling teachers to plan lessons more thoroughly and to use their skills in all parts of the curriculum, contributing positively to pupils' learning.

MUSIC

112. Pupils achieve above average standards by the time they leave the school, maintaining the good standards identified in the last report. Although no music lessons in Years 1 and 2 were seen, the good quality of the pupils' work and the school's provision were clearly seen in the many music opportunities during the week. Pupils' singing in assemblies, for example, was tuneful and enthusiastic and pupils knew the words well. They showed evident enjoyment when joining in with appropriate actions to the songs. The very positive atmosphere in the school ensures that all pupils are involved and feel valued, contributing effectively to their good learning.
113. All pupils gave high quality performances in the Singing Together Celebration. This regularly gives all pupils throughout the school very good opportunities to perform for each other and emphasises the school's motto that 'Everyone is special'. Year 2 pupils, for example, have good control of their voices and respond sensitively to the pupil 'conductors' who give instructions for raising and lowering the volume. Pupils accompany themselves with simple percussion parts, played rhythmically. Other pupils confidently perform pieces using a range of hand-bells. All pupils confidently sing two part songs together.
114. There are good opportunities for pupils to listen to music, for example, when entering and leaving the hall. The teachers are careful to draw pupils' attention to the music and to pose questions to help them to think about what they are hearing. Pupils listen carefully and often recall the pieces well in later discussions.
115. The school has made good use of national guidance for the subject and is amending this appropriately to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. It has chosen to use the skills of a specialist music teacher to teach the core of the curriculum throughout the school. This is effective in ensuring that pupils' skills are carefully developed over time. In addition, teachers take their own music lessons to develop and reinforce pupils' learning. Many opportunities to sing are related to pupils' work in other subjects and develop their learning well. Extra-curricular activities such as the choir and hand-bell clubs extend pupils' experiences and their attainment. The co-ordinator monitors and reviews planning and has good plans to monitor teachers' use of the new materials the school has bought to extend the curriculum. Good use is made of visitors to the school to develop pupils' music experiences such as giving opportunities to learn African drumming and dance. The school makes many successful opportunities to allow pupils to perform for a wider public, for example as a choir.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

116. Pupils achieve standards that are broadly average by the end of Year 2. This remains the same as at the time of the last inspection. Support by the headteacher, who is the present co-ordinator, and visiting specialists ensures teachers improve their subject expertise and confidence in teaching physical education. This results in pupils' sound progress and good attitudes to the subject.
117. Pupils enjoy their lessons and try hard to improve their performances. They extend their control and co-ordination through working with a partner and practising movements and balance. Year 1 pupils reproduce and explore dance movements well when listening to a familiar sung poem and begin to mimic their partner's actions. They skip and run safely using space in the hall well. Year 2 pupils extend their skills of throwing and catching successfully and work well in small teams. They begin to demonstrate and evaluate activities. They know the importance of warming up before an activity and the benefit to their health.

118. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with good teaching by the visiting specialist. Teachers explain clearly what pupils are to learn at the beginning of lessons, often making further effective references to it during lessons. This helps pupils to focus on improving their learning. Teachers use warm-up sessions well so pupils practise a range of movements while warming up muscles and increasing exercise. Quiet but firm instructions ensure pupils listen carefully and know what is expected of them. All the adults in the lessons work well together and support pupils effectively, providing good role models for pupils. When Year 2 pupils work with pupils from a local special school, very good support for pupils with special educational needs and group activities enable them to develop good team spirit. High expectations of work and behaviour extend pupils' enthusiasm for physical education and promote good behaviour. Teachers provide some opportunities for pupils to demonstrate activities to one another and evaluate each other's work, but pupils are less proficient at this aspect because opportunities are limited.
119. Pupils benefit from a wide range of activities outside their lessons that consolidate or extend their physical education skills well. Organised lunchtime activities, such as skipping, ball games or hoops, encourage pupils to exercise. Visits by players from Stoke City football club and the dance club contribute to the provision for physical education. Swimming and sponsored skipping during the personal, social and health education week extend pupils' skills and help to make them aware of the importance of exercise for health. Displays promote physical education and help to raise its profile in school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

120. Standards for children aged seven fully meet those required by the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Since the previous inspection, teachers have improved opportunities for pupils to learn about other religions, including Islam and Judaism, as well as Christianity. As a result, a strength of learning now is that pupils clearly respect different religious beliefs. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, show good achievement.
121. In both year groups all pupils, including those with special educational needs, show very good attitudes towards religious education. This is because teachers make the subject interesting. For example, they tell Bible stories in a lively way, making good links with pupils' own experiences. Year 2 pupils know that Moses prayed to God for food and water and wrote that, 'we can pray to God for people who don't feel well'. After hearing the Bible story Jesus told, *The Lost Coin*, Year 1 pupils discussed and showed on their faces the different feelings of the old lady, made more real to them because the teacher pretended to have lost a large, gold coin.
122. Teachers very effectively promote pupils' learning about religion by inviting visitors in to school to share their knowledge with them. For example, in a very good lesson, a mother talked to Year 2 pupils about Islamic beliefs and customs. They responded with great curiosity and sensitivity to things that they found interesting. They asked very thoughtful questions such as, 'Don't you know what Allah looks like?' and expressed wonder at the answer. After time for thought, another pupil asked, 'Do you believe that Allah made man in his own image?' When told that Muslims believe that everyone is special and equal, pupils immediately made a comparison. 'But so do we!' they cried, a very successful reflection of the school's motto. They clearly understand that the Koran and the Bible are similar as they are very special books. They know that Christians worship in a church and Muslims worship in a mosque. They have a sound understanding of the main Christian festivals such as Christmas and enjoy learning about festivals from other religions, for instance Diwali.
123. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and provide very good role models. For example, the very good methods and sensitive questions the teacher used to guide the discussion about Islam, with resources such as large photos and a

Koran stand, fully involved all pupils and effectively clarified their understanding. Teachers often share their own ideas of what is of value or concern to them to help pupils explore issues such as caring for others. They carefully plan lessons together in year groups to take account of pupils' knowledge and experiences. They clearly tell pupils what they are going to learn at the start of lessons and check at the end to find out what progress pupils have made.

124. The subject co-ordinator has a good understanding of her responsibilities. She is monitoring planning to ensure coverage of the syllabus and is starting to monitor the standards of pupils' work. This has identified that Year 1 teachers too often ask pupils to record their work by retelling a story and drawing a picture. Pupils rarely respond to the meanings of stories in wider ways, such as art, different types of writing, drama, movement and music. The close links with the local community and church contribute very effectively to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The good acts of collective worship also reinforce and contribute to pupils' learning in religious education. For instance, Year 1 pupils wanted to finish writing in class and at home the story of *The Lost Sheep* that they had heard in assembly.