

INSPECTION REPORT

**GAINSBOROUGH HILLCREST COMMUNITY
INFANT & NURSERY SCHOOL**

Gainsborough

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 120490

Headteacher: Mrs J E McDonald

Reporting inspector: Mrs L P A Clark
25431

Dates of inspection: 1 – 3 October 2001

Inspection number: 207297

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Nursery
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Heapham Road Gainsborough Lincolnshire
Postcode:	DN21 1SW
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J O'Connor
Date of previous inspection:	5 October 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
25431	Lesley Clark	Registered inspector	Mathematics Design technology Music Foundation stage	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9160	Keith Baker	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for it's pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents and carers?
14591	Richard Perkin	Team inspector	English Art Physical education Religious education	How well are pupils taught?
19117	Margaret Handsley	Team inspector	Science Information & communication technology Geography History Equal opportunities Special educational needs	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

Gainsborough Hillcrest Community Infant School is smaller than average with 136 pupils on roll aged four to seven and 52 children who attend the nursery part-time. The school is situated among extensive local authority housing estates. The school serves a local community with increasing signs of social deprivation including a high proportion of families under the care of social services. The number of adults with higher education qualifications is very low. Forty per cent of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average. An unusually high proportion of pupils enter and leave school at times other than the usual: 17 per cent last year, particularly affecting Year 2. The school takes in pupils who have been excluded from elsewhere, many of them with behavioural difficulties. Thirty six per cent of pupils have special educational needs, which is above average, and the proportion of pupils who have statements of special needs is also above average nationally. These proportions are much higher than at the time of the last inspection. No pupils come from ethnic minorities and there are no pupils learning English as an additional language. Attainment on entry to the school, both into the nursery and on transfer from other schools, is well below average. Many children have a very limited vocabulary and ways of expressing themselves when they start school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a rapidly improving and effective school in which pupils, while attaining average standards achieve very well and those with special educational needs make very good progress. Teaching is good and the school is very well led and managed. The school motto to 'Aim high and achieve' is clearly reflected in its work. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils of all abilities achieve very well.
- The school takes good care of its pupils.
- There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- The quality of teaching is good and many lessons in English and mathematics are very good.
- The school assesses and monitors pupils' work and progress very well.
- The leadership and management by the headteacher and key staff are very effective and the governing body gives very good support.
- The school has very positive links with parents.

What could be improved

- Standards of speaking and listening throughout the school.
- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT).
- The timetabling of lessons so that time, resources and accommodation are used to best effect.
- Levels of attendance.

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 1998 when the present headteacher had been acting headteacher for 5 weeks. Since then, the school has improved a good deal. Standards are much better than they were then, in spite of the far higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs; in particular, reading, which was a weakness three years ago, has improved. The quality of teaching and of pupils' learning is now good overall. This is an improvement since the last inspection where there was some unsatisfactory teaching and a much smaller proportion of very good teaching. The quality of indoor and outdoor resources in the nursery has improved considerably and is now very good indeed. The assessment of pupils' progress is a considerable strength as is the monitoring and evaluating of teaching and learning. The leadership and management of the school have strengthened and are now very good. Standards in ICT, however, remain below average though they are improving steadily with the new resources in the recently developed computer suite. Standards in music remain below average and pupils are only just beginning to follow a planned programme of work in the subject.

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
	1998	1999	2000	2000
Reading	E	E	E	E
Writing	D	E	D	C
Mathematics	C	C	E	D

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

The school identified boys' underachievement as being the main factor affecting overall performance in national tests. As a result of specialist additional help given to boys, particularly in reading, and a close involvement with parents who come in each week to share reading, numeracy or ICT with their children, standards have risen. Although the results for 2001 are not fully available, the school's scores improved on the previous year's by 17 per cent in reading; they remained similar in writing and in mathematics 25 per cent of pupils exceeded national expectations. Inspection judgements are that pupils in the present Year 2 class are likely to attain average standards in English, including literacy, and mathematics, including numeracy, and science by the age of seven. Pupils achieve very well in reading, writing, mathematics and science, for the attainment of most of the pupils is well below average when they begin school. The school has set itself challenging targets, which it is on course to meet. The trend in the school's results is upwards.

Standards in speaking and listening by the age of seven are below average and although pupils achieve well overall many pupils cannot explain what they mean sufficiently clearly. Although very many pupils enter school with limited vocabulary, not enough is done at an early enough stage to develop their skills in language and communication and throughout the school pupils do not learn or use a wide enough spoken vocabulary. Children make good progress in their personal, social, emotional and physical development in the nursery and satisfactory progress in developing skills in using language and number. Children achieve well in all their areas of learning in the reception classes and by the age of six standards are below rather than well below the standard expected of their age. Standards in ICT for seven-year-olds are below average as pupils are only just beginning to learn the basic skills. Standards in all other subjects are broadly average apart from in music where they are below average.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good; pupils enjoy coming to school and are interested in their lessons. There is a small number of pupils who find it hard to concentrate for very long.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good; pupils behave well and respond positively to their teacher's praise and encouragement of good behaviour. They are polite and helpful and abide by the school's rules. Occasionally play becomes over-boisterous.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory; relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers are warm and friendly. Pupils work independently in lessons but have limited opportunities to show initiative around the school and in their learning.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory; attendance in the 1999/00 academic year was well below average and the rate of unauthorised absence at the school was above average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and of pupils' learning is good overall. It is satisfactory in the nursery and, apart from areas of the curriculum relating to children's personal, social, emotional and physical development, all areas of learning are well taught. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in the reception classes except for the teaching of early literacy and numeracy skills, which is good. Teaching is good in Years 1 and 2 with some very good teaching in all three classes, particularly in English and mathematics. Literacy and numeracy are very well taught and teachers are particularly skilled at developing the basic skills of reading, writing and number. The school meets the needs of its pupils well. Resources and support staff are used very well, in all classes, to help pupils to learn. Specialist teaching in reading is very good and has a significant impact on the standards pupils, particularly boys, reach. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good assistance, which helps them to learn as well as others. Teachers manage pupils well and have high expectations, particularly in Years 1 and 2. Sometimes, in lessons which are too long, the pace of working slows and pupils lose concentration. Opportunities are not always used to the full to promote pupils' independent working or to develop their speaking and listening skills.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory; a curriculum that meets statutory requirements is enhanced by very effective strategies for teaching the skills of literacy and numeracy. It is well planned for each subject. However, the timetabling arrangements limit the opportunities for pupils to use some accommodation and resources throughout the day and this has a detrimental effect on subjects such as ICT.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good; the very good provision for pupils with special educational needs enables them to achieve very successfully.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good; provision for pupils' social and moral development is very good and underpins the work of the school. Taking turns and sharing form an important part in lessons and at lunchtimes games are used very well to reinforce what pupils learn in school. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory though opportunities are missed to develop these in other subjects.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good; pupils are taken care of well and there are good procedures to monitor their personal development. Pupils are given very good support and guidance academically and their progress is very closely monitored so they receive the teaching and support to enable them to succeed. The procedures for monitoring attendance are satisfactory. More could be done to help parents understand how important it is for their children to attend school regularly.
Partnership with parents	There are very good links with parents who are supportive of the school and all its work. They think highly of the headteacher and the staff and value the education given to their children. The school finds ways to involve parents in their children's learning and parents enjoy working alongside their children in mathematical and reading activities. There are also very good links with parents of pupils with special educational needs. The school gives good information to parents about what their children are learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good; the school is very well led and managed by the headteacher, key staff and governing body. The school understands its strengths and weaknesses very well and has taken very effective action to raise standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good; the supportive governing body carries out its duties very effectively. It is very well organised and regularly monitors the efficiency of the school in terms of what pupils are taught, the resources and the building.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good; the headteacher and subject co-ordinators monitor teaching and learning in their subjects very well and use the information to help raise standards of attainment, notably in English and mathematics.
The strategic use of resources	Good; financial planning is good and the school uses most of its resources very well. The computers are under-used at present because of timetabling arrangements. Educational decisions are firmly linked to the best value in terms of money.

The school has a well-qualified teaching staff, ably assisted by support staff who give very good assistance to pupils individually and in groups. The accommodation is good and the provision for outdoor play is very good indeed both for nursery and other pupils to promote imaginative play.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • The school expects their children to work hard and to achieve their best. • The teaching is good and their children make good progress. • The school works closely with parents, who know how their children are getting on and feel they can ask questions. • They think this is a good school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wider range of activities outside lessons.

A very small proportion of parents responded to the questionnaire. Their views were wholeheartedly positive, as were the views of those parents the inspection team talked to in the pre-inspection meeting and during the inspection itself. The team agrees with parents that this is a good school. The range of extra-curricular activities is similar to other infant schools. The additional lunchtime activities, however, such as the ICT and games clubs, are better than in many infant schools.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- 1 Overall standards by the time pupils leave the school are broadly in line with the national average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. This indicates very good levels of achievement because most pupils enter the school with well below average attainment. The nature of the school's intake has changed since the last inspection. There is a much larger proportion of pupils with special educational needs and a higher turnover of pupils who join and leave the school at times other than the usual. This particularly affected last year's Year 2. These factors are reflected in recent test results which, in 2000, indicated that pupils attained well below average standards in reading and mathematics and below average standards nationally in writing. Compared to similar schools, results were close to average in writing, below similar schools in mathematics and well below in reading. Recent initiatives, however, have had a considerable impact on pupils' performance, resulting in much better levels of attainment, particularly in reading, numeracy and in writing. This is reflected in the 2001 results. The very good provision for pupils with special educational needs and for those pupils who have behavioural difficulties enables them to achieve as well as other pupils and contributes to better standards.

- 2 Standards in literacy have improved since the last inspection, when they were judged to be below average. Though standards in writing were judged to be above average, this was not reflected in the 1998 results. Standards in reading have improved dramatically as a result of the improved quality and quantity of books, effective teaching of library and information gathering skills and very good teaching of different types of reading. The very effective strategy for teaching literacy has also played a large part in this improvement. From accurate assessments of pupils' achievements and attainments, the school has very successfully targeted pupils' individual literacy needs, in particular tackling boys' underachievement in reading. As a result, standards overall have risen significantly. Pupils' standards in writing at the age of seven are at the levels expected of their age largely because of the school's recent emphasis on reading as a priority, which has meant less specific targeting of writing. Pupils write appropriately for a range of audiences and purposes at a reasonable length. However, opportunities for more able pupils to write at greater length are infrequent. ICT is not used as well as it should be to help pupils to compose and edit their writing.

- 3 Standards in speaking and listening are below average though they improve well during pupils' time in school; pupils have a limited vocabulary and younger pupils rarely speak in sentences. Although pupils achieve well, and respond well to questions, not enough is done at an early enough stage to develop their skills in language and communication or, when they are older, to make more formal presentations to the rest of the class or to discuss together in pairs or small groups.

- 4 Standards in mathematics are broadly average, as reported in the last inspection, but many aspects have improved since then largely as a result of the school's use of the national strategy for numeracy. Very good assessment procedures have highlighted areas of comparative weakness. Differences between the attainment of boys and that of girls are carefully monitored so that suitable steps are taken to strengthen pupils' performance in tests. Pupils enter school with very low understanding of number, shape and space and they achieve very well throughout their time in school.

- 5 Children enter the nursery with very limited skills in all areas of their learning. Teaching and learning in the nursery concentrates on promoting children's personal, social, emotional and physical development. Children do not achieve as well as they should in acquiring spoken vocabulary at this stage. Children in the reception classes receive a good grounding in the early skills of literacy and numeracy and, although standards are generally below those expected of six-year-olds at the end of the year, children achieve at a good rate. Pupils achieve very well in both English and mathematics by the age of seven largely because of the very good teaching of basic skills of literacy and numeracy in Years 1 and 2. Pupils are keen to learn and are interested in their lessons. In these classes, teachers employ imaginative methods within the recommended framework to teach literacy and numeracy, often using puppets, games or imaginative resources to help pupils to learn in different ways.
- 6 The school has found ways to involve parents successfully in the education of their children. The family literacy scheme is very well supported and contributes well to the quality of parental support for their children's progress. Parents regularly join their children in class for shared literacy, numeracy and ICT sessions and through these borrow books and numeracy resources from school to help their children at home. This too helps pupils to achieve very well.
- 7 In science, teacher assessments in 2000 indicated that a higher proportion of pupils attained the standard expected of seven-year-olds than nationally and the proportion of those attaining higher standards was similar to the national average. Strengths were in pupils' scientific knowledge; their attainment was much lower in the investigative and experimental side of science. Pupils in the present Year 2 class attain standards that are likely to be in line with those expected for their age at this early stage in the school year. This indicates significant improvement in attainment since the last inspection and very good achievement for all pupils.
- 8 Standards in ICT are below average and pupils do not achieve as well as they should because current timetabling arrangements do not make full use of the available resources. Standards in art and design, design and technology, geography, history, religious and physical education are broadly average and pupils have achieved very well by the time they leave this school. Standards in music are below average and although pupils have learnt a reasonable number of songs their understanding of other aspects of music is fairly limited due to the lack, until very recently, of a planned programme of work.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 9 The attitudes, values and personal development of the pupils are good, thus maintaining the findings recorded at the last inspection. Parents report that their children enjoy coming to school and this is clearly so. The close relationships existing within the school and its supportive ethos promote a good teaching and learning environment.
- 10 A positive start is made in made in developing the right attitudes to work and play in the nursery and reception classes. Many of the children lack confidence when they join the school but even the youngest children with only a week or two's attendance soon join in the activities available and adjust to the routines. Initially, teachers rightly place emphasis on the development of the children's behavioural and personal and social skills. Thus, the children quickly become more self-disciplined. They make good progress in learning the importance of sharing, taking turns and working

harmoniously with others, and these skills are put to good effect in the well-equipped playground. Children learn to listen and to follow instructions; a good example was the constructive way in which the children in a reception class responded to their teacher's assessment of their ability in physical education. Concentration levels can be a problem at first but the children improve as they progress through the nursery and reception classes.

- 11 Attitudes in Years 1 and 2 are good. By this stage, the pupils are showing ready interest in their lessons. The quality of teachers' lesson planning is invariably good and pupils respond by listening carefully to instructions and persevering with their tasks. Most are eager to answer questions. When their energy is directed by good teaching, they sustain motivation and concentrate well; some good examples of this were observed in literacy and numeracy lessons, and the concentration shown by some Year 1 and 2 pupils in a dance lesson was quite exceptional. Just occasionally, a few pupils become too easily distracted and do not apply themselves to their work and therefore require careful management from the teacher.
- 12 The generally good standard of behaviour noted at the last inspection has been maintained and continues to have a significant effect on learning. Several children arrive at the nursery and school with emotional or behavioural difficulties, but teaching and support staff manage the pupils very well and systems of rewards are defined and followed. As a result, class work throughout the school proceeds for the most part in a calm and orderly way. Pupils are polite and helpful and stick to the school's rules. They move around the premises sensibly and assemble very quietly. They are justly proud of their school and respect its environment and equipment. No evidence of bullying or other serious anti-social behaviour was observed during the inspection. There have been no exclusions in the latest reporting period.
- 13 Relationships between adults and pupils and between the pupils themselves are good. In the nursery and reception classes, the children learn how to develop the social skills to work alongside other children and adults. Most pupils in the school want to please their teachers and the mutual respect between them does much to enhance the quality of work and the progress made. During play time and lunchtime, the pupils are good-natured and play happily together. Just one or two instances were observed of boys becoming rather aggressive and their play over boisterous, but the staff took prompt action to stop this becoming out of hand. Pupils show consideration for others. They have a genuine concern for those less fortunate than themselves and have a positive and supportive interaction with the children with special needs.
- 14 Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. In the nursery and reception classes, the teaching and the stimulating range of activities provided help extend the children's natural curiosity, confidence and self-esteem. They learn how to develop the social skills to work alongside other children and adults. As they get older, pupils grow in confidence and those in Years 1 and 2 are able to work independently when not directly supervised by the teacher. Most pupils respond readily to requests to take some responsibility for the day to day running of the school, such as classroom duties, and they participate eagerly in assemblies. However, opportunities overall for taking initiative and showing responsibility are limited.
- 15 Attendance is unsatisfactory. The last inspection reported that the level of attendance was in line with the national average. However, in the last two years, the attendance rate has fallen well below the national average. Unauthorised absence is also worse than the national average. Many pupils come from socially disadvantaged

backgrounds, several suffer from ill health. For these children, the impact of long or frequent periods of absence clearly has a detrimental effect on their progress. A significant part of the unauthorised absence can be explained by high level of pupil turnover at the school; often several days elapse before the school discovers it has not been notified that the pupil is now attending another school. Virtually all pupils arrive for school on time and lessons start promptly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

- 16 The quality of teaching and learning is good overall; it is often very good for pupils in Years 1 and 2. The quality of teaching has a significant impact on pupils' progress. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching in one in every five lessons observed was very good and it was good or better in nearly two-thirds of the lessons seen. This marks a significant improvement since the last inspection when teaching in more than one lesson in ten was deemed to be unsatisfactory. The proportion of good and very good teaching is also much higher now. The teaching of English, particularly reading, and mathematics is very good and literacy and numeracy are very well taught across the curriculum. The teaching of oral communication skills is less effective and this sometimes affects pupils' learning in other subjects. Science is well taught, as are art and design and physical education. There was insufficient evidence to judge the quality of teaching in design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology, and religious education. Teaching is satisfactory in music. The inspection judgement confirms the parents' positive views of the teaching.
- 17 Teaching in the nursery is satisfactory and settles children into the routines of school well. Much of the planning is based on the use of very good resources and consequently the teaching of personal, emotional, social and physical development is good. An area to improve is the teaching of basic vocabulary from the moment children enter school in order to help them communicate more effectively. In the reception classes, teaching is satisfactory overall with good teaching of early literacy and numeracy skills. The very good quality support given by the nursery nurse and classroom assistants in these classes helps children, including those with special educational needs, to achieve well in all aspects of their learning.
- 18 A major strength of the teaching lies in its effectiveness in teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy; in particular, reading skills are taught very well. Not only does this result in pupils' confident use of such strategies but it also positively affects their attitudes to reading, writing and mathematics. Even pupils whose reading is not strong are developing an enjoyment of books and a confidence in approaching them. Such confidence and enjoyment are very well promoted by the use of small withdrawal groups for sessions on Our Way of Learning (OWL), the school's way of helping pupils who are having difficulties with reading. These groups are very well led by well-trained classroom support assistants and provide much needed motivation for pupils, particularly lower achieving boys. They are making a strong impact on these pupils' attainment and attitudes. Teachers use their classroom support assistants very effectively and pupils benefit from their skills in the classroom as well as in withdrawal groups. The school's very effective implementation of the national literacy and numeracy strategies has a similar positive effect. The teaching of basic skills is effectively supported by classroom displays and by the provision of good quality books attractively and accessibly displayed; classrooms are lively and stimulating. Spoken communication skills are less well developed, although teachers are good at allowing pupils time to think through their responses; however, the pupils' limitations in vocabulary and lack of confidence in expressing themselves at length sometimes

inhibit their learning in a number of subjects. Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to plan what they are going to say, either individually or in pairs, before they say it. There are too few opportunities for pupils to speak in formal situations.

- 19 The quality of teachers' planning is good. Its major strength lies in the way it uses assessments to match work very effectively to pupils' levels of understanding. Consequently, pupils with special educational needs undertake activities in most lessons that are challenging but manageable; these pupils (and others) are often given very good support from well trained and very capable support staff. The planning takes full account of individual education plans when appropriate. Teachers know pupils' needs very well so that they can pitch questions to maintain involvement and promote good behaviour, thus enabling the pupils to make very good progress. Teachers' planning also caters effectively for the needs of more able pupils, who are provided with stimulating and challenging tasks that build on their previous learning and develop it well.
- 20 Teachers often use stimulating approaches that catch and maintain pupils' interest very well: 'Today we're going to go sentence mad,' said one teacher and the pupils immediately responded with delight. Teachers are not afraid to make learning fun and pupils consequently enjoy their learning where this happens. Teachers have a well-developed range of strategies for ensuring that pupils, including those with challenging behaviour and low levels of concentration, pay attention, work hard and achieve. In the most effective lessons, the teachers' very good class management, based on very constructive relationships, ensures that pupils are productive and creative for the whole of the lesson. The levels of concentration seen in a dance lesson, for example, were extremely high and very well sustained even by those pupils who normally find it difficult to pay attention for more than a few minutes. This happened because the teacher persuaded the class that they were carrying an invisible ball that they must not drop at any cost – pupils 'watched' the invisible ball throughout their movement sequence and, even when watching other pupils' performances, carefully kept their grip on the ball.
- 21 Lessons usually have a good pace although some lessons are allocated more time than the pupils can realistically cope with; in these long sessions, pupils' attention flags and the pace of learning drops. Teachers assess pupils' work constructively and keep very thorough records of their achievements. They mark pupils' written work thoroughly, usually adding some praise alongside a point for development inside a bubble; these targets are taken seriously by the pupils. Homework is used well to promote pupils' learning in reading, spelling, mathematics and science as well as occasionally in other subjects.

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

- 22 The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that meets statutory requirements. The curriculum for children in the nursery and reception classes provides satisfactorily for each area of learning. There are strengths in the provision for literacy and numeracy, long-term and medium-term planning, links between subjects and the very good provision made for pupils with special educational needs. The provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is good. However, there is a relative weakness in the way the lessons are timetabled through the week, which does not make the most effective use of the time available for each subject.

The school has maintained the strengths noted at the last inspection and has brought about further improvements in response to the last report.

- 23 The school has put into place good quality policies and schemes of work for all subjects. The long-term and medium-term planning allows for a rich and varied curriculum to be taught. Links between subjects are identified which reinforce learning. A good example of this is the use of design and technology in history, when pupils studying the Second World War designed containers for their gas masks. The use of drama in science helps pupils to understand, for example, the concept of insulation when making ear protectors. However, both writing and information and communication technology tend to be underused in other subjects. The provision for information and communication technology has improved significantly since the last inspection. In all other subjects the provision has improved and ranges from very good in literacy and numeracy to at least satisfactory in all other subjects except music, which still has some way to go.
- 24 The provision for personal, social and health education is good. Teachers plan good quality lessons that promote good relationships and develop social awareness, through, for example, creating a 'promise tree' with each child making a commitment to developing an aspect of their behaviour. Pupils learn about what they need to remain healthy. They learn about the importance of sharing and being friends within a community as part of their citizenship education.
- 25 The quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. All aspects of the provision are very effectively organised and co-ordinated, with very good support from outside agencies, such as the educational psychologist. The policy for special educational needs, the statements of need for pupils and the individual education plans provide the basis for the high quality of this area of the school's work.
- 26 Teachers are very much aware of equality of opportunity. They make sure boys and girls have equivalent experiences and that pupils with special educational needs have the help they require to make good progress in their learning. Higher attaining pupils are also provided for well.
- 27 A satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities is provided with a good range of lunchtime clubs in games, sport and information and communication technology. These are valuable in promoting the all-round development of pupils in personal and social skills.
- 28 The school encourages visitors to enrich pupils' experience. The local vicar is a frequent visitor and regularly takes assemblies. A visiting specialist held a day of drama based on the experiences of evacuees in the Second World War. This was very enjoyable as well as serving to enrich pupils' knowledge and understanding in history. Other visitors include local people, such as a grandfather who came to show pupils' his war medals. The school arranges visits when possible, such as to Gainsborough Old Hall, which widen pupils' experience. Links with the nearby junior school are effective in enabling a smooth transfer.
- 29 The provision for spiritual and cultural education is satisfactory, whilst provision for moral and social development, a key feature of the school's work, is good. The daily assembly provides opportunity for prayer but little opportunity for reflection. It provides an effective forum for moral and social education, through stories such as 'The Enormous Turnip', for example. The school has a clear code of conduct that enables

pupils to understand the difference between right and wrong and to develop an awareness of personal responsibility and citizenship. Pupils take part in events such as Book Week to raise money for charity, taking some responsibility for others. Pupils' experience in subjects such as English, history, art and religious education help them appreciate the cultural aspects of society in Britain. The school's curriculum planning reflects ethnic diversity so that pupils may come to appreciate the customs and traditions of other cultures, such as when learning about the Chinese New Year. In their religious education, pupils learn about the values and beliefs of other Faith groups. However, the nature of the surrounding area means pupils have few opportunities to meet people of other faiths or to visit their places of worship.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 30 The previous inspection reported that the care and welfare of the pupils was sound but that some policies and procedures were not adequately documented. Since then the school has improved its provision, which is now good. The caring environment and concern for the well being of all the pupils are a tangible strength of the school and appreciated much by the parents. The school is therefore living up to its aim of regarding everybody as special and important. This undoubtedly has a positive effect on pupils' attitudes, progress and attainment.
- 31 Procedures for child protection, and for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pupils, are now documented extensively. They are of good quality and reviewed regularly. Considerable attention is devoted to child protection and staff are fully aware of the procedures to be followed. The head teacher is the person designated for child protection and is awaiting the opportunity to undergo some required specialist training provided by the local authority. The school has put procedures in place to meet the requirements of health and safety regulations. Safety inspections of the site are carried out but the school has yet to adopt a regular cycle of risk assessments covering all aspects of its activity. Although a formal scheme of work for teaching personal, social and health education has yet to be introduced, the provision in this area of work is good.
- 32 Procedures for monitoring and improving behaviour are good. The school insists that pupils keep to the rules and has high expectations of pupils from the early years onwards. The positive behaviour policy places a strong emphasis on encouragement and rewards and is implemented consistently both in and out of the classroom. The school has also adopted a strong anti-bullying policy, which makes it clear that any form of oppressive or anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated. Governors and staff review the policy annually. However, the school is realistic enough to know that bullying might occur from time to time and has laid down clear procedures to deal with any such cases. Parents are kept closely informed and consulted on the level of conduct expected of their children. They are confident in approaching the school over any behaviour issues and they widely approve of the high standards being maintained.
- 33 Procedures for monitoring and promoting high attendance are satisfactory. Attendance registers are maintained accurately and meet the regulations. The importance of their children maintaining a high level of attendance is made plain to parents who for the most part are very co-operative about providing information about absences. All absences are followed up but not necessarily on the first day of absence, and this is a factor in the relatively high level of unauthorised absence. An electronic attendance system was introduced recently and this should be used to

enable the monitoring and analysis of attendance of individuals and groups of pupils to become more systematic and regular.

- 34 Procedures for monitoring and assessing pupils' academic progress and performance across the curriculum are very good. This represents a good improvement on the last inspection, which found that assessment in subjects other than English, mathematics and science was inadequate. Teachers know individual pupils well and their strengths and weaknesses, and their recording is good. Personal records for each child in all subjects are kept in folders, which collate their assessment achievements. The nursery has its own individual file system. Methods of assessing pupils' attainment on entry to the school are firmly established in the reception classes and the progress the children make is assessed carefully. In literacy, a new system for assessment has been adopted that adheres to a strict timetable for oral and written assessments. The consistent use of assessment information is very good and in both literacy and numeracy it is used effectively to track the progress of pupils. Good analysis of assessment records also leads to the setting each term of challenging targets for learning, both for whole age groups and individual pupils.
- 35 Procedures for monitoring and supporting the pupils' personal development are good. From the nursery onwards, class teachers monitor the personal development of pupils and keep notes of their achievements, behaviour and social development. Reference is also frequently made to pupils' personal development in their annual progress reports to parents.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 36 The previous inspection noted that parents had very few concerns about the school and this continues to be the case. The response by parents to the inspection questionnaire was small, but taken together with the school's own survey of parents' views, the level of satisfaction with the work of the school is clearly high. Parents are pleased particularly with the hard work expected of their children, the progress they make and the quality of the teaching.
- 37 Overall, effective links with parents have been formed, enabling them to play an active part in their children's education. The quality of communication with parents is good. Formal documents such as the prospectus and governors' annual report are clear and informative. The school newsletter - Hillcrest Headlines - keeps parents up to date with events and developments. Parents' views are sought regularly by way of surveys and through meetings with the head teacher. Meetings with new parents are held annually in the nursery and home visits were introduced last year. These are proving to be an excellent foundation for communicating with parents as well as establishing important information about the child. The targets set each term for the pupils in numeracy and literacy are shared with parents. The pupils' progress reports, issued annually, provide good information on what the children have achieved as well as giving some useful pointers on what parents can do to help their children. Parents with any concerns about their children find the head teacher and class teachers friendly and approachable.
- 38 Parents' involvement with the work of the school is regarded as very important both to the child and the school. Parents are represented well on the governing body, where they make a strong contribution. A few parents provide regular assistance in the school. A small but very committed group of parents have re-activated the Friends of Hillcrest School. Money is being raised to help with the cost of swimming lessons and

equipment such as computers. The scheme to involve families in literacy is in its third year and is well supported. In addition, some parents regularly join their children in class for shared literacy, numeracy and computer sessions. Parents are consulted regularly about how the school can be improved. All these initiatives are drawing parents closer to the school and are having a good impact.

- 39 The contribution of parents to children's learning at home and at school is generally good although the high turnover of pupils makes this problematic in several families. An appropriate home-school agreement is in place and a booklet has been distributed to parents on how to help their children at home. A positive start is made in the nursery where parents are encouraged to read with their children by taking story books home, and this practice continues throughout the school. Pupils are sometimes given homework to support their lessons and teachers find this a convenient way of advising parents on the sort of topics which will shortly be studied by their children, especially in literacy, numeracy and science.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 40 The leadership and management of the school are very good, reflecting very good improvement since the last inspection, when the present headteacher had been acting headteacher for only five weeks. Many new initiatives then rapidly put into place have had time to flourish and the school is clearly benefiting from that sound basis for action.
- 41 The quality of leadership provided by the headteacher and key staff is very good. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses very well and through a well thought out programme of monitoring and evaluation develop a comprehensive and effective school improvement plan. The school has achieved a great deal in a short time and the improvements are striking since the last inspection. The quality of support given by the governing body is also very good and governors are much more fully involved than at the time of the last inspection. The governors work in partnership with the headteacher and staff with responsibilities. There is a strong commitment to raising standards and to raising the profile of the school within the local community. In these, it has been very successful.
- 42 The main tools the headteacher, staff and governors use are monitoring, evaluation and assessment. The school has a clear programme for this, which is planned in detail in the school improvement plan. The headteacher monitors lessons regularly and analyses results of tests and samples of pupils' work. Subject co-ordinators observe lessons as well as examining planning. Literacy and numeracy co-ordinators analyse work throughout the school as well as test results. The deputy headteacher co-ordinates these assessments. From these activities, strengths and weaknesses are accurately identified and clear strategies for future action are developed. (In this way, the senior management team has a very clear idea of general strengths and weaknesses within particular subject areas.) It was as a result of this that the school developed its successful strategies for teaching reading, for raising boys' achievement and for encouraging and making possible within school parental involvement with their children's learning.
- 43 There is a planned programme of monitoring visits by governors. Governors monitor the school twice a year, once to look at their assigned subject area and secondly to look at the fabric of the school. This is formally organised, with established procedures for reporting back. This information is then used in the school improvement plan to

determine future action. The huge improvements to the school grounds and highly imaginative development of the play areas for all children, including those in the nursery, arose from this process. This very well organised system also takes into account parents' views, culled from questionnaires and pupils' views, which are ascertained in personal, social, health and citizenship education lessons. The school is in its third year of a planned four-year programme of work. The impact on standards is monitored very closely by the leadership and management and is the prime force behind all the school's planning.

- 44 Financial management is good and is overseen very well by the governing body's finance committee. Day-to-day financial management is well run by an efficient administrator. The school uses new technology satisfactorily to support its work. Money from specific grants and for particular purposes is well spent and care is taken to apportion enough to train staff fully. This in turn improves the quality of teaching and of pupils' learning. The governing body monitors very carefully the effectiveness of the school's spending. When it was decided to put resources into the Our Way of Learning (OWL) scheme, the governors insisted on knowing if the number of hours spent would generate sufficient return in terms of pupils' achievement. They asked for tangible results, which they then examined before concluding that it was a very cost effective scheme for improving boys' reading. The leadership and management therefore have a very strong commitment to getting the best value from their income and in monitoring its usefulness in terms of pupils' performance and progress. The substantial sum of money held over for next year forms the basis of the next planned development of the school building to provide additional office and reception space as well as an area for staff and parents to meet.
- 45 The leadership and management are characterised by a comprehensive understanding of how decisions can interrelate. For example, when the school decided to purchase outside play equipment, this was linked to the school's policy to reduce bullying and to support an initiative to develop a healthy school. In these ways, decisions taken by the leadership and management have anticipated far-reaching consequences. The school's primary aim is to 'Aim high and achieve'. This motto and the new name for the school, Hillcrest, were adopted after the last inspection and reflect the positive and collegiate responsibility initiated by the present very good leadership and management of the school.
- 46 The school's systems are manageable whilst offering comprehensive information which can be accessed to improve the quality of teaching and learning. There are very good systems in place to cover staff absence and the employment of a part-time teacher to give key staff time to manage their areas of responsibility is particularly successful.
- 47 The school has made good improvement overall since the last inspection. It fulfils its statutory requirements. Achievement is very good and standards rise from below average to average by the age of seven. The teaching is good as are pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Financial planning is good and the school is very well run. The school therefore gives good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

48 In order to improve standards further the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- ◆ systematically develop pupils' speaking and listening skills by:
 - providing and reinforcing key vocabulary and opportunities to use it from the moment children start school;
 - when introducing lessons, provide tighter focus on the specialised language to be used and provide opportunities for pupils to use it;
 - provide more formal opportunities for pupils to use their speaking and listening skills;

- ◆ make better use of the computers in the classrooms and ICT suite in order to raise standards and develop the use of ICT in other subjects;

- ◆ improve the use of time in delivering the curriculum by:
 - changing timetable arrangements;
 - modifying the use of accommodation and learning resources throughout the day;
 - building in more opportunities for pupils to write in their own words, in subjects other than English;

- ◆ improve levels of attendance by:
 - monitoring and analysing attendance data more rigorously;
 - raising the profile of high attendance through communication with parents.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	35
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	22

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	8	15	12	0	0	0
Percentage	0	23	43	34	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)	26	138
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		50

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	5	41

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.9
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.7
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest available reporting year	2000	18	24	42

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	13	17
	Girls	15	21	21
	Total	24	34	38
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	57 (62)	81 (74)	90 (85)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	16	17
	Girls	20	21	24
	Total	33	37	41
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	79 (77)	88 (87)	98 (100)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	90
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)	6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23
Average class size	27.6

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	73

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
Total number of education support staff	2.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65
Number of pupils per FTE adult	8.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
	£
Total income	353110
Total expenditure	322038
Expenditure per pupil	1713
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	31072

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	1.4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	136
Number of questionnaires returned	11

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	82	18	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	73	27	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	60	40	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	73	0	0	0
The teaching is good.	73	27	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	64	36	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	36	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	82	18	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	64	36	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	45	55	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	64	36	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	18	55	27	0	0

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

49 Standards are well below average on entry to the nursery. Children achieve well in personal, social, emotional and physical development because of the very good level of resources for learning but on entry to the reception classes their attainment in language, communication, literacy, numeracy, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development is still well below average. In particular, children's speech is poor and many have difficulty communicating with words. A small number of children do not attend nursery regularly. Children achieve well in the reception classes though their attainment is below that typically expected in most areas that the young children study. Approximately 20 per cent of children join the school in the reception class. A small proportion of these have attended nursery or playgroup intermittently elsewhere. Strengths lie in the good teaching of early skills of literacy and numeracy in the reception classes. An area to improve is the teaching of basic vocabulary from the moment children enter school so that they learn and practise words and so become more effective communicators. Planning in the nursery tends to revolve around resources rather than teaching points.

Personal, social and emotional development

50 Children come eagerly to school. In the nursery, a well-established routine when children come in with their parents helps children to feel secure. Together they pick up the child's attractively presented name card, complete with animal picture, which they then match to the corresponding coat peg before posting it in the letterbox. By the end of the year, most children learn to recognise their names. A similar technique is used to help children choose their first activity and to take turns to have their mid-morning or afternoon snack. Because of their immaturity, children find this confusing to begin with and are a little muddled about what they have selected to do. Opportunities are missed to make these more social rather than functional occasions.

51 Many children have very immature skills in personal and social development when they enter the nursery. Some children are quite aggressive, growling, 'Bad' or 'Leave me' in response to another child and most are unused to doing anything for themselves. They are initially quite unresponsive and teachers have to work hard to get children to listen to them, using strategies such as 'Look at me' and speaking directly to the child's face to keep their attention. Children become settled and choose favourite activities, though they play mainly on their own, alongside others rather than with them. Many children find it hard to concentrate for more than a few minutes and the teacher and nursery nurse patiently help them to extend their concentration by talking to them and suggesting further possibilities. The good quality of teaching of this aspect in the nursery and the very good resources for learning help children to become more confident and begin to share resources with others, though much of this is by unspoken agreement.

52 Children achieve well. In the reception classes, their level of confidence is such that they begin to share and to work together with some independence. They join in assemblies well and behave as maturely as older pupils. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and good use of praise encourages children to say 'thank you'. Children show some independence at organising themselves to complete the activities specially designed for their group. For example, a group of lower attaining children elected to

find the treasure in the sand first before going on to build a wall for Humpty Dumpty to fall off. In discussion time, children think of kind things to say about each other. They tend, however, to repeat what the child before them says, stretching the teacher's ingenuity to get the children to suggest something other than 'sharing sweets'. Teachers help children to be positive in attitude towards each other, explaining that 'this makes other people like and value us.'

Communication, language and literacy

- 53 Children's achievement is good overall. In the nursery, children find it hard to communicate verbally, using gestures such as pulling and pointing to indicate what they want. Much of their play is silent and initially, when faced with a playhouse, children lack the skills for imaginative play, holding a telephone silently for a long time, for example. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. The teacher spends much time talking to children, trying to initiate conversations but does not give them the basic words to enable them to begin to communicate. Children are largely unresponsive to attempts at dialogue and do not understand how to talk about what they are doing. The nursery nurse talks to children effectively; repeating words and phrases quite naturally as she helps them to learn. Although both adopt a more structured approach to language later on in the year, many children have lost valuable time and when they enter the reception class they do not know words like 'short' in relation to length and most communicate in one-word answers or short phrases. Opportunities are missed therefore to develop speaking and listening skills early enough.
- 54 Early skills in literacy are well taught in both reception classes and teachers spend much time helping children to learn initial letter sounds, write their names and begin to read and write. At the start of the year, few children know the correct sounds for letters and become muddled with the different actions to help them distinguish one sound from another. Higher attaining children know how to handle a book, seek information from pictures and construct meaning. Others are very unsure. Teachers carefully prepare work for children of different levels of attainment; for instance, helping a higher attaining child who recognises that 'a' is a word as well as a sound and introducing lower attaining children to new vocabulary such as 'engine' for the front part of a train. As a result, children's communication, language and literacy improve steadily, though overall they attain below the standard typically expected of their age by the end of the year.
- 55 Routines are well established for the literacy lessons and children respond maturely as they move from whole class teaching to group work and independent activities smoothly. They receive very good assistance from classroom assistants. Teachers try to involve all children, so everyone has a turn, and sometimes lessons are lively and fun, particularly when puppets are used to help children to learn.

Mathematical development

- 56 Children's achievement is good overall as early numerical skills are well taught in the reception classes. Children have a well below average concept of number, shape and space when they first come to school. Much of their time in nursery is spent finding out through doing and the very good resources help children to learn satisfactorily in this way. Most have no knowledge of counting rhymes and songs when they come to school and they find it very hard to sit down and concentrate for very long. Through playing with sand and water, children find out, for example, that a small container of water will not fill a large bottle and they discover how to pour sand, with varying

degrees of patience. Because the planning, however, does not make explicit the vocabulary for children to learn and for staff to use, opportunities are missed to develop children's mathematical knowledge and understanding. Adults tend to act in an organising capacity rather than in teaching basic skills.

- 57 The quality of teaching is good in the reception classes and the early introduction to numeracy is effective in helping children to learn. They achieve well. The resources for learning are good and numbered socks on a washing line help children to visualise numbers as well as increase their dexterity as they peg them out. Their attainment is below average and most, at the start of the reception year, begin to know the sequence of numbers to twenty but very few recognise these when they are written down. Very few children are sure that four follows three. The good quality of teaching ensures that children with different levels of attainment are given suitably different work. The resources for learning are very imaginative and in a very good lesson the teacher really captured the children's attention by providing pirate hats so that children pretended to find buried treasure, which was in fact numbers, which they had to place in a certain order. Teachers have high expectations and expect, for example, children to thread a precise number of beads on a string following a pattern. Such lessons are lively and activities have an imaginative slant which makes them much more interesting for small children and enables them to work independently. Children receive very good quality support from classroom assistants who, for instance, help lower attaining children to select and glue in place the appropriate length of wool to match the picture.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

- 58 Children enter school with well below average levels of knowledge and understanding. They have little concept of time or of different places. They find the array of resources in the nursery absolutely fascinating. They are carefully supervised by the teacher and nursery nurse and begin to find out much to interest them about their world. Because of their limited language skills, however, it is very hard for many children to talk about what they know and understand and much of their talk is unrelated to what they do. For instance, they enjoyed tasting different foods but found it hard to articulate or to remember what they had done. The quality of teaching is satisfactory.
- 59 Children achieve well in the reception classes. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Through well-planned lessons, children discover that some toys float and some sink. Some, however, are very uncertain as to whether a toy car is able to sink or float and they respond 'yes' to both suggestions because of the teacher's intonation. Their level of understanding shows their inexperience. One thinks, for example, that a lolly stick is going to sink to the bottom 'because it's small'. A more able child, for example, tries to explain that 'a boat can't sink because of the thing on top'. Opportunities are missed to record children's responses. Teachers plan the use of time well to help children to concentrate fully with many opportunities for practical activities. Again however, children's attainment is affected by their limited vocabulary and is below average by the time they leave the reception classes.

Physical development

- 60 The extremely good resources for physical education in the nursery greatly benefit children's skills and development in this area. They achieve well. The large partially covered play area is invitingly laid out for children to ride large wheeled toys on imaginary roads, to scramble over grassy banks or through a tunnel or to climb into a

covered sand pit. The children get ample opportunity to use these facilities and are very well supervised by adults. Children are well co-ordinated and physically confident, steering cars with trailers round carefully. Adults spend much time trying to get children to play co-operatively; children tend to play separately, though occasionally they interact with others.

- 61 Reception children also benefit from the use of these very good resources and timetabled activities each week develop their physical capabilities. Children achieve well overall and in indoor physical education lessons in the hall attain standards only slightly below those expected of their age. They begin to find a space on their own although a few won't move away from their friends. Most jump and stop when told to but many find hopping difficult. Most are able to walk at different speeds and change direction but a small number find it hard not to run. They enjoy games and behave well. They learn to behave sensibly in response to their teacher's good class management and control. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall as the pace of lessons can be on the slow side.

Creative development

- 62 When children enter the nursery, they have had little experience of creative activities. Their attainment is well below average. The painting equipment fascinates many and they thoroughly enjoy seeing what happens when they mix, for example, red and yellow together. Most children do not know the names of colours and cannot distinguish, for instance, between blue and red. They begin to explore making marks on paper, swapping the brush from hand to hand. The resources for learning are very good and the nursery nurse helps children very well, reinforcing the names of colours and setting children off to search for orange paper, for example. Children's achievement is hampered by the difficulty they have in communicating what they want, demanding, for example, "chalk in here". With adult support, children learn how to roll out play dough to cut out shapes. Children's achievement is only satisfactory partly because there is no clear system in place to check that all children have the opportunity to spend enough time on this area of learning.
- 63 The quality of teaching in the reception classes is good for many aspects of creative development. By the time they begin Year 1, children have achieved well though their attainment is below that expected of their age. Some of the teaching is imaginative and children produced some very effective pictures rolling a marble through paint on to a piece of paper. The teacher used this very well to reinforce their mathematical understanding, choosing primary colours and pointing out how the lines were straight and not curved. Children enjoyed rolling plastic cars through paint but found it difficult to produce curved lines on paper. Children have satisfactory opportunities to sing songs and rhymes and learn about the sounds different musical instruments make. These sessions are not as fully planned as they should be, so that children do not achieve as they could.

ENGLISH

- 64 Pupils' standards of attainment in English have improved since the last inspection when they were judged overall to be below the national average, although standards in writing were above average. By the time pupils leave the school standards are now broadly in line with the national average. This is very good achievement, as pupils enter the school with well below average attainment. Standards in reading have markedly improved since the last inspection because of a significant improvement in

the quality and quantity of books available, effective training of the pupils in library and information retrieval skills, the successful implementation of a reading scheme and very good systematic teaching of reading skills and strategies. The very effective execution of the school's literacy strategy has also played a significant part in this improvement. Very efficient arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and tracking their progress in reading and writing have enabled the school to target pupils' particular literacy needs accurately and to provide the support they need. For example, when it was noticed that some boys were reluctant to read, they were given expert extra support in a small group and more non-fiction books were included in their reading diet; consequently their attainment in reading has improved significantly. The impact of these initiatives explains the difference between last year's national tests results in reading and the present inspection judgement; as teachers become more confident in applying the new arrangements, the pace of pupils' progress increases. Because of the attention given to reading, pupils' standards of writing have not improved to the same extent; however, they are still at expected levels for their age. Standards in speaking and listening remain below those expected for seven-year-olds. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress because teachers adapt work carefully to match their needs and these pupils receive often very good quality support. More able pupils are challenged by the tasks set for them and particularly by the questions that teachers target at them; consequently they too make very good progress.

- 65 Many children enter the school with poor communication skills. These improve to some extent in their first years in school but, by the time they start Year 1, the speaking skills of many pupils are still very under-developed, they have a limited vocabulary and they rarely communicate in complete sentences. These limited oral skills inhibit learning not only in English but also in other subjects. For example, in an art lesson in Year 1 where pupils were trying to describe the differences between two pieces of art work, even some more able pupils struggled to articulate their ideas. Teachers are good at allowing pupils the time to try to explain what they want to say but the pupils' lack of even basic vocabulary means that they are often unsuccessful in expressing their ideas clearly. Pupils listen to each other and to the teacher well for the most part and teachers are skilled in explaining tasks and asking questions to clarify meaning. They use a good variety of strategies and techniques to focus the pupils' attention. However, there are a number of pupils who have short concentration spans and find it difficult to listen for very long.
- 66 Pupils' enjoy reading and talk about their favourite books and stories with enthusiasm. For example, a less able reader, a boy who had last year been identified as having negative attitudes to reading, spoke animatedly about which of three short stories he liked and why he liked the one about a bicycle best. The pupils who are chosen to be part of the OWL (Our Way of Learning) groups benefit from the fun they have with books and stories and are now confident in approaching books. Regular shared reading sessions with parents are linked well to individual termly reading targets based on careful assessments. Family literacy classes have also increased parents' confidence in helping their children. Books at an appropriate level are taken home every evening and parents are encouraged to comment on their children's reading in the home-school reading diaries; teachers respond constructively to such comments. By the time they are in Year 2, all pupils, even the less confident readers, use a wide range of approaches to help them read unfamiliar words. More able pupils read with good levels of understanding and expression; one pupil, for example, showed a delightful appreciation of the humour in a book about a dysfunctional vampire family. Most older pupils competently use the contents page and index to find information in a

non-fiction book and they know their way around the library categories well as a result of regular library skills sessions.

- 67 By the time they reach Year 2, all but a very few pupils write with a good degree of independence. They write appropriately for a range of purposes and audiences at a reasonable length. Stories are sometimes imaginative and arguments carefully laid out in bulleted lists. One pupil very clearly labelled the electrical equipment he had placed in various categories and others produced concise and accurate accounts of water, ice and steam. Writing is supported well in other subjects though opportunities for more substantial pieces of writing in religious education or history, for example, are not always provided. Pupils write their news and retell stories they have heard with a good sense of structure. Sentences are generally well formed but do not normally communicate complex ideas. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to re-draft and edit their work and, while pupils use the computer to present short pieces of their work effectively, they very rarely use it to help them compose and edit their writing. More able pupils produce attractive and well-written booklets of their stories but written work in books is often undated and lacking a title; opportunities for presenting written work for display or other purposes are too few. Pupils are encouraged to use dictionaries when they are able to and have regular spelling practice; consequently, levels of spelling are at nationally expected levels. Pupils' use of punctuation develops as they get older and reaches average levels by the age of seven; teachers are careful to insist on recognition of punctuation marks to assist pupils in their reading for understanding as well as in their writing. Pupils' handwriting is generally clear but few manage to join up their writing consistently. Pupils make good progress in developing their technical skills in writing in both years because of the effective systematic teaching of skills by all the teachers and the classroom support staff.
- 68 The teaching of English is very good, an improvement since the last inspection. In particular, teachers are very good at teaching the basic skills of reading, spelling and writing so that pupils acquire these skills quickly and confidently. In shared reading sessions, teachers explicitly demonstrate strategies for tackling unfamiliar words so that pupils understand the techniques well and can then apply them effectively in their own reading. By the time they reach Year 2, pupils, on meeting an unfamiliar word, automatically break it into its parts or sound it out to try to decipher it; if that does not work, they read on in the sentence to see if the sense provides a clue. If there are illustrations, pupils use them to help find the meaning. In one classroom, a lively mobile display reminds pupils of possible strategies to use and other displays support other aspects of literacy very effectively. Classroom libraries are well stocked with a good range of fiction to suit the full range of ability and maturity in the class. Reading corners are attractively set out so that pupils are motivated to read. The school library too is attractive and clearly organised. Teachers share their own enjoyment of books by reading aloud with lively expression and, often, a good sense of fun – pupils were spellbound by a teacher's performance of a crocodile poem. As a result of these initiatives, pupils have a very positive attitude to reading and to books, which marks a substantial improvement since the last inspection. This in turn leads to very good progress. Homework is used well to support learning. Pupils regularly take home their reading books as well as having writing and spelling homework.
- 69 Teachers mark the pupils' work constructively, finding something to praise but almost always setting a pointer for improvement in a special bubble – pupils look to these targets as soon as they get their books back and take good notice for future work. Teachers provide good support for pupils to improve their writing skills. They provide a good range of activities that involve writing for a variety of audiences and purposes but

there are not frequent enough opportunities for more able pupils to write at length either in English lessons or in other subjects. Writing activities are well planned to match the needs of particular groups of pupils and lessons are very carefully prepared so that no time is wasted in moving from the whole class session to group work. The whole-class sessions at the beginning and end of literacy hours are used effectively – teachers use stimulating approaches to catch pupils’ interest and use the final session to check and clarify pupils’ learning. The literacy strategy is very well understood and used very effectively to promote pupils’ literacy.

- 70 Teachers seek to promote pupils’ skills in speaking and listening through effective questioning and are often very patient in allowing pupils ample time to articulate their responses. However, while there are opportunities in personal, social and health education sessions for pupils to speak in turn, there are too few opportunities provided for pupils to make more formal oral presentations to the rest of the class or to discuss and plan together in pairs or small groups.
- 71 Support staff are used very effectively not only to support pupils with special educational needs but also to work with other pupils who need extra help to push them along more quickly. They are also used on occasion to help the teacher to assess the contributions that targeted individuals make to discussion during whole class sessions. Several support staff have been trained for the school’s OWL project and provide expert support for groups of pupils, particularly boys, who need extra motivation and input. The effectiveness of this support was seen in one group activity where the six boys were thoroughly enjoying acting out a story with the classroom assistant. Its effect is also seen in these pupils’ progress in reading and writing. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported in developing their literacy skills. Teachers know their particular needs very well; consequently, they plan work that is appropriately challenging but achievable. These pupils also receive high quality support from classroom assistants. Their individual education plans are appropriate and carefully monitored and reviewed. Those pupils whose individual plans relate to their behaviour benefit from the teachers’ well-developed skills in behaviour management. Teachers have a very effective range of strategies for ensuring concentration and good behaviour and pupils respond well to them.
- 72 The subject is very effectively led and managed by an energetic co-ordinator who is making a significant impact on standards, quality and provision in the subject. Systematic monitoring has led to more tightly focused teaching and the very effective assessment arrangements have enabled work to be more closely targeted to pupils’ progress. Substantial amounts of in-service training have developed teachers’ confidence in delivering the literacy strategy and the improved levels of resources have had a significant positive impact on pupils’ standards of attainment, particularly in reading.

MATHEMATICS

- 73 Standards are broadly average at the age of seven. This is confirmed by previous test results. Standards at the time of the last inspection were deemed to be above average though pupils’ performance in national tests was in fact closer to the national average. This indicates very good levels of achievement for pupils who enter the school with well below average attainment. Many features of mathematics have improved greatly since the last inspection.

- 74 There are considerable strengths in the teaching and learning of mathematics. The national strategy for numeracy has greatly improved the quality of teaching, which is now very good. The subject is very well led and managed and the co-ordinator monitors teaching and learning very carefully. As well as monitoring individual lessons, the co-ordinator examines general trends and draws conclusions, which are then used to improve both teaching and learning throughout the school. Teachers' plans and assessments of pupils learning are examined each term for general strengths and weaknesses and also to check standards across each class. Careful monitoring of the achievement of boys has shown that in year groups where there is a greater proportion of boys with special needs the results tend to be lower. Currently the co-ordinator is investigating ways of encouraging girls to attempt questions at a higher level since an analysis of past papers has shown that boys attempt more difficult questions than girls. The school's assiduous assessments contribute very well to very good levels of pupils' achievement.
- 75 A number of initiatives have strengthened pupils' knowledge and understanding of mathematics and have drawn parents into helping their children to learn more effectively. Each class has a shared numeracy lesson with their parents each month. In these lessons, parents play mathematical games, which they can then borrow, with groups of children. The scheme is very successful and the high level of parental response to questionnaires stresses how much both parents and children enjoy these. An extra curricular activity organised at lunchtime gives pupils further opportunity to enjoy games based on numeracy. In these sessions, pupils practise social skills as well as using logic to appreciate tactics from another's point of view as in three-dimensional noughts and crosses, for example.
- 76 The quality of teaching is very good overall, never less than satisfactory and with some very good teaching of basic skills in numeracy. Strengths lie in the very good use of games to structure the opening mental mathematical session and to form the basis of some of the independent activities undertaken by pupils working in groups. These are suitably adapted according to pupils' ability. In a Year 2 lesson, for example, pupils pooled their ideas in a collective game to make a 20p using different value coins. The independent activities were very cleverly devised to enable all pupils to reach a similar standard using a very practical approach. More able pupils' work involved exchanging different coins for their equivalent value and average attainers used calculation up to 50p. What distinguishes the very good from the good lessons is the pace, class management and the ability to motivate children to learn. In the best lessons children work quickly and almost furiously as they shake dice trying to speed up their calculations. Support assistants are used very well to work with groups of pupils and to help those with special educational needs or those with behavioural difficulties. Weaknesses lie in the inconsistent use of mathematical vocabulary; for example, using the word 'centimetre' but not drawing pupils' attention sufficiently to the word or having a board with mathematical vocabulary to refer to. Consequently pupils confused centimetres and metres. Not enough use is made of ICT to support mathematics but the school's plans to do this are wise and well timed.
- 77 Pupils' behaviour is very good as are their levels of concentration. They clearly enjoy mathematics and the structured approach to learning. Teachers use a good range of strategies to control and manage the class and encourage children by giving reward stickers and explaining the reasons for these such as "working together nicely and taking turns". Sometimes lessons go on too long, taking a full hour rather than the recommended three quarters of an hour. This makes it very hard for young children to concentrate fully as they become restless. As a result, they cannot contribute as well

as they might to the final part of lessons to demonstrate, for example, what they have learnt and understood.

SCIENCE

- 78 Pupils' overall attainment in the present Year 2 is in line with that expected for their age at this early stage in the school year. This indicates significant improvement in attainment since the last inspection.
- 79 The quality of teaching and learning is good. The strengths in teaching are seen when teachers have sound knowledge of the subjects and provide interesting, practical activities that help pupils understand the lesson. Pupils respond well, showing interest and involvement so that, by the age of seven, they have a satisfactory understanding of the importance of a fair test when carrying out investigations. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 carry out investigations with their teacher's support and guidance, discuss their findings and reach sensible conclusions. In one very good lesson, pupils classified sounds into pleasant and unpleasant noises. They discussed the purpose of noise and realised the importance of emergency vehicles using loud sounds to attract attention. Teachers make good use of skills from other subjects, such as mathematics and drama, to clarify pupils' understanding. In one lesson, through drama pupils immediately understood how sound waves travel through the air. Teachers make insufficient use of writing skills for pupils to record their learning.
- 80 Teachers plan work to build on pupils' existing knowledge and experience so they make sense of their findings by relating them to existing knowledge. For example, pupils know that sound causes vibrations in the air, therefore insulation inside an ear protector would have to be sufficient to absorb the vibrations and prevent them from travelling into the ear. Teachers' probing questions make pupils think and help them make good progress in their understanding as, for example, when discussing the relative merits of different materials for insulation in ear protectors.
- 81 Pupils work hard largely because they relate well to teachers and lessons are well managed, with a brisk pace. Occasionally concentration slips when lessons are too long. Pupils gain an appropriate range of knowledge and understanding, building on their experience of the world. They learn about forces when pushing or pulling toys, they expand their understanding of how electrical appliances work by constructing simple electrical circuits, and learn about properties of materials when choosing them for different purposes, such as conducting electricity. They gain experience of sorting, when sorting materials according to their properties, for example, which contributes to their development of scientific thinking.
- 82 Pupils' achievement, compared to their attainment on entry to school, is good. Pupils with special educational needs receive a very good level of support from teachers and support assistants. They help them in a variety of ways to overcome their difficulties and make good progress in learning. Higher attaining pupils are given work which challenges them and enables them to attain highly. The good quality scheme of work ensures that pupils cover appropriate work at the right level for their age. Teachers' planning enables pupils' knowledge and understanding of living things, materials and physical processes such as heat and sound to develop systematically throughout Years 1 and 2. The school's present emphasis on practical, investigative work is appropriate, promoting knowledge and understanding of basic scientific principals.

ART AND DESIGN

- 83 Standards are in line with those expected for seven-year-olds, similar to the standards seen at the last inspection. Pupils of all levels of ability, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. Pupils in Year 2 produce lively, attractive, original full length self-portraits using felt-tip pen. Lower attaining pupils use paint imaginatively to produce strong outlines and brightly coloured features in their abstract portraits inspired by a picture by Paul Klee. Pupils use a range of media and a variety of techniques with skill to produce, for example, well observed crayoned pictures of snowdrops or pleasing abstract prints using different kinds of printing. Younger pupils' brightly painted pictures of Mary's tiger show good brush control and confident handling of colour. After a visit by a sculptor, pupils produced their own twig sculptures and at other times have worked in clay substitute and textiles and worked on decorating tiles, all at a generally satisfactory level. On National Art Day, pupils produced a great deal of effective work using different media. Pupils have used a variety of famous artists to inspire their own work and contrasting portraits by Miro and Lawrenson led to pleasing work by pupils of all levels of ability in Year 2. Pupils' observational and technical skills are developed as they move through the school. They are also encouraged to evaluate their own work and that of famous artists but the progress of many is inhibited by their under-developed communication skills.
- 84 Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are increasingly confident in teaching the subject after reviewing and rewriting the scheme of work and are now looking to use a wider range of techniques and media. Visiting experts have provided training to enable teachers to broaden the range of techniques they use. Teachers' planning is thorough and takes good account of the variety of pupils' needs. Teachers select interesting material and maintain pupils' interest well. Lessons are thoroughly prepared so that no time is wasted. Teachers question well to help pupils understand the processes that they have used and to help them evaluate their work. The subject is effectively led by a knowledgeable co-ordinator and contributes well to pupils' cultural development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 85 No lessons of design and technology could be seen, so no judgements have been made on the quality of teaching or on pupil's response. From talking with the subject co-ordinator, scrutinising documentation and looking at work done by last year's Year 2 class, it is clear that pupils undertake a suitably wide range of work and achieve standards which are typical of those expected of seven-year-olds.
- 86 Much of the work links closely with other subjects such as art, literacy and numeracy. In Year 1, for example, pupils plan different toppings for pizzas. They list the ingredients and label diagrams clearly. As a class, they worked out which were the favourite toppings for pizzas and recorded these in a chart. Pupils made effective collages of their final pizzas choosing appropriate colours and textures such as circular pieces of sponge for salami. Pupils both design and evaluate their work. In Year 2, they sketched out some ambitious ideas for pop up toys and peg dolls. They explained what the hardest part of the task was and one pupil wrote with great satisfaction, 'My favourite part of my doll is all of it.'
- 87 The co-ordinator manages the subject very well and has a full understanding of what is taught and learnt in each class. Slightly more time has been given to design and technology because it clearly benefits pupils' practical skills. The resources for

learning are good. Standards are similar to those in the last inspection but the overall management of the subject and the quality of resources have improved considerably.

GEOGRAPHY and HISTORY

- 88 The curriculum is planned in such a way that neither geography nor history was being taught at the time of the inspection. Therefore it is not possible to make a judgement about teaching and learning. The small amount of evidence available indicates that pupils' attainment is in line with that expected for pupils' ages in both subjects.
- 89 Improvement in the provision for these subjects since the last inspection is significant. Good quality schemes of work have been developed which are relevant to the pupils and the local surroundings. These ensure that pupils cover the required work appropriate for their age, including those in the mixed-age class. This provides the necessary structure for pupils to build up knowledge and skills in a systematic way, forming a secure foundation for future learning. Subject planning shows the schemes of work being implemented for each year group, making sure that the subjects are sufficiently well covered and have strong links with other subjects, such as design and technology, writing and mathematics. Arrangements for assessing and recording pupils' learning are good. Resources for learning are generally good, although there are not enough globes with sufficient detail on them to have one in each classroom.
- 90 In geography, pupils study simple maps and make plans of their own environment. They map routes in the locality, such as the route to school or to the shops. Higher attaining pupils label the roads. They use simple keys to identify features such as the sea, mountains and rivers. Pupils record weather patterns and learn about the different seasons. They study a contrasting locality when visiting another village some way away, comparing the many differences between a town and small village. Pupils gain experience of other countries through the travels of Harry the Hiker and Burnaby Bear; both are teddy bears who accompany members of the school community on their travels to diverse places such as Mexico and Scotland. Post cards and photographs augment the written messages received from the travelling bears so that pupils can gain insight into different climates, societies and ways of life.
- 91 In history, pupils start by looking back at their own lives to begin to develop a sense of chronology. Their study of the local area and of another village includes elements of history as well as geography, seeing how the way of life has changed. Both history and geography standards benefit from this link. Pupils also study distinct periods of history, such as Tudor times, visiting Gainsborough Old Hall to gain the feel of the times by dressing in Tudor clothes and joining in a Tudor banquet. In their study of the Second World War, pupils enact the part of evacuees setting off on a long train ride with their gas mask and a parcel of Spam sandwiches. They then write a letter in role, telling their family about their experience. Some of their pictures are quite vivid and higher attaining pupils' writing is quite dramatic as they explain 'some children went in air raid shelters'. Pupils do not write at any length, however. In this way, using drama, art and literacy, the subject is brought to life so that pupils can gain empathy with people who lived in the past.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

- 92 Standards are below average by the age of seven. This is largely because the resources for learning and the school's new approach to teaching and learning in ICT are too recent to have had a real impact as yet. Much has improved since the last

inspection with the provision of a new ICT suite. The gap in time between ICT lessons, however, coupled with the very low attendance rate, means that some pupils make slow progress, particularly in acquiring fluent keyboard skills.

- 93 The school has made significant improvements to the quality of provision since the last inspection. A good quality scheme of work has been developed. This plans for the subject to be taught in a progressive way, so that pupils systematically build up their skills. The arrangements for assessing pupils' work and recording what they have learned are clear. The learning resources have greatly improved, with a new computer suite and access to the schools' Intranet making a positive impact on pupils' learning. Pupils in Year 2 have benefited from the improved provision during the last year and have made good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding. They cover the full range of the subject curriculum, including work on graphics, controlling programmable toys and working with educational programs that develop mathematical skills, for example. However, particularly in keyboard skills, they have not yet reached the level of skill expected for their age. This is largely because they have lessons on alternate weeks with very little opportunity to practise in between.
- 94 The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have benefited from recent training to improve their confidence and expertise. They provide good, clear explanations and the right amount of support to help pupils learn at a good pace. Pupils very much enjoy the subject and are keen to learn. They write short pieces of text and know that they can be saved and retrieved. They can use functions such as spacing keys and the enter key and use the cursor to help them edit the text. However, their lack of fluency in using the keyboard makes this a slow process. Teachers plan lessons clearly so that pupils know what they are learning and keep focussed on the task. They provide suitable resources, such as word and picture cards to help pupils in their task. Most work well both individually and in pairs, with more confident pupils helping others. This contributes well to pupils' personal development and helps them to make good progress in knowledge and understanding. Teachers revise previous learning and encourage new learning through clear instruction and careful questioning. Pupils work hard to gain new knowledge and understanding.
- 95 Lessons in the computer suite, however, are generally too long to make the most of the time available. Although the lessons are well paced to keep pupils' attention, many pupils find it difficult to concentrate for long periods of time. The time given over to the subject in the classroom is insufficient for pupils to maintain their skills from one lesson to the next. Although teachers plan for computers in the classroom to be used in other subjects, such as mathematics, they are often unused for long periods of time during the day. This also contributes to pupils' below average attainment, as they do not get enough chance to practise what they have learnt.
- 96 Teachers are well aware of equality of opportunity and make sure that girls and boys, including the substantial number with special educational needs, have a fair turn and appropriate support to help them make good progress during lessons.

MUSIC

- 97 Standards are below average by the age of seven. Although some aspects of the subject have improved since the last inspection, there is more to be done. A new co-ordinator has just begun to introduce a new scheme of work and is devising a series of lessons based on learning through practice. Currently the school is trying out these

out in accordance with the school improvement plan. The subject suffers from the insufficient time given to it; for example, in some classes just fifteen minutes at the end of the morning is allocated to music and in others half an hour at the end of the day. At both these times pupils are not necessarily at their best.

- 98 The quality of teaching is satisfactory. The quality of pupils' singing is below average and many pupils find it hard to pitch the notes accurately. When singing a two part round, for example, in assembly, Year 2 pupils easily drowned out the younger pupils because they had not learnt to moderate their singing tone. Pupils in Year 2 learn to recognise the different sounds that different musical instruments make and explore a range of sounds from one particular instrument as they learn to play quietly and loudly. In a very good lesson, pupils hardly dared breathe as they listened to a long sound being played on the chime bar waiting until the very last sound had died away. Using games, teachers understand how to develop pupils' musical awareness and in response to such teaching pupils proved to have quite inventive ideas, finding many different ways of getting sounds from a cabasa, for instance. Where teachers' subject knowledge is less secure, pupils become confused between "louder and higher" because the teacher has not understood how to distinguish clearly between pace and volume in ways which children can understand.
- 99 Some music lessons reinforce work done in other subjects, such as literacy, very effectively. At the end of one such lesson, pupils explored the full vocal and tonal range as they recited poems, reducing their voices to the merest whisper and dramatically increasing the volume and raising the pitch of their voices at exciting moments.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 100 Pupils' standards are at levels expected for seven-year-olds, thus maintaining the position at the last inspection. Pupils of all levels of ability, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. Older pupils engage in dance with very high levels of concentration, producing very well controlled and aesthetically very pleasing short sequences of movement beginning and ending with the same shape. Elsewhere, the quality of movement and gymnastics showed an appropriate sense of space and reasonable levels of balance and control. Pupils were able to travel around the hall in a variety of ways and worked together well for the most part. Pupils' ball control skills were at expected levels. Younger pupils persevered well when they found skipping backwards difficult and they took turns well.
- 101 The quality of teaching and learning is good. The most successful lessons show very high levels of class management, resulting in very high levels of concentration and excellent behaviour. Teachers have a good range of devices to challenge, focus and motivate such as, for example, choosing very stimulating music. Teachers use imaginative devices very effectively to focus and retain pupils' attention. For example, a box of magic dust convincingly transformed pupils into animals which moved appropriately around the room. In another lesson, the teacher asked pupils to imagine they were holding an imaginary ball and this provided a focus for some very concentrated work in dance – the ball was very real to the pupils holding it. Teachers encourage pupils to evaluate their own and each other's work though their attempts are sometimes frustrated by some pupils' lack of skill in communicating their ideas.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 102 Pupils' attainment by the time they leave the school is broadly in line with that expected for seven-year-olds in the locally agreed syllabus, thus maintaining the standards found at the time of the last inspection. Pupils in Year 2 are familiar with aspects of Islam, Hinduism, Judaism and Christianity. They know the story of Rama and Sita and understand the significance of the stories of Daniel and King Solomon. They know some stories by and about Jesus and know about his birth and death and something of the meaning of both. They have visited the local church and have seen and discussed the vicar's vestments and features of the church such as the font. They understand the symbolism of some of the stained glass windows in the church and have produced their own silhouette card windows in response.
- 103 No judgement is made about the quality of teaching because no lessons were observed. Staff have jointly devised a scheme of work based on the new locally agreed syllabus. This links with the programme of collective worship through its personal, social and health education content and through its consideration of festivals such as Chinese New Year or Divali. The local vicar visits the school regularly and welcomes classes into the local parish church for services and for learning about Christianity. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The effective and knowledgeable co-ordinator monitors teaching and has arranged substantial in-service training for staff. The subject is well resourced. These factors have a significant impact on pupils' learning.