

INSPECTION REPORT

STAPLE HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Bristol

LEA area: South Gloucestershire

Unique reference number: 109018

Headteacher: Mrs P A Francis

Reporting inspector: Peter Kerr
23583

Dates of inspection: 15th –18th January 2001

Inspection number: 207993

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of children:	3 to 11
Gender of children:	Mixed
School address:	Page Road Staple Hill Bristol
Postcode:	BS16 4NE
Telephone number:	01458 867240
Fax number:	01458 867241
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. Paul Cubie
Date of previous inspection:	16 th November 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
23583	Peter Kerr	Registered inspector	Music Physical Education	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9691	Jon Vincent	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? How well is the school led and managed? - Support
28088	Christine Raymond	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Art and design Design and technology	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students? How well does the school care for its pupils? – Support How well is the school led and managed? - Support
26514	Amanda Tapsfield	Team inspector	Special educational needs Mathematics Information and communication technology	How well is the school led and managed? - Support
27541	John Collins	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage Science Geography History	How well is the school led and managed? - Support
22778	Anne Shannon	Team inspector	English as an additional language English Religious education	How well is the school led and managed? - Support

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services
Strathblane House
Ashfield Road
Cheadle
Stockport SK8 1BB

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33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a larger than average primary school, with 387 children of statutory school age on roll, in an economically and socially deprived area. In addition, a two-class nursery caters for 90 children aged three to four, who attend part-time. The school takes in children from neighbouring areas of Bristol, many of whom have special educational needs. One third of all the children have special educational needs, both learning and behavioural, which is well above the national average, and ten of these have a statement of need. All but about two per cent of the children are of white ethnic origin and about four per cent of the children speak a language other than English as a first language, although they now speak English well. The children enter both the nursery and the school with below average attainment overall, and about one fifth of the children claim free school meals.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an increasingly effective school. Much of the teaching is good. The nursery and reception classes offer the children a very good introduction to full-time education from a well below average start. In the infants, the children consolidate their gains and achieve well at the end of Key Stage 1. Much improved teaching in the junior department enables all the children, including many who join during this stage with severe educational and emotional problems, to make sound progress overall and reach standards in English and mathematics that are in line with the national average. In science, the children exceed this standard. The headteacher and governors provide a very good standard of leadership and management that is helping the school to make significant gains in many aspects of its performance. The finances are well managed and the school gives good value for money, ensuring educational inclusion for many very difficult children.

What the school does well

- All the teaching is at least satisfactory and much of it is good or better.
- Standards in English, mathematics and science are improving, and are now at least average.
- The nursery and reception classes give the children a very good introduction to school.
- The children have good attitudes to learning and generally behave well.
- The school shows great care for children with learning and behavioural difficulties. It is very successful in helping them to improve and in dealing effectively with any instances of inappropriate or oppressive behaviour.
- The headteacher and governing body have brought a new sense of educational direction to the school and manage it very well.

What could be improved

- The teaching methods used are not always varied enough to provide sufficient challenge for all the children, especially the more able.
- The way the timetable is organised results in some lessons, especially in English and mathematics, lasting too long.
- When children are withdrawn for support, they sometimes miss important lessons.
- The children do not have enough opportunities to develop their independence and to show initiative around the school.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Very good. The school has come a very long way since it was last inspected in November 1998. All the key issues have been successfully addressed. Expectations are higher, and standards have improved in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 2. Standards in science at Key Stage 1 have and design and technology throughout the school have improved significantly. The quality of teaching is much better overall; the teaching of numeracy skills is good and the teaching of literacy skills is satisfactory. The use of assessment to inform planning has improved; it is very good in information and communication technology, good in design and technology and art and design, and satisfactory in other subjects. Leadership and management are clearly focused on raising expectations and standards and on improving the quality of teaching. Sufficient time is now allocated for teaching and the quality of information given to parents has improved and is now satisfactory. In addition, more realistic assessments by the teachers have led to realistically challenging targets being set for eleven-year olds

in the national tests in English, mathematics and science, which the school is on course to achieve. Better management of the school's finances has led to improved cost-effectiveness and a good capacity to improve further.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	E	D	E	E
mathematics	E	C	C	C
science	D	B	C	C

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

The table shows that standards have improved in mathematics and science at Key Stage 2 compared to the national average, but not in English. However, the English work seen in Year 6 during the inspection was of an average standard, showing rapid recent improvement. Standards are also average in mathematics, while in science, the children have above average attainment at the end of Key Stage 2, especially in experimental skills. At Key Stage 1, standards in science overall are in line with expectations, but investigative skills are not as good as they could be. Standards are average in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1, reflecting the school's performance in the national tests for seven year olds, which were in line with all and similar schools. The children's speaking and listening skills are average at the end of both key stages. Good standards have been maintained in art at Key Stage 2, while standards in design and technology have greatly improved and are now in line with expectations. Standards in information and communication technology are below average but are rising rapidly. In all other National Curriculum subjects, attainment is in line with expectations at both key stages, and in religious education, standards meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus at the end of both key stages. Children with special educational needs make good progress towards their individual targets, and those who speak a language other than English as their first language achieve well because of the very good support they receive. The children achieve well as a result of improved teaching and increased expectations, and are on course to meet the school's new, suitably challenging targets, although higher attaining pupils are not always challenged enough. The good teaching and learning that occurs in the nursery and reception classes ensures that the children achieve well and exceed the "Early Learning Goals" for the new "Foundation Stage".

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most children are well motivated, enthusiastic about their lessons and proud of their achievements.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils are courteous and polite and show respect for property. Parents appreciate the standards of behaviour encouraged and maintained by the school. The instances of poor behaviour by a few pupils are dealt with effectively.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are good. Children work and play well together and co-operate and collaborate when necessary. They relate well to adults. Personal development is satisfactory; the children accept responsibility willingly and show initiative when allowed.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The attendance rate is average and there are fewer than average unauthorised absences.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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 nursery and reception classes provide a very good quality of education for the children in this age group. They enable the children to learn through purposeful play in a relaxed but stimulating atmosphere. Teaching in Key Stage 1 is good, and in Key Stage 2 it is satisfactory overall, through with examples of very good and excellent teaching. This key stage has more difficult special educational needs to deal with and has been more severely affected by staff absences. Over the school as a whole, 82 lessons were observed, including the teaching of special educational needs groups. The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in all the lessons, good or better in 73 per cent, very good or better in 19 per cent and excellent in 4 per cent. The excellent and very good teaching inspired the children to do their best and involved a good range of methods. These elements were missing from other lessons. The teaching of English and of literacy skills is satisfactory, but many literacy lessons are too long and this slows the pace of learning. The teaching of mathematics is good, and numeracy skills are well taught across the school, with plenty of examples of the children applying them in other subjects. The teachers have very good relationships with the children and manage them well. Lessons are well-planned, with clear objectives based on good subject knowledge. When support assistants are available, they work closely and effectively with the teachers. All the direct teaching of children with special educational needs is at least good and some of it is excellent. The teaching provided for children with severe behavioural problems is exemplary. Teachers provide some good opportunities for children to learn through experimentation in science in Key Stage 2. However, this is not a strong point in the teaching generally, and children do not have sufficient opportunities in lessons to learn through investigations and independent research. This limits the levels of achievement possible, especially for higher attaining children. The school meets the needs of all the children, but when children are withdrawn from class for support they sometimes miss important lessons. Homework is set, but not consistently within each year group.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Children in the nursery and reception have a wide range of good quality learning opportunities. The curriculum for the infants and juniors is broad enough, but lessons in English are sometimes too long, causing an imbalance.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The support they receive with their individual targets is very good indeed. However, they sometimes miss important lessons when receiving this support.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. These children are given timely and good quality support and are soon able to make the most of all the learning opportunities provided by the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good for moral and social development and satisfactory overall. The school helps the children to acquire good moral values and learn right from wrong. Good relationships are fostered and lessons provide ample opportunities for co-operating. There are opportunities for reflection and the children's ideas and feelings are valued. Opportunities to show initiative and take responsibility are limited and more could be done to improve the children's appreciation of cultural diversity.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The adults in the school know the children well and look out for their needs. Excellent care given to children with behavioural difficulties and the school's procedures for promoting good behaviour and dealing with bullying are very good.

The school has a good working partnership with parents, many of whom give very good support in a variety of ways.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very good leadership, giving the school a clear sense of direction and setting sensible and achievable priorities for improvement. The acting deputy head gives very good support and the senior management team is beginning to develop an effective role.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governors have a very good picture of the school and fully support the headteacher. They are actively engaged in setting priorities and ensuring that improvements happen.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school has good procedures for tracking the achievements of the children and checking on the quality of teaching.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The governors ensure that budget planning is closely linked to the school's educational priorities and provide good financial management, applying the principles of best value to all purchases of goods and services.

There are enough suitably qualified and experienced teachers and classroom assistants to meet the needs of all the children in the school. The accommodation is satisfactory, but the exterior is in urgent need of repair. The level of resources provided by the school is satisfactory, but some of the children coming into the school from outside its catchment area with special educational needs do not attract the level of support that they should from their local education authority.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What some parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and make good progress. • The school is well led and managed and is very approachable. • The teaching is good and the children are expected to work hard. • Children with special educational needs are well looked after. 	There were no areas of concern expressed by a significant number of parents.

The inspection team agrees with the above views and endorses one parent's written comments that the school is a happy, caring place. A few parents wrote to express concern that the more able children were not always given sufficiently challenging work. The team agree that more could be done in this area.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and children's achievements

1. There have been significant improvements in standards throughout the school since the last inspection, when low expectations were a key issue. The recently appointed headteacher has raised expectations dramatically, and has set new, ambitious targets for the school, which have been achieved. The main area for continuing concern is achievement in English at Key Stage 2, but the signs are that this too is improving. Children with special educational needs make particularly good progress and achieve well because their needs are identified early and they receive very good support. Children with the capability of reaching higher levels of attainment are beginning to achieve towards their potential in some subjects, but continuing limitations in the teaching methods used in some classes prevents them from learning as rapidly as they could. Children for whom English is not their first language also receive very good quality and timely support to enable them to make rapid progress in learning English and in achieving to their potential in all areas. The school's results in the national tests for seven-year olds have been better than those for eleven-year olds in the past, but better teaching in Key Stage 2 and more accurate assessments and targeting are bringing the school's results up to the national average across the school.
2. Children enter the school with below average attainment, but make rapid progress in the nursery and reception classes so that by the time they start the National Curriculum in Year 1, most of them have achieved nearly all the early learning goals. They have average attainment in their creative, personal, social, emotional and physical development and their knowledge and understanding of the world. In language and communication and mathematics, particularly good teaching has enabled many of them to exceed the early learning goals and achieve above average attainment. The present arrangements for this age group have only been in place for a short time, however, so that current Key Stage 1 test results cannot yet be used as a measure of progress for the children during the infant years. In addition, a significant minority of children has special educational needs and does not reach average standards despite achieving well. The effect of special educational needs is even more marked in the juniors because the school takes in a significant number of children from neighbouring areas of the city. Many of these children have educational or behavioural problems, and in many cases do not bring with them the resources necessary to support their difficulties. This places an unnecessary extra strain on the school's resources and also depresses the results obtained in the national tests for 11-year olds, especially in English.
3. The results in the national tests for seven-year olds in 2000 showed that the children have average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at this stage. This is true when compared to all schools nationally and to schools with a similar entitlement to free school meals. The trend over the past four years has been similar to the national trend in reading and mathematics, with the results keeping about average. In writing, however, the results have improved dramatically in 1998 from well below average for the preceding two years to average. In 2000, the children's attainment in reading was better than in writing because more of the children reached the above average Level 3. In writing, too many of the children failed to reach the average expected level of 2B, and the school has identified this as a priority area to develop. The inspection found that the standard of writing is indeed improving in the infants and is now nearer average overall, though there are still a number of children with low attainment. In mathematics, more children achieved at least the expected level 2 than in an average school, and a similar

proportion reached Level 3 as nationally. This reflects the success of the school's implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. There is no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls at this age. The girls' results are better than the boys' results in some years, but in other years the reverse is true.

4. The school's results in the national tests for 11-year olds in 2000 were average in mathematics and science but well below average in English compared to all schools nationally and also when compared to other schools with similar free school meals entitlement. The school's trend in average points scored is above the national trend over the three subjects as a whole, but the relatively poor performance in English is a concern for the school. The results were not as far behind the national figure in 2000 as they had been from 1996 to 1998 however, and the evidence of this inspection is that standards are moving ever closer towards the average. However, a significant feature of the test results was the small proportion of children reaching the above average Level 5 in English – 12 per cent compared to 29 per cent nationally. In mathematics and science, the school's results were very similar to the national results in this respect. It seems, therefore, that the school is not enabling the higher attaining children to achieve as well in English as they do in mathematics and science. The inspection evidence, however, is that the more able children are not challenged enough in mathematics and science either, so the explanation for the low test results in English may lie partly in the difficulty many of the children have with writing. It is also the case that most of the special educational needs children have great problems with English, and this is reflected in the much higher proportion of children attaining below Level 4 in English than in mathematics and science. Standards in literacy are satisfactory, but not as good as in numeracy, because the children do not have as many opportunities to practice and apply them in other subjects.
5. The inspection found that standards were in line with national expectations in all subjects at the end of both key stages except in science, information and communications technology and art and design. In science, standards are above average at the end of Key Stage 2, especially in experimental and investigative skills, partly because of the very good input the children have in Year 6 from the secondary school, but also because of good teaching throughout the juniors. The children's knowledge and understanding in science is average in Key Stage 1, but their experimental skills are below average because they have too few opportunities to investigate. In art and design, standards are above expectations at both key stages because of attention to the systematic teaching of basic skills with a wide range of media and materials. Standards in information and communication technology are below expectations at the end of both key stages but are improving because of a good curriculum and good teaching. The impending introduction of a computer suite to give the children more "hands-on" tuition and time is a very sensible step towards more rapid improvement and higher standards.
6. Standards in design and technology have improved from unsatisfactory at the last inspection to in line with expectations. The children's mapping skills in geography are above expectations because they are taught well, with lessons clearly building on existing skills in each key stage. The children also have sound skills of historical enquiry, using a range of sources of information to compare different historical periods. In music the children sing well at both key stages and have sound composing and performing skills at Key stage 1. There was no evidence on which to make a judgement of their composing and performing skills at Key Stage 2. The children's attainment in physical education is in line with expectations overall at both key stages. They have good games skills in Year 6 and good movement and dance skills in Key

Stage 1, but did not achieve well in gymnastics in the lesson seen at Key Stage 2 because of a lack of challenge, especially for the more able.

7. Although the differences between the test results for boys and girls were not significant in themselves, girls in the school do not perform as well compared to the boys in the school as girls do nationally compared to boys. At a national level, for example, girls perform considerably better than boys in English, but in the school, the boys' results are higher than those of the girls'. In some lessons during the inspection it was noticed that boys demanded considerably more attention than girls, mostly through challenging behaviour. This is an area that the school does not yet monitor closely, but could be important in enabling girls to achieve as well as they can.
8. Children with special educational needs make good progress towards their individual learning targets because of the very good support they receive, both from the class teachers and from the special educational needs teachers and support assistants. On occasions when the teacher's attention is focused on other groups and there are no other adults in the room, these children do not get the support and encouragement they need to achieve well. On other occasions, when they are withdrawn for support, for example for additional literacy, they miss other important lessons, and therefore do not achieve as well as they could in these other areas. The school recognises that this is a problem and is reviewing the way it supports these children to try and include them as much as possible in classroom activities. Children with severe behavioural problems achieve particularly well because of the excellent support they receive through the anger management programme. Much of the work that is done with these children is quite outstanding and helps to keep them within the learning environment when otherwise they would be excluded.
9. The school is making better provision for the more able children than it did at the time of the last inspection, but this is an area where there is still room for improvement. In some lessons, there is insufficient scope for higher attaining children to extend their learning through, for example, individual investigations and research, so their achievement is limited. In other lessons, however, they are well catered for with challenging questions and tasks, and they achieve well. Children for whom English is an additional language are identified early and receive very good quality support from the school, with good guidance from outside agencies. This ensures that they make very good progress in learning English and therefore quickly begin to achieve well in other areas. There is no evidence that children from different ethnic groups achieve less well than others. The school is a racially harmonious community where children from all backgrounds have equal opportunities to make good progress and achieve well. There recently up-graded targets for English and mathematics in the national tests for eleven-year olds are suitably ambitious and the children are on course to meet them.

Children's attitudes, values and personal development

10. Attitudes to learning are good overall and have improved since the last inspection. These attitudes are reinforced by the school's vision statement, which is prominently displayed throughout the school. Most children enjoy coming to school. They have a positive approach to their lessons and they try hard to meet the expectations of their teachers. The safe, warm and welcoming atmosphere promoted by the school provides an environment that encourages children to do their best. Most children are well motivated, enthusiastic and proud to share their successes.
11. Behaviour in and around the school is good. Children are courteous and polite to adults and one another and show respect for property. Parents appreciate the high behaviour standards encouraged and maintained by the school. The persistent poor behaviour by a few children with behavioural difficulties is well managed by the school and the disruption caused to learning for other children kept to a minimum. All staff are excellent role models and lead by example. Children work and play well together, regardless of age and gender and co-operate and collaborate when necessary. Relationships are also good between children and adults. This aspect has been maintained since the last inspection. There have been ten fixed term exclusions and two permanent exclusions during the past school year. No bullying or oppressive behaviour was seen during the inspection.
12. The children's opportunities for personal development are satisfactory overall, but could be improved and extended. When opportunities do arise, children take advantage of them and show initiative. This is a similar judgement to that made in the last inspection report. Routine tasks such as taking registers to the office are carried out quietly and efficiently and without the need for supervision. Year 6 children help their younger peers at lunchtime and act unprompted when they notice a need. In the nursery and reception classes, the children make good progress in their personal development, showing confidence in the well established classroom routines and making choices about what they will do.
13. Attendance levels are broadly in line with the national average, as they were at the time of the previous inspection report. Unauthorised absence is slightly below the national average. The school liaises constantly with the educational welfare officer in its efforts to maintain and improve the attendance rate.

HOW WELL ARE CHILDREN TAUGHT?

14. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection, which is a considerable improvement since the previous inspection when 12 per cent of the teaching was unsatisfactory. Over the school as a whole, the quality of teaching was good or better in seventy three per cent of the lessons that were observed, compared to 48 per cent last time. However, this figure hides some significant variations. Taking all the inspection evidence into account, including the progress made in the core subjects of English and mathematics and by different groups of children, the inspection finding is that the standard of teaching and learning in the school is satisfactory overall.

15. The standard of teaching is very good in the nursery and reception classes (the Foundation Stage), giving the children a very good preparation for the Key Stage 1 National Curriculum and religious education programme of studies. The quality of teaching in all of the 14 lessons seen in this stage was at least good and was very good in 17 per cent of the lessons. The consistently good quality of the observed lessons, together with the excellent planning and organisation based on the very good knowledge and understanding that the teachers have of how young children learn all contribute to a very good overall judgement for the teaching. All the areas of learning are well provided for now that the reception classes have access to a separate secure outdoor play area. The teachers establish clear routines and involve the children from an early stage in choosing and planning their activities so that they begin to take some responsibility for their own learning. They encourage learning through purposeful play with a range of carefully chosen equipment and materials and introduce the older children to more formal learning when they are ready for it.
16. In Key Stage 1, the standard of teaching is good overall, with 78 per cent of lessons judged good or better and 17 per cent very good. In Key Stage 2, 54 per cent of the lessons were judged good or better, with 13 per cent very good or better and 4 per cent excellent. In addition to these class lessons, six lessons were observed in which teachers taught children with special educational needs in small groups. All of this teaching was at least good. One third of it was very good, and one of the six lessons was excellent. Considering the importance of the progress the children make in Key Stage 2, and of challenging children of all abilities, the inspection team judged that teaching and learning is satisfactory but improving, with many hopeful pointers for continuing improvement. Of particular note in Key Stage 2 is the success the teachers have in keeping a large number of children with special educational needs and behavioural difficulties included in lessons and making at least sound and often good progress in all subjects relative to their prior attainment.
17. The biggest improvements have been in the teaching of English and mathematics. At the last inspection, more than a third of English lessons and more than a quarter of mathematics lessons were unsatisfactory. In this inspection, there was no unsatisfactory teaching in either subject and teaching was good or better in more than half the lessons in both subjects. There was also a small proportion of very good teaching in both subjects. The very good teaching in English was in Year 1, where the teachers matched the challenge in the activities to the needs of all the children, including those with higher attainment, so that they could all make good progress. In mathematics, the only very good teaching seen was in a lesson on place value in Year 4 in which the teacher managed to get the children really enthusiastic about being able to add tens, hundreds or thousands to a number quickly. The teacher's own enthusiasm and lively presentation contributed greatly to the success of this lesson, together with a clear explanation of the learning objective and a clear recap of what had been learned at the end. Even in this lesson, however, conversations with the highest attaining children revealed that they found the work easy and were capable of more demanding tasks. Many lessons, although good in other respects, lack this pace and enthusiasm to inspire the children. The basic skills of numeracy are taught well, and the children are given opportunities to develop and use them in other subjects. Basic literacy skills are taught satisfactorily, but the children do not have enough opportunities to practice and develop their speaking and writing skills in a variety of situations, both in lessons and beyond.

18. The teachers prepare their lessons well. They give clear introductions and ensure that the children understand the purpose of the lesson. Despite there being an usually high number of children with behavioural difficulties in the school, the teachers manage their lessons very well. This is because they have good relationships with the children and generally apply the school's positive discipline policy consistently. Children for whom English is not their first language are taught well. They receive additional support at an early stage and are soon integrated fully into lessons. Homework is set, and in some classes is of good quality and used well to further the children's learning, but this is not consistent in each year-group. The children respond to the positive way they are treated by applying themselves well to their tasks. They co-operate effectively and collaborate on joint tasks when given the opportunity. For example, in science lessons in Key Stage 2, they develop good investigative skills because they are encouraged to conduct their own experiments. Even in this strong area, however, there are too few opportunities for those children who are capable of it setting up their own experiments to test their own ideas. Enabling the higher attaining children to learn more quickly through imaginative teaching methods and more opportunities for independent learning and open-ended investigations is a challenge for the school now that it has got the basics of teaching right.

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

19. The curriculum is broadly based and meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. It provides a range of opportunities for children of all ages. There is good provision for children with special educational needs, whose requirements are carefully considered, although they sometimes miss important lessons when they are withdrawn for support. All subjects meet the statutory requirements. The school satisfactorily follows the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. The quality and range of learning opportunities for children under five (the Foundation Stage) is broad and balanced and includes all the early learning goals now identified in the new curriculum for this age-group. Children are assessed on entry to the nursery and when they leave to join other schools. The children are assessed again using the Local Education Authority baseline assessment on entry to the reception class so that the school now has a clear baseline from which to measure the children's progress. The provision for children with special educational needs in all foundation stage classes is very good and has a positive impact on the progress these children make.
20. The improvement in standards of English and mathematics since the last inspection is due at least in part to the successful introduction of the national strategies for the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Many of the literacy lessons, however, last too long, reducing the time available for other activities and causing an imbalance in the curriculum. Since the previous inspection the school has improved the planning of subjects, which is now based on schemes of work and is beginning to take account of more accurate assessments of the children's attainment. This ensures that the children continually build on existing skills in each subject. However, there is no clear overview of the whole curriculum to assure a balance of time and content between subjects. Improvements have been made in the curriculum for design technology since the last inspection and it is now satisfactory.

21. There is a range of extra-curricular activities available for Key Stage 2 children and these include football, netball, choir and dance. There is an enthusiastic take-up of these extra opportunities provided voluntarily by some teachers, and the more popular activities such as the dance club, are run on two nights to accommodate the demand. There is a small charge for lessons in French, that are open to Year 5 and Year 6 children. Junior children also have the opportunity to take brass instrumental lessons. Key Stage 1 children have access to a Music club. The curriculum is enhanced by visits to places of historic interest such as Laycock Tudor Village and a Roman Fort where children take part in role-play activities when they dress in period costumes. The school takes part in local music festivals and the choir goes to sing at a local Old People's home on some occasions. The school has a good personal, social and health education programme in place, including provision for sex education, and links with the Bristol Old Vic enable children to share in a drug awareness presentation. Relevant topics such as healthy eating are included in the science curriculum, and during the inspection children had good opportunities to raise issues that concern them in "circle time"¹ sessions. Some children from Years 5 and 6 have the opportunity to take part in an annual residential visit, which contributes significantly to their social development.
22. Links with the community also contribute to children's learning. For example, visiting ministers from two local churches, the Salvation Army and Christian groups have given presentations, and children have enjoyed watching Romanian dancing when a troupe visited the school recently. The school currently has no links with local businesses, apart from practical support that has been given with redecoration. There are good links, however, with a local comprehensive school, and during the inspection some Year 6 children were able to work with a science teacher in the school laboratory. Teachers from the school plan the lessons alongside the secondary school teachers and the children complete the work using laboratory equipment. This very good quality provision helps the children to achieve above average standards in science by the age of eleven.
23. The provision for children's spiritual development is satisfactory. Good quality acts of collective worship are planned to ensure a broad coverage of issues using a variety of themes, and the teachers value the children's thoughts and feeling in "circle-times" and other discussion activities. There are some opportunities for reflection, as when children in one class were asked to consider the feelings of people at the time of the Armistice Remembrance Day, but this is not a strong feature of assemblies and lessons.
24. The provision for the children's moral development is good. Children know what is expected of them and are aware of the class rules. These are prominently displayed in classrooms and the teachers, who provide good role models, work consistently throughout the school day to enable the children to understand right from wrong. The schools behaviour policy places considerable emphasis on cooperation and respect for others and the members of staff on duty at lunchtime supervise children with care and respect.

¹ "Circle Time" is a session aimed at improving the children's personal, social and health education. The whole class usually sit in a circle with the teacher, and take turns to talk – expressing their views on a particular topic, relating some of their experiences or saying how they feel about something.

25. The provision for children' social development is good. The teachers and classroom assistants make good use of opportunities to develop social skills, encouraging children to work in groups during lessons. The children generally cooperate well. The positive effects of this good provision can be seen in many situations, for example when a Year 6 child showed concern for a friend who was crying and when other children help a child with Down's Syndrome to carry out day-to-day tasks. The children are given some opportunities to take responsibility, such as laying the tables for the second dinner sitting, collecting books and as library monitors. There are no significant opportunities, however for children to contribute in more formal ways to the life of the school, for example by taking part in a school council or other discussion or decision-making forum. The school has developed a very successful anger management programme that helps some children with severe difficulties to manage their problems and build positive relationships.
26. The provision for children's cultural development is satisfactory. The children are introduced to a range of authors, composers and artists in English, music and art and design lessons, representing a range of cultural traditions and influences. For example, African dance music is used when children are exploring a rainforest environment through dance. Religious education also provides an introduction to the main cultural traditions now established in these islands. However, the school does not make the best use of the diverse cultures represented in the local environment for this area of learning.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

27. The school continues to look after its children well. The caring culture promoted throughout the school by all staff ensures pupil well being. This, coupled with the warm and welcoming atmosphere that permeates the school, creates a good learning environment.
28. Procedures for monitoring attendance are rigorous and effective and any incidences of unexplained absence are immediately investigated. The school works closely with the educational welfare officer and other similar agencies. The school has a suitable child protection policy, with the nominated child protection officer having received the appropriate training. Many other staff members have received appropriate training in child protection matters, and also in first aid.
29. The combination of policies ranging from assertive discipline to anger management and the manner in which these policies are practised is a strength of the school. Every classroom displays the behaviour expectations, and with all staff acting as role models, very good standards of behaviour are maintained throughout the school.
30. The school has a comprehensive health and safety policy supported by a diligent governor with specific responsibility for health and safety matters. A detailed risk assessment has been carried out recently and the policy is at present being updated. Both the school and governors are very aware of health and safety requirements and take swift and efficient action when necessary.
31. Procedures for monitoring children's academic progress are satisfactory, and are beginning to be used effectively to raise expectations and achievement. There are good examples of marking, assessment and record-keeping, and of using the information gathered in the planning of lessons, for example in religious education. Practice is not consistent across the school however. For example in mathematics, and in English, marking is not used sufficiently to identify what the children need to do

to improve their work. This is an area for further improvement. The monitoring of personal development is satisfactory and the information gathered is recorded adequately and collated with records of academic progress as children move through school. The personal development of children with special educational needs is extremely well supported, though there is some lack of consistency in the quality of individual educational programmes. Overall, procedures for assessing the children's progress for ensuring their welfare are good. The school values its children and looks after them very well.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

32. Parents' have positive views of the school and their links with the school are also good. These aspects have improved since the last inspection. Parents appreciate the warm, caring and welcoming atmosphere the school radiates. They take advantage of the 'open door' policy and the approachable nature of the school staff. The inspection confirms their views, and also agrees with the one or two parents who expressed concern that higher attaining children are not always given sufficiently challenging work.
33. Parental involvement with work in the school is good, with many parents working in school on a regular basis. This parental help covers a wide range of activities and includes hearing readers, taking cookery lessons and supervising work with computers. Parents are very supportive of the school. For example, during the parents' meeting, parents constantly used 'we' when talking about the school. They also felt the school was not getting the recognition it deserved. The Friends of Staple Hill School are very active and raise considerable amounts of money for use by the school. These funds have enabled the school to completely refurbish the library to a very high standard and provide additional outside play equipment for the under fives. Members of staff also painted exciting murals on the exterior of the nursery unit.
34. Homework varies between classes and is inconsistent. However, the top years in Key Stage 2 receive regular homework and most parents hear their children read at home. The home/school agreement is scheduled for introduction in February 2001.
35. The quality of information to parents has improved since the last inspection when it was unsatisfactory and a key issue. The school prospectus and the annual governors' report to parents now include all the required information. However, the attendance figures appear as numbers only, and not percentages, so they cannot be compared with national data. Governors are currently reviewing the prospectus in an attempt to make it more 'user friendly'. Parents now enjoy more detailed annual reports, with comments enabling them to identify their children's needs. Parents of each year group receive termly newsletters, and memos are sent to parents as and when necessary. All entrances to the school are used to display appropriate information for parents. An evening held for parents with their children explaining the "numeracy hour" was well attended and some parents have expressed their appreciation of this. Parents of children with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language work closely with the school over their children's needs. The parental involvement in school and the efforts of the parent teacher association greatly enhance the children's learning opportunities.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

36. At the last inspection in 1998, the school lacked clear leadership and had not made satisfactory improvements following the previous inspection in 1996. There was insufficient focus on raising standards and no-one was checking the quality of teaching across the school, which was unsatisfactory. The new headteacher has remedied these serious defects in a very short period of time through very good leadership. She has brought a new sense of direction to the school, raised expectations of what the children can achieve and put in place clear systems for checking the quality of teaching and learning. A key feature in her success has been her ability to concentrate on the most important priorities to set the school on the right footing, conserving energy and commitment among the staff to carry forward all the other improvements that will be needed in the future. The most important and immediate effect of the new leadership initiatives has been a change to the school's vision statement to include a commitment to high standards. This has been quickly translated into increased targets for the school in the national tests for 11 year olds in English and mathematics, which have been achieved.
37. Within the school, the senior management team has reversed the decline in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school that had set in at the time of the last report. This aspect of management is now satisfactory. The Headteacher has helped individual members of the team to establish clear job descriptions that enable them each to fulfil a responsible role within the school aimed at raising standards and the quality of teaching. More formal procedures for appraisal and performance management are now in place to take this process further by revitalising this layer of management and ensuring that all participants are fully committed to the process. A weak point in the management of the school is the uncertainty over the deputy-head's role caused by the continuing long-term absence of the current post-holder. The special educational needs co-ordinator is fulfilling the post admirably in an acting capacity, giving the headteacher very good support, but in the present circumstances cannot properly develop a distinct managerial role at this level as well as fulfilling her other duties.
38. The largely new governing body are completely behind the headteacher in her aims and objectives and give her very good quality support. The governors have a very good picture of the school, built up by frequent visits and meetings and by some of them working in the school in a voluntary capacity. They are very willing to take initiatives, for example by ensuring that the school gets all the support it needs from the local authority and other agencies. They are also keen to act as a critical friend and ensure that the school delivers the best possible education to the children. The governing body oversees the budget, ensures that all proper financial procedures are followed and plays an active part in achieving best value in the purchase of goods and services. All statutory requirements are met, and the governors are assiduous in implementing new initiatives, such as the very good performance management procedures now in place. The school development-plan drives budget planning so that the maximum educational benefit is gained from all expenditure.
39. The school has a very significant special educational needs commitment, and fulfils its obligations to these children admirably in very difficult circumstances. The management of this provision is very good. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and all the paperwork is detailed, clear and meets the requirements of the Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs. The support the school receives from the two local education authorities (LEAs) it serves is very different, but the school goes to great lengths to ensure that all pupils with special educational needs receive the same high level of care. Nonetheless the imbalance in the two levels of LEA support is

hampering the school's provision and taking up too much of the co-ordinator's time. The co-ordinator gives good support to the class teachers, advising on the writing of individual education plans and on effective methods for addressing children's needs. The school also has a number of very skilled classroom assistants who give very good support to these children.

40. The staffing levels are satisfactory overall. There is an adequate number of teachers properly qualified for the primary age range. The arrangements for helping teachers who are new to the school to settle in are in the process of being updated, and are satisfactory. The arrangements for establishing newly qualified teachers on the staff are good, and help to ensure that these teachers quickly become effective members of the teaching team. Special educational needs assistants apart, there are sufficient classroom assistants in post, but in some lessons, particularly literacy and numeracy in Key Stage 1, the teachers do not have enough help in the classroom to ensure that all the children get the support they need.
41. The school's accommodation is satisfactory overall and allows the curriculum to be delivered in full. At the time of the inspection a redundant building was being converted to a dedicated nurture unit for children with special educational needs. On completion this addition will augment the current very good provision for children with behavioural difficulties. The nursery accommodation has a positive impact on the quality and range of learning and the play opportunities presented. There are bright displays and examples of children's work throughout the school. Five vibrant murals painted by staff and children featuring the school enliven the school hall and its surrounds. The library is a dramatic improvement since the last inspection report and is now a superb resource.
42. The caretaker and his staff work conscientiously to keep the school clean and tidy. However, this is much harder work than it should be because the contractors responsible for providing cleaners do not ensure that a full complement of competent staff is provided. The exterior of the school buildings is in poor condition and needs refurbishment or replacement, and the headteacher has ensured that this work has been put in hand. There are ample hard surfaced play areas with a secure outside area for the nursery children. The large playing field adjacent to the school is of ample size but unfortunately suffers from the attention of vandals. The school is well aware of this problem and addresses it on a regular basis. In addition to the nurture unit under construction, the school also has plans for a dedicated information and communication technology suite when funds allow.
43. Resources are satisfactory overall, enabling all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education to be taught properly. The number of computers in the school is just adequate, but the current arrangements for their use do not result in enough "hands-on" time for the children. The planned computer suite is designed to remedy this. The school has a satisfactory range of resources for special educational needs, but the school has to go to great lengths to secure the financial resources necessary to support those children with special needs that come into the school from the neighbouring local authority. The school makes good use of all the money it receives to support children with special educational needs, as it does with all additional funding.

44. Given the low starting point of many of the children entering the school, the quality of education now provided and the standards reached by the children at the age of eleven, the school gives good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

45. In order to consolidate the good gains already made, widen the learning opportunities for all the children in the school and enhance their personal development the headteacher and governors should:
- (1) Ensure that a wider range of teaching methods is deployed to include opportunities for all the children, and especially the more able, to undertake individual and extended investigations and research. (Paragraphs 1, 4, 5, 6, 9, 17, 18, 64, 71, 72, 76, 77, 94, 98, 104)
 - (2) Re-arrange the timetable so that the children do not spend too long in English and mathematics lessons. (Paragraphs 20, 64)
 - (3) Review the way support is given to children with special educational needs and who require extra help with literacy so that they do not miss other valuable learning opportunities. (Paragraphs 63,69,98)
 - (4) Provide a wider range of opportunities for children to show their initiative, develop independence as learners and take on responsibilities around the school. (Paragraphs 12, 25, 56, 64)

In addition to these key issues, the governors should consider the following further areas for improvement when drawing up their action plan:

- Find ways of using the cultural and ethnic diversity of the local community to improve the children's awareness and appreciation of the contributions that a range of cultures make to life in Britain today. (Paragraph 26)
- Monitor more closely the relative participation and performance of boys and girls. (Paragraph 7)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	82
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and children	45

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4%	15%	54%	28%	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons. Figures are rounded up to the nearest whole number and therefore the total may not equal 100%.

Information about the school's children

Children on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of children on the school's roll (FTE for part-time children)	45	384
Number of full-time children known to be eligible for free school meals		70

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of children with statements of special educational needs	3	8
Number of children on the school's special educational needs register	14	117

English as an additional language	No of children
Number of children with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of children
Children who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	27
Children who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	37

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.7
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered children in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000	30	29	59

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of children at NC level 2 and above	Boys	25	25	27
	Girls	26	29	29
	Total	51	54	56
Percentage of children at NC level 2 or above	School	86 (82)	92 (77)	95 (91)
	National	84 (82)	85 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of children at NC level 2 and above	Boys	26	27	27
	Girls	28	29	24
	Total	54	56	51
Percentage of children at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (82)	95 (91)	86 (84)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered children in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	26	32	58

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of children at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	20	22
	Girls	23	23	29
	Total	38	43	51
Percentage of children at NC level 4 or above	School	66 (67)	75 (80)	88 (87)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of children at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	16	19
	Girls	23	22	23
	Total	35	38	42
Percentage of children at NC level 4 or above	School	61 (47)	67 (51)	74 (67)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	80 (75)

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

Ethnic background of children

	No of children
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	2
Indian	4
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	310
Any other minority ethnic group	13

This table refers to children 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	8	2
Other minority ethnic groups	2	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	14
Number of children per qualified teacher	24.2
Average class size	27.4

Education support staff: YR – Year 6

Total number of education support staff	4.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	161

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of children per qualified teacher	22.5

Total number of education support staff	3.1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	110

Number of children per FTE adult	8.8
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	813928
Total expenditure	829506
Expenditure per pupil	1991
Balance brought forward from previous year	44358
Balance carried forward to next year	28780

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	429
Number of questionnaires returned	151

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	63	33	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	58	39	3	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	54	6	2	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	44	10	2	15
The teaching is good.	56	40	1	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	47	38	11	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	66	30	1	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	38	0	1	3
The school works closely with parents.	38	48	8	5	1
The school is well led and managed.	60	35	1	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	49	44	2	3	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	43	13	4	17

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

46. The school has a 90-place part-time nursery unit of two classes. The intake is made up of 20 per cent of children identified by the Local Education Authority (LEA) as children with special educational needs and the rest of the places are allocated by lottery. All prospective parents are offered a home visit in the summer term before children start as part of the very good links with parents established prior to children joining the nursery. Children enter the nursery with a wide range of attainment but by the time they enter reception classes, the majority are in line with the average for schools in the LEA. Initial assessments confirm that most children have poor speaking and listening and mathematical skills. Current inspection evidence shows that these have been very significantly improved in the Nursery and reception classes and many children are now moving steadily through the 'stepping stones' of the new early learning goals. By the time children are ready to start in Year 1, the majority of children are achieving well and attain the early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development. The quality of teaching in each area is good. In mathematical development, and communication, language and literacy, teaching is particularly strong and the majority of children exceed the goals in these areas. However, not all of these children move into the reception classes, which also take in children who have not had this level of support and therefore have lower levels of achievement.

Personal, social and emotional development

47. The majority of children show poor personal and social skills on entry to the nursery but by the time they enter reception classes, these are in line with the average for the LEA and the children are on course to meet the early learning goals for the "Foundation Stage." This is due in no small way to how well the nursery staff carefully and successfully introduces children to the world of learning through play. For example, good use is made of 'milk and fruit time' in the nursery and reception classes to develop children's social skills. Children are already able to take turns and share the resources in the nursery. They are confident in the routines of the class and show independence in their choice of activity. Children in the reception classes build on this and have good levels of self-esteem, which enable them to tackle working in groups with self-assurance. They are aware of the impact of their actions on others and are helpful to each other, for example, when changing for a physical education lesson or dressing before going out to play. They are greatly helped in developing their social skills by the very good examples set by all adults with whom they come into contact. The children are treated with respect and consideration and this helps to establish very good relationships between children and adults. This was well illustrated when a reception class teacher found some boys 'playing' war games and very carefully and sensitively moved their play to other things.

Communication, language and literacy

48. By the end of the foundation stage, most of the children have achieved the early learning goals in this area of learning. Children in both the nursery and reception classes enjoy listening to stories. They share books with each other and the higher attaining children in the reception classes often read a favourite story to their friends. Reception class children are developing good speaking and listening skills and listen attentively to their teachers and other adults. They respond well to questions and many take an active part in class discussions. Spoken language is encouraged in the nursery through rhymes and simple repetitive songs. Children greatly enjoy these opportunities as was seen when a visitor came and played a keyboard for both classes. The majority of children joined in with gusto and particularly enjoyed those songs with actions to them. Reception class children showed good listening skills during a physical education lesson in the hall and closely followed their teacher's instructions. Others showed during a lesson on letter sounds how well they could recognise and associate sounds with particular letters. There is good evidence of how elements of the Literacy framework are being used sensitively to prepare children for more formal learning. Good teaching of letter-sounds was observed in both reception classes and a noticeable feature of these was how well timed they were so as to maintain children's interest and concentration. Good use is made of opportunities to develop children's understanding of the written word and more able children are already writing simple sentences with clearly formed letters. The children in the nursery are encouraged to make marks with different pencils, pens and paint brushes, which are made readily available to enable the children to explore this element of their learning.

Mathematical development

49. By the end of the foundation stage, most of the children have achieved the early learning goals in this area of learning. Teaching and learning in mathematical development is particularly strong and the majority of children are already well on their way to achieving this learning goal by the end of reception classes. Many children can already count correctly to ten and beyond, as was demonstrated by one boy who counted to 32 correctly. Lower attaining children and children with special educational needs are able to match one-to-one when sorting objects and are very well supported in class by the teachers and other supporting adults, including parents. The children are encouraged to see mathematics in all activities right from the start in the nursery. Teachers and classroom assistants take every opportunity to introduce simple counting up to five and beyond, for example. They introduce the children to simple shapes such as squares, circles and triangles, which many of them can already correctly identify and sort. Both nursery and reception classes encourage the correct use of mathematical language so that children are clear about what they are saying and what it means.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

50. Most of the children enter the nursery with a basic knowledge of the world. Teachers are quick to widen this when children are confident enough to venture further afield. They are taken on a walk 'around our school' which helps to widen their horizons and develop their positional language. Reception class children develop a sense of time through looking at themselves 'growing up'. They can sort various materials using the initial sounds of the objects. Both classes make use of computers to help children develop mouse control skills as was seen when children used a 'paint' program. They were able to change the shape and size of the brush they were using and choose different colours to fill in their patterns. Children in both the nursery and reception

classes use the sand and water trays enthusiastically, and many make roads on play mats to develop their sense of the world about them. They learn through the use of construction kits how things can be fitted together, and through planting bulbs they learn how living things grow and relate this to themselves. The majority of children show a high level of interest in the wide variety of practical activities presented to them.

Physical development

51. By the end of the foundation stage the physical development of most children is in line with the early learning goals. Parents and staff have recently developed the outside play area for the nursery classes and it now provides a safe and imaginative area for children to play with large equipment. This is a significant improvement in provision since the last inspection. In a lesson seen in the hall, children showed a good sense of balance and an awareness of space in their movements. They displayed a good regard for their own safety and that of others. Fine motor skills and control of pencils, brushes, glue spreaders and scissors are developed through the many practical activities that children undertake. Teachers and other staff are quick to intervene to teach children such specific skills and guide their efforts.

Creative development

52. In their painting, drawing and collage work most children are well on the way to meeting the early learning goals by the end of the foundation stage. Nursery children enjoy using colour and do so imaginatively, as was observed when some nursery children experimented with colour mixing. Most children start at a low level of skill on entry to the nursery but by the time they enter reception they are at least in line with the average expectations for children this age. They enjoy singing and know by heart a range of rhymes and simple verses. Good use is made of percussion instruments in the nursery to encourage children to explore a range of sounds. All classes make good use of the 'home corner' for imaginative role-play and adults are quick to support and extend these opportunities. Such activities have a good impact on the development of children's speaking skills.
53. The good teaching and learning of children under five identified in the previous report continues to be a strength of the school. Current inspection evidence shows that the majority of children are very securely on target to achieve the expected standards by the end of the foundation stage. Teaching in both the nursery and reception classes is consistently good. In the reception classes well-planned activities are presented across the whole range of early learning goals, which help children to develop their knowledge and understanding. Teaching in the nursery classes is consistently good, with well structured and well-planned learning through play based on a clear view of how young children learn. This good teaching is well supported through the very good assessment and monitoring of children's learning in all classes of the foundation stage. It is detailed, comprehensive and continuous and used very effectively to plan future learning for individuals and groups of children.

ENGLISH

54. Results of the 2000 National Curriculum tests show that by the age of eleven, the children's attainment is well below the national average and the number of children achieving the higher level is well below average. When compared with schools having children from similar backgrounds, attainment is also well below average. There is, however, a much higher than average proportion of children with special needs in the school. The school's trend was slightly better than the national trend between 1997 and 1999 but it was not sufficient to bring the results any higher than well below average. Although test results have improved little from the last inspection, the school is placing high priority on improving aspects of learning throughout the school, particularly writing skills. An analysis of the latest test results undertaken in October 2000 confirms that the school exceeded its modest target of 60% of Year 6 children achieving Level 4 or above by 7%. The school has identified the introduction of "phonics" teaching and Additional Literacy Support (ALS), together with booster classes and improved teacher assessments as contributory factors.² Targets for 2001 and 2002 have been revised upwards taking the school to nearly in line with the national average from being well below. Evidence from the inspection supports this expectation. Lessons observed during the inspection and an examination of children's work indicate that recent initiatives are having a positive impact on children's learning throughout the school. Standards are beginning to improve, and this year's Year six children are on course to achieve somewhere near the national average attainment levels.
55. Trends show that the school has maintained broadly average results in reading at Key Stage 1, but that standards in writing have improved significantly since 1998. The school is now attaining at a level similar to that of comparable schools, and this is reflected by the inspection evidence.
56. Children at the end of Key Stage 1 have developed satisfactory speaking skills and good listening skills. Most children can listen attentively and talk with some confidence. Children at the end of Key Stage 2 also have good listening skills and have acquired some confidence in speaking. They talk enthusiastically about favourite books and authors and about enjoying the quiet reading sessions at the end of the lunch break for example. There were no opportunities to hear them speaking in more formal situations during the inspection. Most children in Years 5 and 6 demonstrate that they have listened carefully in lessons by giving relevant responses to questions.
57. Overall, the children's attainment in reading matches national expectations and the majority makes at least satisfactory progress. In Key Stage 2, children read accurately, talk about what they have read and give reasons for their choice of book. Higher attaining children at the end of Key Stage 1 read at the level appropriate for their ability. These children describe the plot and the characters in the stories they read. Older children predict what will happen in stories and make interesting comparisons between books and their film versions. Year 6 children, for example, talked about how the magic sequences in the Harry Potter books would be filmed. Children of all abilities are positive about reading and enjoy any opportunities they have to read and talk about books. Children were observed in lessons reading aloud and with confidence in groups. Higher attaining children read books they have chosen with fluency and

² "Phonics" refers to the teaching of the sounds that letters and combinations of letters make and the way these are used to make words, so that the children are better able to read and spell familiar words and work out new ones for themselves. "Additional Literacy Support" or ALS, is the support of groups of children who have been identified as achieving less well than they are judged capable of in order to bring them up to average standards.

interest. The children have satisfactory library skills. They know how to use the contents page to locate information in non-fiction books and how to use the index. Their knowledge of authors is satisfactory at Key Stage 2 because they have been introduced to a wide range of authors of different types of books in the literacy hour. This range of texts contributes to children's cultural development. The children's personal choice is often limited to the same author, however, and to one type of book.

58. Teachers use the first session of the literacy hour well to show children how to respond to text. This was demonstrated during a Year 6 lesson, for example, which focused on how the author had created suspense in a Harry Potter story. In a Year 4 lesson, in which the class were looking at 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe' they considered how the author made the characters react to their setting. Year 1 children were observed responding enthusiastically to the story of 'The Gingerbread Man'. Children of all ages and abilities are achieving well in this area of the subject.
59. By the end of Key Stage, 1 children's attainment in writing is average. Higher attaining children are beginning to develop a narrative style in their writing and usually use capital letters and full stops correctly. Lower attaining children are still struggling with letter formation and have a limited vocabulary. Children of average ability in Year 2 have reasonably well-formed and neat handwriting and higher attaining children are beginning to develop an individual style. By the end of Key Stage 2 children write in many forms and for different audiences. The presentation of their work, which was a weakness in the previous inspection, has improved. Their handwriting is reasonably neat and the quality of the content of their writing is now broadly in line with national averages. The scrutiny of work shows that all children have made at least satisfactory progress through the key stage in the use of vocabulary, dialogue and punctuation. At the end of each key stage, the children's literacy skills are broadly in line with expectations for their age.
60. The school has identified the need for more specific teaching of writing skills and opportunities for children to apply these skills in more extended work of their own. Planning for writing activities has shown improvement since the last inspection. The whole school emphasis on improving writing standards is increasing children's achievement. During the inspection, Year 5 classes were engaged in planning their own science-fiction story, for example, having read a story by Asimov, using planning sheets and other aids to help them.
61. Literacy lessons are well planned and usefully evaluated. The skills children have acquired during their literacy lessons are used well in other areas of the curriculum. In religious education, for example, the children have good opportunities to practise their writing skills, recording or re-telling stories from The Bible, such as the Christmas story. In history, the children's neat presentation contributed well to an effective display of writing about Tudor Houses in Year 5. Their speaking and listening skills are also practised and developed in "circle times" and in other lessons. A Year 1 class, for example, listened to the story of 'Dogger' and then a few children told the class about a time when they were lost and explained how they had felt at the time. These children spoke confidently and were able to give details in the correct sequence.

62. Children respond to their lessons enthusiastically. They listen well during whole class learning. Children in groups and those working on their own concentrate appropriately and show good collaboration skills when working together. This was seen in a Year 6 lesson where groups were working together identifying clauses in sentences. In a number of lessons, however, when the teacher is working with one of the groups, some children in other groups lose concentration, become noisy and do not produce an adequate amount of work.
63. Children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress and achieve well. Work is planned for their individual needs and very experienced and competent teachers and support staff withdraw them for additional provision. However, children are sometimes withdrawn for help with English during other lessons, and this denies them some important learning opportunities. Children with special educational needs achieve less well in lessons where there is no additional support for them and where the teacher is supervising other children during individual group work.
64. The quality of teaching is satisfactory over the school as a whole; in Key Stage 1, it is good overall, and is sometimes very good; in Key Stage 2, it is satisfactory, with some examples of good teaching. Where the teaching is good, planning is effective with clear aims; learning objectives are clear and the children know what is expected of them and what they will have learned by the end of the lesson. Lessons are generally well structured and teachers establish clear routines for presenting the phonic work at the beginning of the literacy hour lessons. They use a range of appropriate teaching strategies to meet the needs of the children and achieve the lesson objectives. In some lessons, the clear structure of the literacy strategy was followed and children were given time warnings, which kept the pace brisk. In most lessons, however, the teachers extended the time and the children were allowed to work too slowly on individual work, which lessened their achievement. The good teaching in Key Stage 1 had lively interaction, which held the children's interest and encouraged them to take an active part in the learning. The conclusion of lessons is generally used well to check the children's understanding and to clarify any misunderstandings. The teachers mark the children's books conscientiously, but their marking lacks consistency, and rarely identifies for children what they need to do to improve their work. This is particularly evident in respect of writing skills and is one reason for the children's relatively poor achievement in Key Stage 2. Relationships between children and teachers are good, and this helps the teachers to manage lessons effectively, but overall, the teachers tend to over-direct the children, giving them insufficient opportunities to talk to one another and in different formal settings. There are few opportunities to do this outside lessons, and therefore the children's speaking skills are not as developed as they could be.
65. Good long term planning for English ensures a comprehensive and balanced curriculum, enabling most children to achieve satisfactorily. Management of the subject is good. The coordinator has very good support from the literacy governor and the local authority literacy advisor. The adviser's support and guidance following the last inspection has improved the co-ordinator's skills in monitoring teaching and learning. The new initiatives that have been put in place to improve writing standards are beginning to have an effect, although individual targets for children are not yet systematically set throughout the school.

66. Resources are satisfactory. A range of fiction books is kept in each classroom and non-fiction books are housed in the library, which has been developed enormously since the last inspection. It is now very attractive, bright and cheerful and well organised, thanks to the efforts of some dedicated members of staff and voluntary helpers. All old books were discarded and replaced with the help of money raised by the Friends of the School. The books are shelved according to the Dewey system but also colour coded to help Year 2 children coming into Key Stage 2 and children with special needs. This reflects the very good support the school gives to children who need it.

MATHEMATICS

67. The school makes good provision for mathematics and by the time they leave, the children have made good progress compared to their attainment on entry. Their numeracy skills are in line with expectations at the end of both key stages.
68. Children in Year 2 and Year 6 attain the standards expected for their age in numeracy and all areas of mathematics (number, algebra, shape, space and measure and data handling). The 2000 national test results showed children at the end of both key stages attaining standards close to the national average, and close to those attained by children in similar schools. At age seven, 95 per cent of children attained at least the expected level 2, with 24 per cent attaining the higher level 3. Of children aged eleven, 75 per cent attained at least the expected level 4 and 26 per cent attained the higher level 5. This represents good improvement since the school was last inspected two years ago. This inspection found that the school is maintaining attainment levels that are in line with the national average, which represents satisfactory levels of achievement.
69. There are no marked differences between the performances of boys and girls, although of children aged eleven, more boys than girls attained at the higher level 5 in the national tests in 2000. Children with special educational needs are supported well and teachers are careful to ensure the full involvement of these children in mathematics lessons. They make good progress, although specific mathematics targets are not often identified on children' individual education plans. At times, however, children with learning difficulties are withdrawn from mathematics lessons for support with literacy skills, missing time that should be spent being taught appropriate mathematics skills.
70. By the age of seven, children have a good knowledge of place value to 100. They can identify simple two-dimensional and 3-dimensional shapes and use measuring instruments carefully, estimating before they measure. By the age of eleven, children can work out calculations in their heads quickly and use their knowledge of place value to aid them. They understand fractions and the relations between fractions and decimals. They have sound measuring skills and use and interpret a range of diagrams and charts. The children use their mathematics skills to solve problems expressed in words, and younger children regularly undertake investigations, such as finding as many ways as they can to make a given total. Older children too are given opportunities to use their mathematics skills to solving practical problems such as designing nets to make boxes.

71. The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics is satisfactory. In half the lessons observed, the teaching was good, with some examples of very good teaching. In good lessons, the children are encouraged to solve problems in their own way and are given opportunities to describe and explain their thinking processes to each other. In the less successful lessons, the teacher guides the children along too slowly, giving them too few opportunities to tackle problems their own way and explain their thinking. The pace of learning is pedestrian in these lessons, which fail to excite the children about number.
72. The teachers are familiar and secure with the National Numeracy Strategy, and apply this effectively. The three-part lesson structure is well established and planning is satisfactory, but the use of clear questions at the end of sessions to assess what children have understood is not consistent across the school. Aspects to be learned in each lesson are clearly defined in the planning and displayed on the board, but are rarely shared with the children when lessons begin or reviewed properly at the end of lessons. The teachers use a good range of mathematical vocabulary and children explain their work using the correct terminology. For example, in a lesson on “transformation operations”, children used such terms as “translation”, “rotation”, “reflection”, “vertex”, “horizontal”, “vertical” and “diagonal” correctly and with clear understanding.³ Teachers deliver the oral and mental sessions carefully. In response, the children show good mental agility and learn quickly. The main teaching activities involve children practising their skills and in this part of the lesson teachers manage children and resources efficiently. The analysis of children’s work demonstrated that teachers plan work for children with differing levels of understanding in each lesson. However, in some of the lessons observed, teachers did not expect enough of the more able children, with extension activities giving further practice of what had been learned, rather challenging the children to extend their thinking.
73. Throughout the school children are beginning to make use of information and communication technology effectively to support their work in data handling. Children use mathematics to help learning in other subjects. For example, children use accurate measuring skills in realising their designs in design and technology projects, practise weighing skills in food technology lessons and tabulate findings of their experiments in science.
74. Teachers use a range of strategies to assess the children’s attainment in mathematics. The results from the annual non-statutory tests are beginning to be used to track children’s progress from year to year and are also used to guide the school’s target setting. Each term ‘assessment days’ aid in the setting of individual and group targets, although the form these assessments take is not consistent across the school.
75. The school has made very good progress since the last inspection. The Numeracy Strategy has been adopted successfully and standards of attainment have risen alongside standards of teaching. The co-ordinator is effective in supporting and advising colleagues and in managing resources. She takes an active role in monitoring teaching, and uses her findings to give better support to colleagues, evaluate and increase the standards of attainment in the school and to identify ways in which to further improve teaching and learning. She has a clear vision for the future development of the school’s provision for mathematics over the next few years.

³ A “transformation operation” means changing a shape that is drawn on a grid by moving it to a different place (translation), rotating it about a fixed point or reflecting it, imagining a line as a mirror.

SCIENCE

76. Attainment in science at the end of both key stages has improved since the last inspection. This continues the trend of the past four years of a steady rise in standards. The inspection evidence suggests that attainment by the time children leave school this year should be above the national average. Similar evidence shows that attainment by the age of seven is already in line with the national average. These are both improvements from the last inspection. Inspection evidence shows however, that the school has not yet successfully addressed the issue of low attainment in investigation skills for higher attaining children by the time they leave the infants. Here teaching is more focused on ways of recording observations rather than on taking part in investigations. This remains an area of development for the school. The teaching of investigation skills in science in the junior classes is much better and is having a positive impact on raising standards by the age of eleven. The raising of standards has also been helped by more focused planning and teaching, which comes from the new scheme of work adopted by the school. In addition, the monitoring of teaching and planning by the subject coordinator over the past year has helped to give a clearer idea of how well children are progressing in their science work. Children with special educational needs and for whom English is not their first language are well-supported and make good progress.
77. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is good in Key Stage 2 and satisfactory in Key Stage 1. The majority of science teaching is well-planned, with clear learning objectives, reflecting the teachers' secure knowledge of the subject. Lessons are well-organised and activities are supported with good levels of resources. The teachers make good use of classroom assistants and volunteers, including parents, to support the children's learning. This results in the great majority of children being well motivated and interested. They behave well in lessons, work cooperatively together and show useful learning over time. An example was seen in Year 6 lessons on forces where groups of children were measuring the effects of different weights on the stretch of an elastic band and recording their information in the form of a graph. This was a clear extension of the work seen in a Year 4 class also on forces about the effects of friction on different surfaces. Both sets of lessons were characterised by well-planned and resourced activities, which helped to extend children's knowledge and understanding. The majority of children are clear about what they have to do because teachers give good, clear explanations and instructions. Many lessons are conducted at a good pace through the good use of questioning by teachers and the setting of time limits for work completion. All this helps children to stay focused on what they are doing and the majority work hard with a will to succeed. Good opportunities for cooperation and collaboration through group working are used to develop children's social skills. Few opportunities are allowed, however, for higher attaining children to set up their own experiments, however, and test things out for themselves. Too many experiments are still over directed by teachers, an issue identified in the last report. This remains an area of improvement for the school.
78. The school has now adopted a nationally approved scheme of work for science and this is having a noted impact on the ways in which science is taught and learned across the school. More detailed analysis of test data in science is now being used to analyse what children are learning and how future changes can be made to the curriculum. The coordinator is beginning to assume a more active role in the monitoring of teaching and learning in the subject; this remains an area of development for the school. The school has very good relationships with a local secondary school. Groups of Year 6 children visit regularly to improve their investigation skills and this helps them to prepare for the next stage of their education. Whilst some use of

numeracy skills is evident in how children record their observations, and speaking and listening skills are encouraged through question and answer sessions, the use of information and communication technology is less well developed. The school is aware of this and the coordinator has plans to address this aspect of the subject's development.

ART AND DESIGN

79. Standards of work achieved at both 7 and 11 are generally above those expected nationally, maintaining the good levels of achievement reported by the previous inspection. The comprehensive portfolios of samples of children's work put together by the school reflect a wide range of two-dimensional and 3-dimensional activities at both key stages. All children, including those with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, make good progress and achieve well.
80. Key Stage 1 children are able to use large brushes when painting big pictures, for example of Humpty Dumpty, and show finer motor control when painting smaller pictures. They were seen using these skills to create pictures of "Funny Bones", a character in a story-book they were reading. The children's paintings of different sizes are interesting and colourful, showing their improving awareness of space. The children know how to mix colours, using both paints and pastels, and use these skills to obtain the colours they require. They also develop good observational skills at an early age. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, the children were encouraged to look carefully at their reflection to produce a self-portrait, and used their observational and colour-mixing skills to match hair, skin and eye colour. The children are also involved in three-dimensional work, for example in making Chinese dragons using folded paper, and in making a larger dragon as part of the Chinese New Year celebrations. The children are taught the basic skills they will need before they start a topic so that they can practise and improve these skills in their work.
81. The children use a variety of media in Key Stage 1, such as pastels, charcoal, textiles, clay and printing techniques, and the teachers keep examples of their work in a portfolio for future reference. This helps to ensure that Key Stage 2 children build successfully on the skills they have already acquired. At this stage, the children look more closely at the works of great artists, using elements of the different styles as a basis for their own work. Year 6 children, for example, are able to produce good quality paintings in the style of Manet, Van Gogh, Monet and Renoir. They are able to express opinions and explain why they prefer the work of one artist to that of another. The children continue to develop their control of tools and techniques and their skills of direct observation. They show an understanding of tone when using paints and pastels to create portraits and pictures of flowers and buildings from direct observation. They experiment to find the most suitable medium, for example when deciding whether to use pencils, charcoal or chalk when drawing vegetables. They use various materials for three-dimensional work, including clay to make tiles for relief designs and paper for folding into three-dimensional designs. Cross-curricular links are made when children make clay models and masks as part of their work on Greeks and Egyptians. There is also a comprehensive portfolio of work in Key Stage 2. This shows the full range of their work, illustrating the progress made in the areas of art and design throughout the key stage.

82. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers guide children well but also allow them freedom of expression. Children in both key stages respond well to art and design lessons. They work hard to achieve their targets and are able to explain what they like and what works well. They are confident enough to share their learning with other children in the class. Throughout the school, children are generally well behaved in lessons. They listen well, and accept advice to improve the quality of their work. Planning is seen by the coordinator and there is a good range of resources, but monitoring of lessons is not yet taking place so there is no overview of the quality of teaching and learning across the school as a whole.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

83. Standards of work achieved at both 7 and 11 are in line with national expectations. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards reached were below national expectations. All children, including those with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and good progress in Key Stage 2. Design and technology is effectively linked to other subjects, such as when making musical instruments.
84. Although no lessons were seen at Key Stage 1, children's work on display and in portfolios show that they are able to use a variety of materials to make both large and small models. The large Chinese dragon on display in the corridor, and smaller ones made with concertina-folded paper inside the classroom are good examples of their work. Children have experience of using fabrics when making puppets, and they learn skills to help them join fabrics in different ways. Key Stage 1 children also experience food technology, but the skill development in this area is less defined than in other areas of technology where comprehensive skill lists have been prepared for all year groups. A good range of construction materials is available to support the subject in the infants.
85. By the age of 11, children are able to plan their work by drawing designs. They use labels to explain their diagrams and design templates, for example when making purses. They choose suitable materials to construct their designs from a limited range provided and evaluate their work. They ask questions such as "did I have to make immediate changes?" and "did I choose the right materials?" The children learn new skills such as scoring paper and exploring different ways of joining materials when they begin a new topic. A display in Year 6, for example, shows different ways of joining wood in preparation for making a shelter. Children in a Year 5 class have made bread in various shapes and sizes after an investigation into different types of shop bread. Their evaluations include ideas for improvement. They know that white rolls rise more than brown rolls because white flour is lighter than brown flour, making good links with their studies of materials in science. Health and safety is considered at all times, as was exemplified in a good lesson in which children were introduced to the correct use of craft knives.
86. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and the teachers have clear aims and objectives for the children's learning. Interest is stimulated and children respond well to their tasks, showing care in their work. The co-ordinator's portfolio and skills' lists show development across the age groups. She monitors planning and has improved the quality and range of resources since the last inspection. Lessons are not being monitored, however, to ensure consistent quality of teaching and learning.

HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

87. Due to the way the subjects are timetabled in blocks over different terms, during the course of the inspection only one geography and two history lessons were seen. Evidence from children's previous work and current displays and from talking to the two coordinators, class teachers and children indicate that the quality of work in both subjects is in line with the standards expected, reflecting satisfactory teaching and learning. This finding is similar to that of the last inspection. The work that the children have done over the year shows that they are experiencing the full range of programmes of study of the National Curriculum. They make sound progress through a range of topics that are well supported by educational visits and the work of theatre groups and other visitors to school. Good use is made of the local area for studies in history and geography. The planning for both subjects shows that they are taught through a cycle of topics which provide appropriate coverage of the times and places identified in the National Curriculum. Children with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language are well supported and make good progress.
88. The development of mapping skills across the school is particularly good. It is progressive and sequential and helps to consolidate and extend children's knowledge and understanding as they move through the school. Evidence of this was seen in a Year 5 geography lesson where children were discussing and plotting the effects of traffic changes to the local High Street. Good use was made of children's information and communication technology skills in this lesson to record information on a computer database to support their learning. The discussion helped to consolidate and extend their speaking and listening skills as they debated the alternative routes their choices would involve. Similar discussion skills were seen in a Year 3 history lesson where children were asked to compare the lives of children in Ancient Greece with their own, and make reasoned choices as to which they would prefer. The lesson made good use of different sources of information and enabled children to see clearly the different ways in which the past can be represented. In Year 2, the use of a video on Florence Nightingale helped the children to build a clearer picture of what the past was like. In all the lessons seen, the majority of children show a positive attitude to their school-work. They are interested in the activities their teachers present and are eager to participate in class discussions. Children develop their knowledge and understanding of Britain in the past through studies of the Tudors and Victorians. Their knowledge and understanding of other cultures is extended through topics on the Romans and Ancient Greece. Good use is made of educational visits to Caerleon and Red Lodge Tudor House, for example, where children dress in period costume. Similar visits support children's geographical topics. For example, children in the infant classes make very good use of the local area in the work on journeys to school and 'Around our School'.
89. In the lessons seen the children were attentive to their teachers and willing to take part in the activities. The use of schemes of work to guide the planning of the curriculum, which is an improvement since the last inspection, is helping to improve the quality of teaching.
90. Both the history and geography coordinators have worked closely together to maintain the profile of the subjects across the school. Both coordinators are beginning to assume more active roles in the monitoring of the teaching and learning in their subject areas. The school has recently become involved with courses to assess children's attainment.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

91. Standards attained by children at age seven and age eleven are below expectations because of the limited hardware currently available, although rapid progress is being made to make good the deficiencies. The co-ordinators have designed a very good programme for the next two years designed to bring the standards attained by children up to the expected levels for their ages. The children are making as much progress as can be expected in view of this limitations.
92. Most children in the school can use the Windows operating system to load a desired program. Many can gain access to a specific file, both those saved onto a disk and those on the hard drive. Throughout the school the children develop and practise word processing skills. By the end of Key Stage 2, children can edit a piece of text, and rearrange it by highlighting an area of text to 'drag and drop' it into a new location. They change the print style, size and colour, use a spellchecker and print off their own work. They are given opportunities to draft a piece of written work directly to the word processor, although this does not happen often enough for children to gain sufficient practice at these skills. Children throughout the school use data-handling programs at appropriate levels to enter and present data, although older children are not confident at interpreting the information they collect. Younger children use a floor robot to learn elements of control technology, whilst older children program buzzers to sound at a set time.
93. Children are beginning to use the Internet, although at present only the computer in the library is on-line, so their skills in this area are limited. Currently they visit websites that interest them personally (Buffy the Vampire Slayer or Neighbours for example). The school safeguards against children visiting undesirable websites by ensuring they do not have unsupervised access to the Internet. They have not used e-mail, and their use of computers to create multimedia presentations is mainly limited to importing pictures into their written work.
94. The teaching of ICT observed during the inspection was good. At present the school has one computer in each classroom with a few spare workstations stored in corridors. Teachers demonstrate a new use or skill to the whole class and children undertake the activity themselves in pairs during other lessons. Whilst not ideal, this is as effective as it can be because children are enthusiastic and keen to use the computers, and pay good attention during the demonstrations. Nonetheless, the lack of equipment means that they have insufficient 'hands-on' time to build a secure skills-base from which to develop confidence and a more sophisticated use of the technology. They do not have the opportunity to undertake independent research nor work at the computers unsupervised. Teachers are aware of the children who have extensive experience of computers outside school, and seek to challenge them, without compromising the learning of those less fortunate.
95. The joint co-ordinators are knowledgeable, but at the moment both are on long-term leave. They are very conscious of their colleagues' lack of confidence in their own ICT skills and have worked hard to identify those areas of the ICT curriculum where teachers feel most insecure. The school is a considerable way down the road towards its aim for a computer suite, in which a whole class can learn in pairs and gain greater 'hand-on' experience. The co-ordinators have a clear vision as to how this will extend children's experience and skills and also give them further opportunities to make use of these skills to support work in other subjects.

MUSIC

96. Satisfactory standards have been maintained since the last inspection. The children sing well in both key stages. In Key Stage 1, they sing songs and nursery rhymes in tune under the teachers' direction and sing quietly or loudly as the song demands. In Key Stage 2, the children sing a range of songs with a good sense of mood and tempo. They keep their parts well when singing rounds and have a good sense of rhythm. It was not possible to observe any children composing and performing music in Year 6, but the work being done in Year 4 and Year 5, indicates that the children are on course to reach expected standards in these areas by the end of the key stage. They listen to pieces of music from a range of cultures and historical periods, learning to identify different musical elements and instruments and the way these are used to create different atmospheres and serve different purposes. For example, Year 4 children listened to three pieces of music from Europe, Japan and New Mexico, all intended to represent different aspects of water. They suggested what each piece made them think of, then collaborated as a class under the teacher's skilled direction, to produce their own pieces incorporating a crescendo and a diminuendo to represent a rainstorm. Excellent teaching in this lesson enabled all the children to understand the process of composing and performing a piece for a desired effect and to appreciate and enjoy working as part of a large ensemble.
97. The children also read musical scores appropriate for their age. In Key Stage One, they use and read pictures and symbols to represent musical sounds and follow a conductor when playing their pieces on percussion instruments, as was illustrated by tapes made of some of their efforts. In Key Stage 2, the children gradually develop an understanding of more formal musical notation. In a Year 5 lesson, for example, the children showed their knowledge of the basic formal notations for rhythm patterns by matching them to a piece of Japanese drum music. They showed a good sense of rhythm and a lively interest in performing the music, though they did not get as far as doing this in the lesson.
98. Too few full lessons were seen to make a general judgement about the standard of teaching in the subject. The quality of teaching varied from satisfactory to excellent in the lessons that were observed. The excellent teaching in Year 4 engaged the children's interest from the start in a selection of well-chosen taped pieces of music, leading into a whole class activity that required the children to fully co-operate in generating very quiet sounds with their bodies and gradually making them louder, then quieter again. The teacher's enthusiasm and quiet determination succeeded in gaining the full and eventually enthusiastic participation of even the most reluctant children, so that by the time the class moved on to using instruments, every child knew that the outcome would be worthwhile and therefore gave their full attention to it. Unfortunately, a number of children missed this stimulating lesson because they were withdrawn for support with additional literacy. The teachers do not always use a wide enough variety of methods to gain and keep the children's interest and enthusiasm, and this sometimes leads to a loss of attention, slowing down the pace of learning. This happens, for example, when pieces of music are played that excite the children's interest, but without the opportunity for them to experiment for themselves.

99. The best teaching is informed by a good knowledge of how the children learn best as well as attention to appropriate skills for the age group concerned. The teachers enjoy good relationships with the children and generally manage them well, even when their behaviour is quite challenging. They have a good informal knowledge of how much the children know and understand, but do not always plan lessons to develop their skills as far as is possible, especially in composing and performing. The co-ordinator organises the subject effectively, but does not check on what level of challenge is being offered to the children as they progress through the school, or the standards achieved.
100. The school has maintained its tradition of bringing performers into the school to enrich the children's experience, and of encouraging the school choir to give performances in the community. The members of the choir have also been taken to see a live orchestral performance in Bristol and some of them wrote a report about it for a local newspaper, which helped them to develop their literacy as well as their critical skills. The range of music the children are exposed to helps them to appreciate different cultures, and the experience of co-operating and collaborating to create performances helps their social development. Music is also used effectively on occasions to create a reflective atmosphere in assemblies. The children who have peripatetic lessons on brass instruments make good progress and reach above average standards for their age. There are also recorder lessons in Key Stage 2 and an infant music club, enabling those children with the interest to develop their talents.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

101. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in the teaching of games and the standards that the children achieve in this area of the subject have improved. There have also been improvements to the curriculum, with due attention to dance and gymnastics built into the curriculum, and in the quality of teaching and learning by the inclusion in lessons of evaluation by the children of their own efforts.
102. At the end of Key Stage 2, children achieve well in games and reach standards in line with expectations. The higher attaining children have above average ball skills and awareness of space when playing netball, for example, because of excellent teaching that challenges them to make the most of their talents. Average attaining children pass a ball accurately and move into a sensible space to receive the ball. Lower-attaining children also achieve well because of the support they are given to extend their passing and receiving skills as far as they can. The children enjoy good relationships in lessons and co-operate well in team games. They enjoy competition, but have a good sense of sportsmanship in response to the good example and high expectations set by their teachers. Their behaviour is good because they are purposefully engaged, and they show high levels of concentration and effort.
103. The level of performance observed in gymnastics at Key Stage 2 was not as good as in games. The children performed a series of rolls at floor level and linked their movements together with increasing control. Some good teaching encouraged them to improve the poise and balance of their movements, but they did not put the same effort in and achieve as well in this area of the subject as they did in the games lesson because the expectations set for them were not as high and the pace of the lesson was slower. The only dance lessons that were seen were in Key Stage 1, in which the children achieved well. For example, they used their bodies to move as the animals portrayed in the story they were listening to. The children thoroughly enjoy the creative aspect of these lessons and put themselves wholeheartedly into their roles, sometimes beyond the confines of the lesson. Their rate of working is high and they extend and improve the range of movements they use.

104. The standard of teaching is good overall and never less than satisfactory. In the best lessons, the teachers are active and enthusiastic, and this inspires and motivates the children to work hard and use their imagination and skills to the maximum. Another aspect of the most successful lessons is the balance the teachers achieve between giving the children instructions as a whole class, guiding them as they work in groups and leaving them some time to develop individual skills and group co-operation. Occasionally, the teacher spends too much time with some groups, allowing others to lose concentration and misbehave, but as a rule most of the children work well unsupervised and stay on the task they have been set. In some lessons, teachers over-direct the children and do not give them enough encouragement and support to explore their own ideas and extend themselves.
105. The co-ordinator manages the subject well, giving good leadership and direction and ensuring that a balance is achieved between the different strands of the subject and that there is a good supply of resources for all the planned activities. All the children have the opportunity to learn to swim and to acquire the basic skills of water safety, and most of them achieve at least the minimum expected standard before they leave the school. There are after-school clubs for dance, netball, football, rounders and country dancing, which are all well supported. The children achieve well in these activities and the teams that represent the school in team games are very successful. All teams are open to boys and girls and there is complete equality of opportunity in all activities.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

106. Attainment at the last inspection at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 was judged to be in line with the standards expected in the locally agreed syllabus. Children made satisfactory progress. Since then the school has maintained these standards.
107. At the age of seven, children's knowledge and understanding of religious education is in line with the new locally agreed syllabus. They can express their feelings about others with good explanations, for example, as to why someone is their friend, using words like 'trust' and 'being kind'. They explain clearly why people go to church and what they pray for, for example praying for a friend who is in hospital. They have a sound knowledge of the stories of religious festivals and celebrations of faiths other than Christianity, for example Diwali and the Chinese New Year, and Year 2 children have constructed a model of a Chinese dragon as part of their learning. They know the Christmas story and can retell it showing a satisfactory understanding of the events.
108. At the end of Key Stage 2, children have an appropriate knowledge and understanding of religion and of the importance people who follow different faiths place in their beliefs. They know the important feasts of the Christian Church such as Easter and can describe clearly the main events of Easter including the Passover meal. They also have a satisfactory knowledge of some of the stories from the Old Testament, such as the story of Moses and the Exodus from Egypt. They have a basic understanding of the importance of symbols in different religions, for example 'The Five Ks' of the Sikh religion and the menorah in Judaism. The samples chosen for the portfolio of religious education work are of a good standard. The work is very well presented in all year groups. It is presented in a variety of interesting ways including picture stories and answering given questions. Most children are achieving satisfactorily in terms of their earlier attainment.
109. The quality of teaching is predominantly good. It is good overall in Key Stage 1 and satisfactory in Key Stage 2. A key strength in the teaching is that lessons are generally

planned to take account of the children's previous learning and experience. The good lessons observed demonstrated the teachers' good subject knowledge, which was reflected by the clearly defined objectives in the lesson plans. In one very good lesson in a Year 2 class, the teacher used the story of Joseph to show the children that there is always a choice to be made between right and wrong and that only the individual can make that choice. This lesson was enlivened by the use of 'props' (a coat of many colours) and very good story telling skills, which kept the children spellbound. The school has begun to include assessment of the children's work in religious education in the topic plans at Key Stage 1. At Key Stage 2 the pupil completes an assessment sheet once a term. This gives some idea about what knowledge and understanding has been gained over a period of time and contributes to the successful planning of future lessons. The subject makes a good contribution to the children's literacy through reading and writing and giving opportunities for the children to express their own points of view.

110. Since the last inspection, the recently formed local authority has issued an agreed syllabus, which the school has used, together with some programmes of study from government guidelines. These have formed the basis for the scheme of work, which gives a good balance to the curriculum. The coordinator provides effective leadership in terms of planning and providing resources for the subject, but still has insufficient time to monitor the teaching and learning across the school. The resources are good, offering a wide range of books, videos and artefacts, which support the topics in the scheme of work.