

INSPECTION REPORT

MARKS GATE INFANT SCHOOL

Romford

LEA area: Barking and Dagenham

Unique reference number: 101210

Headteacher: Mrs A Vinters

Reporting inspector: Mr J Tyler
20506

Dates of inspection: 22nd to 25th January 2001

Inspection number: 211122

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Community
School category:	Infant
Age range of pupils:	3 -7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Lawn Farm Grove Chadwell Heath Romford Essex
Postcode:	RM6 5LL
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev R Gayler
Date of previous inspection:	22 nd February 1999

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
John Tyler 20506	Registered inspector	Science Geography Music	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils' taught? What should the school do to improve further?
Viv Phillips 9053	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for it's pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Lyn Adams 23354	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Art and design Design and technology English as an additional language	How well is the school led and managed?
Shirley Lee 19542	Team inspector	Mathematics Physical education Religious education Equality of opportunity	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
John Linstead 20948	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology History Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Marks Gate Infant School is slightly larger than most schools of the same type. The 309 pupils are organised into nine infant classes and a nursery that the youngest children attend part time. Most pupils live on the estate that surrounds the school, which is one of the poorest in the borough. About 30 per cent of full-time pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average. The number of girls and boys is broadly balanced. The number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than in most schools nationally. There are 39 pupils on the school's register of special educational needs, giving a proportion that is below the national average. However, a significant number of pupils with special educational needs are identified but not placed on the register and the true proportion is above the national average. Pupils enter the school with attainment that is, on balance, below that in nearby schools.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school. Children make good initial progress and then steadily gain in knowledge and skills so that, by the end of Year 2, they attain standards that are broadly in line with national expectations. In relation to their starting points, therefore, pupils achieve well in these aspects of learning. Their understanding, such as how to apply knowledge and skills in unfamiliar situations and think creatively, does not develop quite so well. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, helped by schemes of work that set out systematically what needs to be taught each year. Sound management has led to improvement since the last inspection, putting right the significant weaknesses identified at that time. The school has maintained its strengths such as fostering pupils' personal development. The school now offers sound value for money.

What the school does well

- Achievements in reading and numeracy skills are good.
- Children make good progress through the Foundation Stage, especially in their personal, social and emotional development and mathematics.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and good relationships.
- The school successfully nurtures pupils' personal development and wellbeing.

What could be improved

- The school does not have its own educational vision focusing sharply on raising standards.
- The range of stimulating activities and enriching experiences to extend learning is somewhat limited.
- Teaching does not focus as successfully on pupils' understanding as on their knowledge and skills.
- Assessment information is not used effectively to set work that appropriately challenges pupils of all abilities.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in February 1999 the school has made significant improvements in planning the curriculum and the overall quality of teaching, especially the organisation of lessons. The monitoring of planning and teaching has had a positive impact. Assessment procedures are clearer, but information is still not used well for planning further work. Individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are now more precise and effective. Attendance has steadily improved, though it remains well below the national average. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 show greater independence. The school is now meeting its statutory responsibilities and is beginning to evaluate its performance and cost effectiveness more methodically. Overall, these sound improvements have helped to raise standards in national tests and laid a solid foundation for further development.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools*
	1998	1999	2000	2000
Reading	E	D	C	B
Writing	E	E	D	C
Mathematics	C	C	B	A

<i>Key</i>	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

* This refers to schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Many children start Nursery with quite a low level of skills, especially in speaking and listening. They make good progress in the areas of learning for this age group. By the end of the Reception classes, standards are broadly in line with national expectations. They are above expectations in mathematics, but despite significant progress, remain below expectations in spoken language. Children make good progress through this stage of the school, laying firm foundations for Years 1 and 2.

The trend in performance in the national assessments at the end of Year 2 has been steadily upward since 1998. In English, the improvement from year to year is noticeably faster than the national rate. For several years, girls have performed better than boys in English and mathematics. Standards during the inspection broadly match the most recent results in the table above. Pupils' knowledge and skills are generally at a higher level than their understanding. Pupils have a solid grasp of basic skills in reading, writing and number. Although pupils make good progress with their skills in speaking and listening, standards remain below national expectations at the end of Year 2. Standards in science are in line with national expectations. Work seen in other subjects was in line with expectations for the ages of the pupils.

Considering their attainment on entry to the school, pupils generally achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress. When their precise needs have been clearly identified, they make good progress in work that is designed to match their needs. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress, helped by the school's emphasis on speaking and listening. Higher-attaining pupils sometimes achieve less than they should, when work is not challenging enough.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils enjoy school and have good attitudes to work. They are usually happy and willing to do what is asked of them.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall. Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. A few find it hard to follow the codes of conduct in the same way as everyone else.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are positive. Personal development is good because pupils are given opportunities to take responsibility and encouraged to care for others.
Attendance	Despite the school's success in improving the level of attendance, it remains well below the national average and is unsatisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	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 quality of teaching is satisfactory in English, mathematics and overall. Teaching was at least satisfactory in every lesson seen, good or better in 34 per cent and very good in six per cent. Although there are slightly greater strengths in some classes than others, for example in the Nursery, it is the consistency of teaching across the school that is of particular significance. It ensures that pupils learn soundly, whichever class they are in, and make appropriate progress from year to year. A strength throughout the school is the quality of relationships. Teachers and assistants treat pupils with respect and show kindness, but are firm when necessary so that everyone can get on with their work.

Teachers plan lessons with clear learning objectives and the resulting focus helps pupils to make solid gains in knowledge and develop their skills. They often set rather low expectations of how much work pupils should complete, especially during long lessons and sometimes plan an insufficient variety of activities to maintain pupils' enthusiasm.

Pupils acquire knowledge and skills well in most subjects, but their understanding is developed less successfully. Teachers often miss opportunities to extend understanding by making links between different subjects and aspects within subjects. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught soundly, though opportunities to practise them are sometimes missed. Teachers' questioning is usually successful in checking and extending pupils' knowledge, and sometimes their understanding. The marking of pupils' work is not as helpful as it could be in Years 1 and 2. Pupils receive relatively few helpful comments. Information from marking is not used consistently to help plan further work at the right level for all pupils. Higher-attaining pupils are sometimes not sufficiently challenged. Some pupils with special educational needs receive effective, individual support from well-trained learning support assistants and make rapid progress in reading and writing.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Schemes of work ensure that pupils develop knowledge and skills systematically from year to year. The curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. It is not sufficiently enriched by a range of stimulating and relevant activities, such as extra-curricular activities and visitors. Links between subjects are not explicit in the schemes of work and so teachers miss opportunities to deepen pupils' understanding. Students helping in the school make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory provision enables pupils to make appropriate progress. Those who receive help that is focused on their precise needs make good progress. Some needs are not identified as early as they might be, nor with enough precision.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The school's emphasis on developing spoken language is effective in supporting pupils who speak English as an additional language. With limited, external support, teachers and assistants support these pupils appropriately.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school promotes moral and social development well, emphasising care and concern for others in its everyday routines. Pupils are given opportunities to take responsibility and use their initiative. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school is successful in its aim to care well for pupils by ensuring their welfare, protection and personal development. Pupils' progress is assessed adequately but insufficient use is made of the information gathered to raise standards. The school has built satisfactory links with parents and annual reports about pupils' progress are detailed and helpful.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is soundly managed. The clear social vision, which has led to strengths in pupils' personal development, is not matched by a clear educational vision. The school is committed to further improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is loyal and supportive and fulfils its statutory responsibilities. Governors are not yet fully involved in determining priorities for educational improvement and so are not satisfactorily fulfilling one of their major functions.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Monitoring of teaching and learning has helped to improve aspects of teaching and the curriculum. Subject co-ordinators monitor planning and pupils' work but there is insufficient focus on standards.
The strategic use of resources	The good number of teaching and support staff and sound resources help pupils' learning. The accommodation is good. The school makes satisfactory use of available finances and considers spending decisions carefully.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>Their children like school.</p> <p>They feel comfortable to approach the school with suggestions or concerns.</p> <p>Teaching is good.</p> <p>The school helps children to become mature and responsible.</p>	<p>The amount of homework.</p> <p>The range of activities outside the classroom.</p>

Only 10 per cent of survey forms were returned and 8 parents attended the meeting with the registered inspector. The inspection largely agreed with the views expressed. The quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in every lesson seen. The amount of homework is appropriate for the ages of the pupils and supports their learning in school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Many children start Nursery with quite a low level of skills, especially in speaking and listening. They make good progress in the areas of learning for this age group. By the end of the Reception classes, standards are broadly in line with national expectations. They are above expectations in mathematics, but despite significant progress, remain below expectations in their spoken language. Children make good progress through this stage of the school, laying firm foundations for Years 1 and 2.
2. Results in the 2000 national assessments at the end of Year 2 were similar to the national average in reading, below average in writing and above average in mathematics. However, when set in the context of similar schools (those with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals) the results were above average in reading, average in writing and well above average in mathematics. For several years, girls have performed better than boys in English and mathematics. The trend in performance has been steadily upward since 1998. In English, the improvement from year to year is noticeably faster than the national rate. Standards seen during the inspection broadly match the 2000 results. Pupils achieve well in terms of knowledge and skills, which are generally at a higher level than their understanding. This is partly because of the way that they are taught, but also because their spoken language skills are below national expectations and so many find it hard to express ideas lucidly. Pupils have a solid grasp of basic skills in reading, writing and number. Although pupils make good progress with their skills in speaking and listening, standards remain below national expectations at the end of Year 2.
3. The 2000 teacher assessments for science at the end of Year 2 were below the national average. Although more pupils reached the expected Level 2 than nationally, fewer reached the higher Level 3. These assessments were above the average for similar schools. Standards seen during the inspection were in line with national expectations. Work seen in other subjects was in line with expectations for the ages of the pupils, though they are achieving less than they could in humanities (geography and history).
4. Overall, pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress. When their precise needs have been clearly identified, they make good progress in work that is designed to match their needs. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress, helped by the school's emphasis on speaking and listening. Higher-attaining pupils sometimes achieve less than they should, when work is not challenging enough.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

5. There has been steady improvement in pupils' attitudes and behaviour since the last inspection. Attendance rates have improved for the last two years, but have not yet reached a satisfactory level.
6. Attitudes are good. Pupils like school. The youngest children come into the Nursery and Reception classes happily without being anxious about leaving their parents. Pupils of all ages are pleased to find out what they are going to do in lessons. Even when lessons are dull, pupils are usually willing to have a go at the tasks set. They enjoy activities that are interesting and give them the chance to practise their skills, particularly those that help them to understand their work and experiences better. In Year 1 circle time, they responded very well to the chance to express their feelings about what makes them sad and to have one wish for what would make things better.
7. Most children are well behaved in lessons and around the school. A few children in each age group find it difficult to understand and follow simple codes of conduct. Sometimes the problems they have in listening and doing what is asked result in distractions for others and restlessness in the classroom. In general, teachers manage the class effectively so that the overall standard of behaviour is good enough to ensure that pupils can still learn as expected. In a few cases, pupils do not behave as well as they could because the work they are asked to do is not matched closely enough to their different skills and needs. Behaviour in the playground is robust and energetic, but any conflicts reflect the age group, rather than being a sign of a bullying culture. Children own up quickly when they upset someone and are

happy to make friends again, with support from adults supervising playtime. There are no permanent exclusions. Overall, behaviour is satisfactory.

8. Relationships are good. Adults and children relate well to each other. Pupils work and play together constructively. There are the usual minor arguments as the youngest children learn to share and take turns but, generally, there is great goodwill among pupils who are happy to learn how to get on with others. They respond well to the good example set by the staff, led by the headteacher, of how to be co-operative and to show care and consideration for others. They worked very well as a team to present a lively class assembly based on 'We're going on a Bear Hunt'.

9. Personal development is good as a result of the attention given to this by the school. Pupils are encouraged to think about other people and how their behaviour affects their classmates, for example, if they are unkind or talk while another child is trying to present work to the class. They are quick to apologise when they upset someone. As a result, pupils develop a good understanding of the effect their actions have on others even if they are not always able to do what they know is right. They enjoy having the chance to show that they can be responsible and use initiative, as with putting out apparatus for physical education. Their responses to religious education lessons show that they have good levels of respect for other people's beliefs and values. They show increasing tolerance and interest in different points of view.

10. Attendance is unsatisfactory. It is well below average, with unauthorised absence above average. There are a few pupils whose ill health or personal circumstances result in a higher number of unavoidable absences than usual, but allowing for this does not bring the attendance level close to average. Some pupils have occasional or frequent absences without good reason. This slows their overall rate of progress.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

11. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory and has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Teaching was at least satisfactory in every lesson seen, good or better in 34 per cent and very good in six per cent. Although there are slightly greater strengths in some classes than others, for example in the Nursery, it is the consistency of teaching across the school that is of particular significance. It ensures that pupils learn soundly, whichever class they are in, and make appropriate progress from year to year.

12. Teachers plan lessons with clear learning objectives and this helps both them and the pupils to focus on what is being learned rather than just completing the activities. This helps pupils to make solid gains in knowledge and develop their skills. Teachers often set rather low expectations of how much work pupils should complete, especially during long lessons. They sometimes plan an insufficient variety of activities to maintain pupils' enthusiasm. Some science lessons, for example, were in three parts, starting with a long class discussion before pupils worked in groups or individually and then ending with another discussion. Pupils found it hard to remain attentive and concentrate during these 90 minute lessons. When lessons of the same overall length were organised with shorter blocks of activities and discussion, pupils found them more stimulating and worked at a faster pace.

13. Pupils acquire knowledge and skills well in most subjects, including English and mathematics. Their understanding is developed less successfully. An important factor in this is that teachers often miss opportunities to extend understanding by making links between different subjects and aspects within subjects. An example of good links was seen when a teacher asked questions that helped pupils to see the connections between their work on food and health in design and technology and science. Teachers' questioning is usually successful in checking and extending pupils' knowledge, and sometimes their understanding. In a physical education lesson, pupils were not only asked to recall the correct position of their legs when landing from a jump, but also why it was important.

14. Teachers and learning support assistants are familiar with individual targets for pupils with special educational needs and these are used in English and mathematics lessons to plan appropriate work. Some pupils receive effective, individual support from well-trained learning support assistants outside their ordinary lessons. These pupils make rapid progress in reading and writing.

15. A strength throughout the school is the quality of relationships between adults and pupils. Teachers and assistants treat pupils with respect and show kindness, but are firm when necessary so that everyone can get on with their work. Pupils are encouraged to work co-operatively and given good guidance, such as being reminded to take turns. Adults act as good role models in the way that they plan and work together, and set consistent expectations of behaviour. Pupils' behaviour and concentration were best when they were most actively involved. In some English lesson, for example, they discussed issues in pairs rather than individuals taking turns in answering the teacher's questions. This meant that no pupils were passive during the discussions. In the Nursery, when children are free to move between different areas, the staff are good at guiding them into meaningful activities, which helps them to behave positively.

16. The marking of pupils' work is not as helpful as it could be in Years 1 and 2. Pupils receive relatively few helpful comments, either in writing or through conversation. Information from marking is not used consistently to adapt further work to ensure that it is at the right level for pupils who have, for example, not understood the previous lesson. Teachers have a tendency to concentrate on whether work has been completed rather than the standards that have been achieved.

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

17. The school has made improvements to the curriculum since the last inspection and it is now satisfactory. It meets statutory requirements and includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. There is an over emphasis on number within the mathematics curriculum. New schemes of work ensure that knowledge and skills develop systematically in all subjects and support teachers effectively when planning lessons. Links between most subjects are not explicit in the schemes of work. Literacy and numeracy skills are applied and practised in other subjects. Teachers in the same year group plan their lessons together so that pupils in different classes are taught the same thing. Appropriate health education issues are included in science, physical education and personal, social and health education programme.

18. The curriculum is not sufficiently enriched by a range of stimulating and relevant activities. Recently there have been very few opportunities for visits to places of interest, such as the farm and local places of worship. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 visit the library and a local attraction in the summer, such as Whipsnade Zoo. In geography, pupils visit the shops and observe the range of buildings on the estate when they are studying the local environment, and this makes their learning interesting. Relatively few visitors come to the school to tell pupils about their work and traditions or share artistic and musical skills. There are no regular extra-curricular activities after school. During the lunchtime break pupils sometimes have the opportunity to improve their skills or to extend their learning by practising on the computer, and reading.

19. The school has developed some good links with training institutions and secondary schools. Student teachers, and trainee nursery nurses are among those who contribute well to the life of the school by supporting teachers.

20. Provision for pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved satisfactorily since the last inspection. Spiritual development is given satisfactory support overall. In the best assemblies there are very good opportunities for pupils to think about acts of kindness and special moments, as in the simple way visitors re-told the story of one of the miracles so children could understand how friends had helped the lame man to reach Jesus. Children were enthralled by this and by the rhythm and feeling of the Year 1 class re-enactment of 'We're going on a Bear Hunt' with musical instruments adding to the atmosphere. In other assemblies, opportunities are missed to create a sense of occasion. Religious education lessons often make a good contribution to spiritual awareness by encouraging children to think about different world faiths and ways of worship. Few other lessons and class activities, apart from circle time, offer children a chance to talk about experiences and key moments in their lives. There are limited opportunities for them to share ideas and express feelings about stories and poems they enjoy, or responses to art, music, history and drama.

21. The school emphasises care and concern for others in its everyday routines. This leads to good support for pupils' personal, moral and social development. Children are encouraged to think about basic courtesies, so that, for example, they are expected to apologise if they interrupt the teacher or another child. Staff are good at insisting that children take turns and wait for their chance to answer or do a particular task. Adults give clear guidance on the right thing to do in their teaching and behaviour. Pupils are taught about right and wrong so that they know the difference, even if they cannot always make the right choice. The good relationships and teamwork among staff support moral and social development well. Pupils are expected to work and play well together. They are given some good opportunities to co-operate, for example in circle time, home-corner activities and playground games. They are given some useful experience of taking responsibility and using initiative when they get out or put away construction toys, dressing up clothes, paints and other resources. Nursery children are taught to use an activities board independently to show what they have chosen to do. Staff focus much attention on pupils' personal development in order to help children become used to listening and co-operating, so that they understand clearly how they are expected to behave in school.

22. Cultural development is supported through subjects such as religious education and English. Opportunities for children to talk about and appreciate other traditions are used well in individual lessons, as in Year 1 when they looked at how Eid is celebrated and why. Pupils have the chance to take part in music festivals and to look at the work of famous artists. The way in which art, music, story-telling and drama are used to extend children's awareness and enjoyment of their own and other cultures is underdeveloped. There are missed opportunities to value pupils' work and experiences in lively displays that celebrate the rich and diverse cultural heritage of the immediate and wider community. Provision for cultural development has been slower to improve than other aspects of personal development. It is just satisfactory.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

23. The school gives a high priority to ensuring that it is effective in promoting pupils' welfare, health and safety and in its arrangements for child protection, as it did at the last inspection. Improvement has been steady.

24. The school aims to create an atmosphere in which children feel safe and well cared for and is successful in this. There are good child protection arrangements for pupils. Staff know the children well and are quick to notice when someone is unwell or quieter than usual and to offer the help they need. Children know how and where to get help if they are ill or hurt. Well-established routines give good support to the development of appropriate behaviour at school. Pupils are given a blue card to take in if they behave badly in the playground. In spite of the concerns of a very few parents, the inspection found no evidence to support the view that bullying is dealt with ineffectively. Procedures are satisfactory. Any bullying incidents or misbehaviour are logged and monitored carefully so that they can be dealt with properly. Regular attendance is promoted satisfactorily. Good procedures are producing steady improvement in absence rates although these are still high. Pupils' wellbeing and personal development are monitored and supported effectively.

25. The school's procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory. Regular assessments in English, mathematics and science enable teachers to identify pupils who are achieving at different levels and evaluate whether they are achieving as they should. Portfolios of written work illustrate attainment at different levels and teachers can refer to these for guidance. However, they are not updated regularly enough nor used consistently.

26. The school is not making sufficient use of assessment information to develop its curriculum nor to plan work in the immediate future. On occasions, teachers alter their plans, especially in English and mathematics, in the light of how well pupils achieved in a lesson. However such instances are rare. The school has drawn up lists of the minimum standards to be achieved by year groups in English, mathematics and science. The checking of how well groups are working towards the achievement of these expectations lacks rigour and sufficient detail for appropriate action to be taken. The school has recently started setting individual targets for pupils, but it is too early to evaluate this initiative's success.

27. The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, though it is not fully

successful in carrying out its policy of identifying needs early in pupils' school lives. The systems for assessing pupils do not ensure that pupils' needs are identified in sufficient detail. When this is done well, for example in the identification of pupils having a substantial difficulty in reading and writing, the help given enables pupils to make rapid progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

28. Relationships with parents have been strengthened satisfactorily since the last inspection. Reports on children's progress are much improved. There are still very few parents involved actively in the life of the school.

29. Parents are happy with the school in general. Although few of them replied to the questionnaire or attended the meeting for parents before the inspection, there were no major issues raised before or during the inspection. Those who did respond felt positive about what the school offers their children and about changes since the last inspection. One or two were not sure whether their children have the right amount of homework or whether bullying is dealt with effectively. The inspection found that the school welcomes help from parents in hearing their children read at home as often as possible. Rough play and arguments are dealt with promptly when drawn to the attention of staff.

30. Links with parents are satisfactory. The school tries to build productive links with parents and to be welcoming and reassuring so that parents feel comfortable about approaching staff. Teachers wait outside with pupils at the end of the day and chat to parents and carers as they collect children. There is no regular, lively newsletter, or other active initiatives to encourage more parents to become involved in school life in whatever way they can. The information that the school gives to parents is generally good. It is usually clear and easy to read, but is not always as interesting as that in prospectuses that include children's work, illustrations and comments. Parents are invited to contribute to the setting and review of targets on individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs. They are encouraged to play an active part in the programmes for helping those with substantial reading and writing needs. Reports on pupils' progress are well written and give a helpful flavour of what children know and can do. There are examples of particularly good reports that give useful detail about pupils' personal development and their progress in all subjects, not just descriptions of what the whole class did in subjects other than English, mathematics and science. This is good practice and helps to ensure that parents are well informed about pupils' progress.

31. Parents are not involved effectively in the work of the school. In spite of efforts made by the school, such as running courses for parents to support their children's literacy, very few parents come into school to work with pupils. When the school asks for specific help, as with raising extra money to add to voluntary contributions to enable a school trip to take place, parents respond well. Although the three parents' evenings and reviews for pupils with special educational needs are well attended, many parents find it hard to support their children's work in other ways such as hearing them read regularly. A small core of parents works in the school and as governors and their contribution is greatly valued. There is no parents' association. The level of parental involvement is insufficient to support learning effectively for many children.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

32. The headteacher and senior management team provide sound management. The school is strongly committed to building and maintaining good relationships with parents. The headteacher supports the staff and is proud of the relationship the school has with the local community. The school has recently reviewed its aims to include the promotion of high educational standards, but this is not yet embodied in all aspects of the everyday work of the school. Whilst the school displays a clear vision for nurturing pupils' personal development, the same is not true for an educational vision. School improvement has largely occurred in response to direction given by external agencies. A strength has been the school's willingness to accept the need to improve and act upon good advice. The senior management team is now beginning to take a more active role in planning long-term educational developments. For example, they are evaluating how to improve schemes of work to ensure they more closely match the needs of all pupils, and monitoring teaching to identify training needs. The recently appointed deputy head is keen for the school to keep up with current educational thinking and to review the curriculum to ensure pupils have more enriching experiences that will raise educational standards.

33. The system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning is regarded positively by staff and has helped to improve some aspects. For example, the focus on precise learning objectives is better than at the time of the previous inspection. The role of subject co-ordinators is underdeveloped. They monitor

resources, planning and pupils' work and some undertake lesson observations. Most do not fully know the strengths and aspects needing improvement in their subjects because monitoring does not sufficiently focus on standards. Subjects are managed efficiently, but effective leadership is lacking. Most subjects do not have action plans that would guide continuous improvement and support the priorities in the school development plan.

34. Governors are loyal and supportive and fulfil their statutory responsibilities. The governing body is strongly committed to maintaining the caring ethos of the school and views the school as a crucial part of the local community. Governors are not yet fully effective in establishing the educational priorities and direction for the school, largely because they do not have a sound knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. There is a relatively narrow range of experience and expertise on the governing body, with a significant number of governors being employees of the school. The committee structure effectively supports the overall management of the school. Governors are constantly aware of the need to secure value for money when making financial decisions. They ensure that the school makes sound use of the available resources and that specific grants are used appropriately. The school development plan is reviewed on an annual basis with priorities being decided through discussion with staff and governors. Evaluation of progress towards targets is generally based on the completion of tasks rather than the effect upon standards and this reduces the effectiveness of the plan.

35. The co-ordinator for special educational needs keeps an appropriate register of pupils. Individual education plans are well drawn up and clearly identify targets and the methods required to meet particular needs. The school is not fully implementing its policy of dealing with special educational needs at the earliest possible age.

36. There is a good number of teaching and non-teaching staff for the needs of the curriculum. Learning support assistants are generally deployed well and provide effective support for pupils. Learning resources are sufficient and the accommodation is spacious and well maintained. Children in the Reception classes are able to take advantage of a separate, enclosed outdoor play area. The Nursery is self-contained and also has spacious accommodation including an attractive outdoor area.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

37. The school should now:

- (1) develop its own educational vision, with a focus on raising standards in all subjects and areas of learning;
(see paragraph 32-34)
- (2) improve the range of stimulating activities and enriching experiences through:
 - planning lessons with a greater variety of activities;
 - arranging for more visitors to the school and trips out;
 - providing more extra-curricular activities;
(see paragraphs 12, 18)
- (3) extend pupils understanding by:
 - asking pupils questions that check and extend their understanding as well as their knowledge;
 - planning relevant links between subjects;
(see paragraphs 13, 17)
- (4) use assessment information to help set work that appropriately challenges all pupils.
(see paragraphs 16, 26, 27)

Governors may also wish to consider the following less important issues in the action plan:

- attendance;
(see paragraph 10)
- celebrating the richness and diversity of the community's cultural heritage;
(see paragraph 22)
- the early and precise identification of special educational needs;
(see paragraph 27)
- governors' effectiveness in establishing the educational priorities and direction for the school;
(see paragraph 34)
- achievement in humanities;
(see paragraph 61)
- the use of information and communication technology in other subjects.
(see paragraph 64)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

47

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

25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	6	28	66	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	39	231
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	69

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	38

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	10

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	29
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	31

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.3
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000	42	37	79

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	33	31	39
	Girls	34	34	36
	Total	67	65	75
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	85 (82)	82 (82)	95 (91)
	National	84 (82)	85 (83)	90 (71)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	33	37	40
	Girls	35	36	36
	Total	68	73	76
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	86 (80)	92 (92)	96 (91)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

Figures in brackets refer to the previous reporting year

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	6
Black – African heritage	4
Black – other	9
Indian	0
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	130
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y2

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.3
Average class size	25.7

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	218

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Qualified teachers and support staff: Nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	39

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	50

Number of pupils per FTE adult	13
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
	£
Total income	625,855
Total expenditure	608,750
Expenditure per pupil	2,230
Balance brought forward from previous year	63,443
Balance carried forward to next year	80,548

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	309
Number of questionnaires returned	26

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	31	0	4	0
My child is making good progress in school.	58	23	0	4	15
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	42	12	0	12
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	4	69	19	0	8
The teaching is good.	46	46	0	0	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	54	15	0	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	31	4	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	19	4	0	19
The school works closely with parents.	35	42	19	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	38	50	12	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	46	0	4	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	12	27	15	4	42

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

37. During the inspection it was not possible to see enough lessons taught in all subjects to be able to make valid judgements about every aspect of learning and provision.

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

38. By the end of the Reception classes, standards are broadly in line with national expectations. They are above expectations in mathematics, but despite significant progress, remain below expectations in spoken language. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall. There is a high level of consistency between the Reception classes and the quality of teaching in the Nursery is good.

39. Learning support assistants in the Reception classes provide sound support for children. They work well with teachers so that, when supporting small groups, the focus remains on the learning objectives for the whole class. Nursery staff also work well as a team. The induction arrangements for children entering Nursery are good, with staff going on home visits before children start. The school is seeking to strengthen links with local pre-school groups. Assessments carried out soon after children enter the Nursery indicate that many children start with quite a low level of skills, especially in speaking and listening. However, standards by the end of the Reception year show that they make good progress. Improving continuity between Nursery and the Reception classes is resulting in a higher level of consistency, which is helping children to learn effectively. Teachers across the Foundation Stage now plan together under the leadership of a competent Foundation Stage co-ordinator. Improvements in the curriculum and teaching have raised standards since the previous inspection.

Personal, social and emotional development

40. The Nursery offers good opportunities to support children's personal, social and emotional development, which is a particular need for many children. There are many opportunities to make choices and exercise independence when children plan their activities for each session. Pictorial planning boards are used effectively to support, prompt and remind children what they have planned to do. Routines are well established and are understood by children and so they feel confident. Adults provide very good role models for children by having a quiet, consistent approach to resolving conflict. Children are encouraged to play an active part in solving their own problems. This calm approach continues into the Reception classes. Children have fewer opportunities to exercise independence and choice within the more formal lessons, but have an opportunity every day to choose play-based activities in the classroom or in the designated outdoor area. Adults across the Foundation Stage provide good support for personal, social and emotional aspects of learning, which develop well.

Communication, language and literacy

41. A strong emphasis is placed on developing language skills in the Foundation Stage and pupils reach standards in reading and writing that are in line with national expectations. Children in the Nursery respond enthusiastically to rhymes and songs. Adults encourage and remind children to use sentences and appropriate vocabulary when responding to questions and during conversations. Reception teachers use skilful questioning to assess how accurately children have listened to what has been said. The standard of spoken language, however, remains below that expected nationally by the end of Reception. Children in the Reception classes make sound progress in reading. They talk about books and stories, know the difference between words and pictures and most follow print with their finger when reciting or remembering the story sequence. Some children read a range of familiar words. Children display an interest in books and treat them with respect. Reception children frequently practise and develop their handwriting skills. Most children are beginning to use their phonic knowledge to write simple words and almost all children have sufficient pencil control to enable them to form letters correctly.

Mathematical development

42. Children make good progress in mathematics. A significant number of children exceed the early learning goals for mathematics before the end of the Reception year. Children in the Nursery recognise and name a range of two-dimensional shapes and use language, such as *bigger* and *smaller*, to describe

similarities and differences. Children in the Reception classes count reliably up to and beyond ten everyday objects such as beads, pegs and play-dough cakes. They also recognise numerals from 0 to 9 and use language, such as *longer* and *shorter*, when describing lengths of skipping ropes. In the Nursery, some mathematics was particularly well planned, with a range of activities to teach and reinforce what was to be learned. First, adults led sessions on shape recognition with small groups of children. The activity then became available as a choice during the free-play session and further consolidated through the singing of songs about shape. By the end of the morning, children who had not known the names of some shapes at the beginning were confidently using the correct names.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

43. Knowledge and understanding of the world is taught in four component parts: history, geography, science and information technology. Careful planning ensures that all aspects are covered and children attain average standards. Children in the Reception year use the computer mouse confidently and competently to control what is happening on screen. In the Nursery, children are encouraged to use all their senses when exploring food, such as comparing the similarities and differences between water with plain flour and with corn flour. There is insufficient emphasis on the development of knowledge and understanding about children's own and other cultures and beliefs. Reception-year planning includes religious education based on the locally agreed syllabus.

Physical development

44. The outdoor play areas are well equipped with a range of appropriate toys and play equipment. Nursery children use the outdoor area every day and it forms part of the range of independent choices the children make when planning their session. Reception classes take turns in using their outdoor area. Children use the space well and adults encourage and support the development of larger movements in these areas. Reception classes also use the school hall and children listened and followed instructions very well during these lessons. They moved with confidence, control and co-ordination. Overall, children's attainment is in line with national expectations.

Creative development

45. In the Nursery, children choose creative activities each day. They use equipment and materials with increasing skill and control under the sensitive supervision of the Nursery staff. In the Reception classes, children are taught a range of creative skills including how to use paintbrushes correctly and how to mix a range of colours. They display a high level of skill when using painting materials. Reception teachers show children how to use and apply these creative skills in order to refine and strengthen them and to deepen their understanding. Daily singing sessions in the Nursery remind children what they have learnt that day. Counting songs are often sung, along with songs that reinforce speaking and listening skills such as, 'Head, shoulders, knees and toes'. Children join in with enjoyment and enthusiasm and sing tunefully. Standards in creative development are average overall.

ENGLISH

46. The overall standard of English is in line with national expectations by the end of Year 2. Results in the 2000 national assessments at the end of Year 2 were average in reading and below average in writing. The number of pupils achieving the higher levels was also average for reading and below average for writing. When compared with schools in a similar context the school's results were above average in reading and average for writing, whilst above average in both at the higher Level 3. This position is a considerable improvement to that reported in the last inspection, when pupils were clearly underachieving. Girls do better than boys in reading and writing. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. The trend over the past three years has been one of continuing improvement in both reading and writing. Pupils are making good progress in reaching these levels. One reason for this is the introduction of a scheme of work that sets out how knowledge and skills should develop over time. This has been significant in raising attainment in the national tests.

47. Pupils concentrate and co-operate well in their written assignments. They get down to work quickly and sustain their interest in lessons, especially in those where the pace is lively. They have good attitudes

to reading, with pupils of all abilities indicating their enjoyment of books and the sharing of texts with their teachers.

48. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are below what is expected nationally. Many pupils in both years use a limited vocabulary and find it difficult to marshal their thoughts sufficiently to say what they mean. The school has made this aspect of English a priority and has been successful in raising standards. Teachers often remind pupils to speak up and encourage replies that are more than just one or two word answers. Pupils are sometimes asked to discuss issues with a partner and this leads to good discussions. They listen to each other's ideas and are quite confident in these small-scale situations to give their points of view. Pupils listen attentively when teachers read to them and become especially involved when required to read together.

49. During the inspection, the standard of reading was what is expected of pupils of this age. Pupils' reading skills have improved appreciably since the last inspection so that most now reach the nationally expected level by the time they leave the school. In relation to their literacy skills on entry to the school, pupils achieve well. They have a good knowledge of letter sounds that they use to help break down unfamiliar words. Pupils read with good expression taking due note of exclamation, speech and question marks. Although the school has sufficient simple dictionaries, older pupils do not use these routinely and have few strategies for finding words quickly. The quality and range of fiction books available to pupils has been considerably improved since the last inspection. This has done much to encourage a keen interest in reading for all abilities of pupils. The school has also purchased a good number of big books, which enables pupils to share texts with their teachers and improve their understanding of plot, character and settings.

50. The standard of writing seen was in line with national expectations overall. Pupils write appropriately when the work is highly controlled, for example in comprehension exercises. However, pupils are less successful when given more independence, such as when writing stories. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of the mechanics of writing to enable them to convey simple ideas, instructions and descriptions in written form. They have a good working vocabulary of common words that they spell correctly. They tackle unfamiliar words well, applying their knowledge of letter sounds and spelling conventions to good effect. Pupils have adequate opportunities to practise their handwriting and produce well-formed, joined letters and strings of letters when doing so. However, there are very few examples of this being carried into pupils' other written work which, although neatly done, is invariably printed. Most work is correctly punctuated with many pupils routinely using question and exclamation marks. Higher-attaining pupils are beginning to use speech marks and their sentences are becoming more elaborate. The school has extended the opportunities pupils have to write in other subjects, most noticeably in religious education and science. There are still too few opportunities though for pupils to write at length and although the range of writing has been extended there is an over-emphasis on written exercises. This has raised attainment in the skills and knowledge aspects of English but the application of these elements into the expression of ideas and creative forms is somewhat neglected. When given the opportunity, pupils are capable of compiling lengthy and well-written stories.

51. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers make good use of the scheme of work, but do not plan sufficiently to extend higher-attaining pupils. Teachers are good role models when reading with pupils, using good expression and encouraging pupils to do likewise. They do not often extend this to adopting different voices for different characters or to have pupils act out the plot, which would also help to improve speaking skills. Teachers made good use of puppets to gain the immediate interest and involvement of pupils. Some Year 1 pupils excitedly pointed out the mistakes a puppet was making in pronouncing words and confidently provided the correct pronunciation. This astute use of making deliberate mistakes encouraged pupils to recognise and use different letter sounds and was also great fun. A lively reading of a clever story re-telling the Jack and the Beanstalk folk tale produced an equally lively discussion in which pupils expressed views on the plot, characters and what might happen next. In these lively lessons, pupils were actively involved and stimulated and learned at a fast pace.

MATHEMATICS

52. Standards in the 2000 national tests for seven-year-olds were above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. Since the last inspection, the trend in performance has been up in the national tests at a faster rate than the national trend. The standard of pupils' knowledge and skills in numeracy has risen. Girls have performed better than boys in national tests for several years. The majority of pupils in the present Year 2 are working at a level above that which is expected at this time in the school year. However, in some classes the work is not challenging the pupils sufficiently, particularly the higher-attaining pupils. Pupils are making good progress in developing numeracy skills and sound progress in learning about shapes, space and measures. This discrepancy is due to an over emphasis in the mathematics curriculum on teaching basic number skills.

53. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In some successful lessons teachers involved pupils in quick recall of counting and number skills, sometimes playing mathematical games, for example with a large dice. They used many different kinds of activities in a lesson, such as demonstrating with cubes or toys how to make nine in many different ways. In a particularly successful Year 1 lesson the teacher encouraged the pupils to use their initiative. They worked well in pairs, explained what they were doing and why, and showed the rest of the class that they understood how numbers work. Astute questioning reinforced the pupils' understanding and was useful in assessing what they had learned. Pupils listen well most of the time. When they are stimulated by activities that they find fun, they sparkle and are eager to answer questions to show the teacher what they can do. Lessons are always well organised, which is an improvement since the last inspection. The teachers' main learning points for each lesson are clearly planned.

54. The pace was slow in some lessons so that, although most pupils learned solidly, some were insufficiently extended. Too much time was spent repeating the same activity, in the same way, to fill the time available. In several lessons, opportunities were missed to consolidate pupils' learning by linking the number facts pupils already knew to other contexts. For example, $7+2=9$, $6+3=9$, and $5+4=9$ did not lead to calculations with money or shapes, or, for the higher attaining pupils, to bigger numbers with a similar pattern such as $70+20=90$, $60+30=90$ or $17+2=19$, $16+3=19$. Some opportunities are also missed to revise what pupils have done in earlier mathematics lessons and to apply mathematics in other subjects. Although most pupils are learning well how to count and recall basic number facts, they do not understand so well how they can use their number skills in different situations or to solve problems. Work is marked regularly, but there are few comments to help pupils improve their work. In some lessons, there is still an over use of duplicated worksheets that give pupils practice in calculation but do not encourage mathematical reasoning.

55. The subject leader has worked hard to implement the school's scheme of work. She has ensured a consistent approach to planning and that adequate resources are available. Teachers' plans are monitored and lessons have been observed, which has helped improve the consistency in the quality of teaching across the school. Procedures for assessing pupils are satisfactory, though still at an early stage of implementation. Teachers note which number facts and skills pupils have acquired but do not use the information to plan further work that would match the needs of different groups. Pupils with special educational needs often work at the same or a very similar level as other pupils and this is sometimes too hard for them. Good adult support helps them to complete many tasks but is less effective in developing their ability to learn independently in practical activities.

SCIENCE

56. In the 2000 teacher assessments at the end of Year 2, the proportion of pupils who reached Level 2 was above the national average but the proportion at the higher Level 3 was below average. These results were better than in similar schools. The inspection found a similar picture, with most pupils achieving at least satisfactorily but a few underachieving. Some lower-attaining pupils were achieving well. Present standards overall are in line with national expectations in all aspects of science. The recent focus on investigative science and on encouraging pupils to talk about their ideas and findings has had a good impact on their scientific understanding and reasoning. A detailed scheme of work and better teaching have raised standards considerably since the previous inspection.

57. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, with particular strengths in the way that teachers help pupils to foster good relationships and work co-operatively. Some Year 1 pupils worked together well as they investigated and sorted materials. They took turns and helped each other to make decisions. When two pupils interrupted another who was speaking to the class the teacher stopped them and they apologised to the speaker. This was good reinforcement of the values that the school sets out to develop. In most lessons seen, pupils learned rather slowly during some long class discussions. Pupils were sometimes restless while other individuals answered questions. However, the pace increased when pupils were all actively involved and so was satisfactory overall. Some Year 2 pupils became somewhat bored during a long introduction to an activity. Once they were actively involved, writing about and illustrating their instructions to a giant on how to look after a human pet, they became enthusiastic and concentrated well. In one class, pupils thought of a good range of ideas and the teacher wrote them on the board, which enabled them to check key spellings. At the end of the lesson some pupils read their work to the class and others shared things they had discovered in reference books. This led to useful connections to things they had learned in design and technology and health education, which deepened their understanding.

58. Effective co-ordination of the subject has led to improvements in the curriculum and teaching. The plan for developing science has focused on appropriate issues, building on existing strengths and the staff's commitment to raising standards. Assessment procedures are sound and offer the possibility of detailed analysis of strengths and aspects for improvement so that standards can continue to rise. Teachers make insufficient use of information technology in science lessons. Other resources are used well to enable pupils to learn science through practical experience.

ART AND DESIGN

59. Standards in art and design are in line with national expectations. Pupils are taught a range of art and design skills that enable them to use equipment and materials with confidence and control. Displays around the school indicate that pupils have a sound range of opportunities to use pencils and paint and to model in three-dimensional materials, including clay. The work of famous artists is used effectively as a stimulus for pupils' own work. Pupils have looked at the work of artists including Georgia O'Keefe, Piet Mondrian, David Hockney and Vincent Van Gogh. The resulting work has been exhibited in a display of children's art at the local town hall. The subject co-ordinator is enthusiastic and is developing the role by reviewing the current scheme of work to ensure that language levels are appropriate. The co-ordinator has not undertaken any lesson observations in art and is not yet able to sum up the school's strengths and weaknesses in art in terms of the quality of teaching and learning and standards achieved.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

60. In work seen around the school, standards in design and technology are in line with expectations for the ages of the pupils. Younger pupils, for example, made animals with moving parts and older pupils made cards that included lights. Design and technology has not been a priority in the school since the previous inspection and does not feature in the current school improvement plan. The school uses an appropriate scheme of work for design and technology that includes lesson plans upon which teachers base their own weekly plans. This ensures that pupils' skills are developed systematically. The subject co-ordinator monitors lesson plans after lessons have been taught and receives feedback from the senior teacher in each year group. This has helped her to form some ideas about the strengths and weaknesses in the subject. As this monitoring is based upon the school's provision rather than the standards pupils achieve, it has not been as effective as it could in bringing about more rapid improvements.

HUMANITIES

61. Standards in the little work seen in geography and history were in line with the expectations for the ages of the pupils. In geography, younger pupils recognise different forms of transport, while older ones are beginning to compare their home locality with other places. Some Year 2 pupils made good suggestions about some physical and human features they might find on an island, based on the study of a favourite book. Their understanding of geographical features, however, is less than it should be. Some pupils, for example, when describing Marks Gate referred to friends as if they were of the same geographical significance as people's jobs or the road system. In history, pupils have an adequate

knowledge of past and present. For instance, they know some of the differences between the ways in which food is prepared now compared with Victorian times. They have also compared toys, washing techniques and clothes of today with those of over a hundred years ago. Some pupils looked at photographs and other sources of evidence to draw conclusions about the times being illustrated. They were intrigued to see how Victorian classrooms were organised and used. The schemes of work for geography and history have improved since the previous inspection and now set out systematically what pupils should learn. This ensures that pupils' knowledge is satisfactory. Their understanding and skills, however, are not sufficiently developed because the range of activities is limited, the pace of learning is rather slow and very little work is recorded. Pupils do not achieve as well as they could. A good aspect of learning in humanities is that, when pupils do record work, they often apply and practise their literacy skills. Subject co-ordination has been effective in improving the curriculum, but the school has not successfully developed a clear picture of standards in the humanities.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

62. Standards in Year 2 are in line with expectations for pupils of this age. Pupils have a sufficient knowledge of keyboard and mouse functions to enable them to make use of the word processing functions of computers. Pupils use computers to produce geometric shapes and lines and then assemble them into pictures. For example, Year 2 pupils reproduced pictures in the style of Piet Mondrian. Pupils make good use of databases to portray and analyse information such as pictograms showing their favourite pets.

63. Teachers are making good use of the scheme of work that clearly identifies what is to be learned and the teaching methods required. These plans enable teachers to demonstrate computer skills to a whole class through the use of just one computer. Lessons typically concentrate on the acquisition of one or two skills which pupils subsequently practise in pairs throughout the following week. Lessons offer few opportunities for pupils to actually use the computer apart from those chosen to help during demonstrations and this is an obvious constraint on the learning experience. However, pupils learn adequately in this way, their interest and attention being engaged through teachers' good management of these demonstration lessons. These methods enable pupils successfully to practise and learn the skills later on. For example, pupils in Year 1 learned how to use the mouse, cursor and backspace keys to select words from a bank to write a sentence. After the lesson, they worked in pairs to produce work that they successfully printed. The assessment of pupils' progress and attainment is not adequately developed in order to establish the standards being achieved or rates of progress.

64. Although computers are used in mathematics, insufficient use is made of information technology across the curriculum and computers are often not used to support learning in other subjects. The school is not taking full advantage of the wide range of software available. The school has improved several aspects of its provision since the last inspection. For example, teachers have improved their own knowledge and understanding through attendance on courses and the help of the subject co-ordinator. The school has updated its equipment and provided each classroom with two complete computer stations.

MUSIC

65. In the work seen for music, standards were in line with expectations for the ages of the pupils. Some Year 2 pupils were helped to learn a new song by the teacher's clear demonstrations, accompaniment on the xylophone and methodical approach. They practised the words briefly and then learned a line at a time before singing the whole song. The teacher then asked them to stand up and the improved posture helped them to sing out well. Listening skills, such as recognising which of two notes is higher, are satisfactory and pupils show reasonable musical knowledge in discussion. The school has built up a suitable range of resources to enable pupils to make music. Participation in an annual music festival and various events at school give pupils good opportunities to perform in public, which helps build their confidence and self-esteem. Year 1 pupils, for example, performed well to the school during a class assembly.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

66. In the lessons seen, standards in physical education were in line with expectations for the ages of the pupils. The scheme of work helps teachers to plan lessons well so that pupils systematically develop skills from year to year. Teachers set high expectations for good behaviour and emphasised the importance of moving apparatus safely. As a result, most pupils co-operated well and took appropriate care when moving around the hall. The considerable time taken perfecting these routines made a good contribution to social and personal development but sometimes slowed the pace of lessons too much. Pupils showed interest in what they were doing and concentrated well so that they could make helpful suggestions about each other's performance. These evaluations led to some improvement. For example, one pupil suggested that a twist at the end of a series of movements might make the sequence more interesting. Though too little use was made of demonstrations, teachers did make constructive comments that helped pupils to improve their skills and ensured their safety, for example encouraging them to look up when jumping off apparatus and to land with their legs bent to avoid injury. The range and quality of resources is good.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

67. Standards are broadly in line with the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. A new scheme of work sets out a range of topics that build on pupils' previous experience and understanding of the beliefs and practices of Christianity and other religions. Standards in religious education have risen since the last inspection, when standards were judged as being well below expectations. There are insufficient opportunities for enriching the curriculum by taking pupils to visit places of worship and inviting visitors to school so that pupils can hear first hand about the traditions of different religions.

68. Pupils in Year 1 were fascinated during a lesson about Ramadan. Most pupils showed great interest and sat open-mouthed when the teacher told them about Muslims fasting during the day for a month. Pupils were encouraged to see the similarities between their own special celebrations and Eid, which follows Ramadan. Year 2 pupils listened attentively to a parable and recalled parts of the story accurately. They talked about someone who was important to them and gave reasons such as, "She looks after me when I'm ill." They did not understand the religious message from the parable, which was that Christians believe that God loves everyone. The discussion about this was too short and so limited the opportunity for developing a good understanding. In some effective lessons, discussion helped the pupils to make links with earlier lessons so that they began to build up some understanding of the fundamental ideas of Christianity. Teachers successfully plan opportunities for pupils to use their literacy skills. In all the lessons seen, teachers laid the foundations for tolerance well, by showing respect for the topics studied and good subject knowledge in introducing the materials. They managed to make customs from different religions seem special but not strange.