

INSPECTION REPORT

**Saint Michael's and All Angels
Church of England Primary School**

Rearsby, Leicestershire

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 120197

Headteacher: Mrs. Gail Forryan

Reporting inspector: Tony Taylor
4262

Dates of inspection: 19th – 21st June 2000

Inspection number: 220346

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:	Church of England Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Brookside, Rearsby. Leicestershire.
Postcode:	LE7 4YB
Telephone number:	01664 424453
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs. Sue Norledge
Date of previous inspection:	March 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Tony Taylor	Registered inspector	English Information Technology Art History Music Physical education Equal opportunities. Special Educational needs.	What sort of school is it? How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
Mike Romano	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?
Lynne Wright	Team inspector	Provision for children under five. Mathematics Science Design and technology Geography	The school's results and achievements. How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Michael's and All Angels Church of England Aided Primary School is situated in the village of Rearsby, near Melton Mowbray. It is a small rural school that serves Rearsby and adjacent villages. At the time of the inspection, there were eighty boys and girls on roll. Their main ethnicity is white. Of the sixteen pupils with special needs, more than two per cent have statements of special educational need, which is broadly in line with the average. Nevertheless, the total number of pupils who are listed on the school's register of special educational need is above the average. The number of pupils taking free school meals is small, and well below the average. However, the total number of children actually entitled to free meals is difficult to gauge because packed lunches only are provided. The pupils' attainment when they start school is average overall. No pupils have English as an additional language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St. Michael's has been subject to a turbulent period in its development. In 1995, inspectors found the school to be in need of special measures to ensure improvement. By 1997, the school was judged by Her Majesty's Inspectors to have made significant improvement. However, since the summer of 1999, the school has had severe problems related to staffing, and this has upset the rate of development. There are indications that the school entered into a period of decline in both the standards, and the general progress made by the pupils. In January 2000, a new headteacher was appointed. In the short time since then, the quality of education and standards have been considerably improved. They continue to improve rapidly, due to the excellent leadership now being given to the school. The current inspection findings show that standards are satisfactory in all subjects of the curriculum. The overall quality of the education being provided, and in particular the teaching, is now good. The ethos of the school is very good, and it is well placed to ensure further good development. The picture is very positive. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards match national expectations in all subjects.
- The overall quality of the teaching is good.
- Much of the teaching is very good.
- The provision for the pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- The leadership provided by the recently appointed headteacher is excellent.
- The staff is working very well as a team.
- The ethos of the school is very positive.

What could be improved

- The assessment systems for the non-core subjects of the National Curriculum.
- The quality of the marking of the pupils' work in some subjects.
- The information given to parents about their child's progress.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The severe staffing problems have been overcome, and the school has made determined and wide-reaching improvements since January 2000. The teaching has been improved significantly. The curriculum has been improved substantially, with the development and use of new schemes of work and better planning. The underachievement found in the first inspection has been reversed. Standards, and the quality of education are improving rapidly.

STANDARDS

Published national test data for St. Michael's Primary does not provide a reliable guide to the overall attainment of the pupils. This is due to the small size of the groups of pupils taking the tests in any one year, and the influence of pupils who have special educational needs on test results. Similarly, the data does not reflect reliably, the comparisons with schools of similar size and type. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are satisfactory in all subjects of the curriculum. It also shows that, as the school is currently developing all the aspects of its work, standards are rising firmly and steadily. The school is now well placed to meet the exacting targets that have been set for its improvement.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The pupils' attitudes towards school and their work are very good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of the pupils is very good.
Personal development and relationships	The pupils develop well personally, and the relationships are generally very good.
Attendance	Attendance is good.

The pupils like school and generally work hard. This was confirmed by all the parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire. The pupils behave very responsibly and maturely, in classrooms, in assemblies, and outside. Their personal development is good, and they maintain very positive relationships with both the staff and each other. Attendance is better than the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
23 lessons seen overall	Good.	Good.	Good overall, with much very good teaching

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 overall quality of the teaching is good. There is much very good teaching, particularly at the later part of Key Stage 2. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. Of the twenty-three lessons or parts of lessons seen, over 40% were satisfactory, more than 36% were good, and more than 22 % were very good. The combination of good planning by the teachers, based on new schemes of work, and the growing sense of teamwork, have improved the quality of the teaching significantly. The teaching of both English and mathematics is generally good. Literacy skills and numeracy skills are taught effectively, despite the delay until January 2000 in implementing the National Numeracy Strategy. The school is meeting the needs of all its pupils very effectively, despite the large classes. Additional support for the teaching in the larger classes is being used very well, and is increasing significantly the pupils' opportunities for learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum.	The curriculum is satisfactorily broad and balanced, and the appropriate statutory curriculum is firmly in place.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs.	The provision for the pupils with special educational needs is very good. They make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.	The provision for the pupils' spiritual development in lessons and other activities is satisfactory*. The provision for their moral and social development is very good. For their cultural development, provision is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils.	The school cares for its pupils well. Good systems are in place to oversee the health and safety and protection of the pupils.

*The school is subject to a Section 23 inspection that looks in more detail at the pupils' spiritual development through learning in religious education and worship.

The school is rapidly developing its partnership with parents. There has, in the past, been something of a hiatus in the amount of information the school has provided about what it is doing, and about what progress the pupils are making in their learning. This lack is being firmly tackled by the school, and improved systems of communication are being developed. The curriculum is being developed positively, and is now being shaped effectively in order to raise standards. It meets statutory requirements fully. The school has reviewed, and continues to keep under review the way it cares for its pupils. The attitude of all the staff is very caring and conscientious.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff.	The leadership provided by the recently appointed headteacher is excellent. She has very clear aims for the development of the school, and is supported very well by all the staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities.	The governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They are interested, informed, and involved, and provide very good support for the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance.	The school has carried out a comprehensive review and has put into place a variety of systems for the evaluation of its performance. It has made significant strides in improvement, based on this comprehensive analysis, but is not yet satisfied that standards are high enough. It is working hard to get even better.
The strategic use of resources.	The resources, which are adequate, are used very effectively. The school has appropriate plans for the further development of its resources, notably for information technology.

The staffing level is good. The large classes, questioned by some parents as an impediment to learning, are now very well organised and receive good levels of additional trained, support. The accommodation is used efficiently, and is being further developed. The learning resources are adequate. They are of good quality, and are very efficiently and effectively used, due to the excellent leadership and management of the school. The principle of gaining the best value from purchases is firmly embedded in the school's culture.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That their children like school. • That the behaviour of the children is good. • That the school is approachable with questions or a problem. • That the school is helping the children to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework the children are given. • The information they receive about their child's progress. • The school's working with parents. • The range of activities outside lessons.

While all parents who replied to the questionnaire hold the view that their children like school, a substantial minority considered that the amount of homework provided was not enough. A further substantial minority hold the view that the school does not work closely enough with parents, and that they do not feel well informed about their children's progress. A minority feel that the school does not provide an interesting range of activities outside lessons. A striking feature of the information gained from the questionnaire returns is also the number of parents who simply 'don't know'.

The school is emerging from a very turbulent period, where the discontinuity in staffing has been a major issue. It is now successfully past that period, and all aspects of the school are improving rapidly. The parents at the pre-inspection meeting acknowledged this fact. The inspection findings indicate that the homework policy of the school is satisfactory. The annual progress reports are about to be issued, the first under the auspices of the new leadership. The inspection team found the previous reports to be satisfactory overall. The school is currently reviewing this aspect to see what improvements can be made in the information provided. It is also seeking much closer links with parents, who will need to play their part in this development. Given the voluntary nature of the provision of extra-curricular activities and the small number of staff at the school, the inspection evidence clearly shows that it provides a good range of activities. These include games, music, trips to places of interest, and involvement in local activities.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The children enter the school in the term before they are five. At this point, their general attainment is average, but their social development is above average. They very quickly respond to the calm, purposeful working atmosphere in the Key Stage 1 class, and to the example set by older pupils, in developing attitudes to school which are very positive. A well-structured curriculum, which carefully balances learning through play and more formal means, ensures that all pupils make good progress in lessons, and that by the time they are five they are achieving at the levels expected nationally.
2. The previous inspection report of 1995 found the achievement of children under five, and of pupils at Key Stage 1 matched the national expectations in most subjects, but that standards were low in mathematics and physical education. At Key Stage 2 standards were low overall, particularly in history and geography, and a significant minority of pupils was underachieving. Raising the standard of the pupils' work was a key issue of that report.
3. The test and assessment data for the four years from 1996 to 1999 shows a trend of overall decline in English and mathematics at both key stages, and in science at Key Stage 1 when compared to the national picture. Standards in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2 were at low levels compared with similar schools. At Key Stage 1 the attainment of boys and girls showed distinct differences, again with mostly significant levels of decline.
4. Analysis of the data from the 1999 National Curriculum tests and assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 shows that the percentage of pupils reaching the expected levels in reading was high compared with the national average, and was close to the national average at the higher level (Level 3). This reflects recent national and school emphases on the teaching of reading. However, the pupils' writing skills were weaker, being well below the national average, with no pupils attaining at the higher level. In mathematics and science, attainment at expected levels was very high in comparison with the national average, but no pupils attained at the higher level. Overall, the pupils' performance in reading and mathematics was well below the average in comparison with similar schools and in writing it was very low. However, this cohort was very small, so extreme caution needs to be exercised in interpreting the data. It is also heavily influenced by the fact that 75% of the pupils were listed on the school's register of special educational need.
5. Analysis of unpublished recent test data (June 2000), of a small cohort with 44% of pupils on the school's register of special need, shows the decline in standards has been halted. There is an upward trend in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 1, with the majority of pupils achieving average standards.
6. The results of National Curriculum tests taken by the pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1999 indicate that attainment was well below the national expectations for English and mathematics, but in science it was good. No pupils achieved at the higher level in English, and achievement at the higher levels in mathematics and science was about half the national average. Again, the cohort size was small and a high percentage (71%) of the pupils in the cohort were on the school's register of special educational need. Therefore, caution needs to be exercised in any interpretation of the data. It is likely that a similar picture of depressed results will emerge from the 2002 national tests as the 1999 Year 2 cohort reaches the end of Key Stage 2, due to the number of pupils with special needs in that cohort.
7. The school test data for the current Year 6 cohort of pupils shows that almost all pupils have made significant progress from previously low standards at the end of Key Stage 1. The Year 6 pupils experienced a period of considerable disruption in their first term, due to staffing changes. Since January 2000, careful analysis of the pupils' attainment and the use of the information gained to ensure that the teaching is specifically focused on making up lost ground, have resulted in rising

standards. The pupils' attainment is now average and improving in English, mathematics and science. The school is on course to achieve its ambitious targets for the end of Key Stage 2 national tests in English and mathematics.

8. The standards of the pupils' current work show there has been significant and continuous improvement since January 2000, in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science at both key stages, and in information technology at Key Stage 2. The inspection findings show that the majority of pupils achieve the national expectations in all subjects at seven and eleven years of age. They exceed them in reading at both key stages, and in physical education at the upper end of Key Stage 2. Spelling is improving due to the emphasis the school is giving to the pupils' "word attack skills". The pupils' listening skills are good, but there is a need to develop further their speaking skills in larger groups. The pupils in Years 5 and 6 have good calligraphy skills, but they are not used to a consistently high standard in all subjects, especially at early Key Stage 2. Standards of reading are good at both key stages. The pupils read with enjoyment and increasing fluency. Good attention is given to the development of reference skills throughout the school. Overall standards in literacy are satisfactory, and in later Key Stage 2, the development of a variety of extended writing forms, for example in recording research in design and technology, is good. In mathematics there are improving standards in the variety of ways the pupils use and explain their strategies for problem-solving. Their numeracy skills are just beginning to be used effectively across the curriculum and satisfactory standards are being achieved. However, there is insufficient use of measuring in science, and in design and technology. Standards in science knowledge are improving as the scheme of work is becoming better structured, but at Key Stage 2 the overall development of the pupils' science skills is still weaker than the other elements of the subject. This is because most emphasis is placed on the pupils accumulating science knowledge to make up for shortfalls in previous teaching programmes. The school has recognised this as an area for further development.
9. Standards in information technology, design and technology, geography, history, music and art match national expectations. They match expectations in physical education at Key Stage 1, and exceed them at Key Stage 2, where the pupils' games skills are good. This is aided by the good opportunities to extend these skills in after-school clubs.
10. The pupils with special educational needs make very good progress and generally achieve standards in line with their potential. They receive very carefully planned support that enables them to work successfully alongside their peers for most of the time.
11. There has been an all round improvement since the previous inspection. There is no longer a significant difference between boys and girls in either their attainment or their attitudes to work. The current picture of rising standards across the curriculum reflects the determination of the Headteacher, the governors and the teachers that standards should improve throughout the school, and that all pupils will become successful in their learning.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. The pupils are very keen to come to school. This is exemplified by the good attendance achieved so far in the school year 1999-2000. Attendance was 95.6%, and there was no unauthorised absence during that period. There were also no exclusions last year.
13. In lessons and around the school the pupil's attitudes are very positive. Their personal development is also good. The teachers generally have high expectations for good behaviour, and their confidence is well rewarded. In a Year 1 geography lesson, for example, the pupils responded very well, with interesting comments and relevant observations. Similarly, in a numeracy lesson at Years 5 and 6, the behaviour of the pupils was excellent, and they were very eager to answer questions. This is echoed in many of the other lessons observed. In assemblies, the pupils are positive about their involvement in singing and clearly enjoy the "community atmosphere". In all classes, they work well together in groups in all classes and many occasions were noted where they worked in pairs within these groups of their own accord. They are given a number of opportunities to take responsibility round the school, including returning registers to the school

office, and operating the music and overhead projection equipment for assemblies. At lunchtime, when the pupils' general behaviour is also very good, older pupils take responsibility for organizing the play equipment. The parents stated that the older children care well for the younger ones when playing, and this was confirmed by the inspection findings.

14. The vast majority of parents responding to the inspection questionnaire stated that their children like school. This is certainly borne out by the inspection, where the very good relationships that exist between the staff and the pupils, and between the pupils themselves, firmly indicated a strong, caring, and community atmosphere. The teachers set an excellent example in the respect they show to each other, and to the pupils, and this is reflected well in the whole ethos of the school. It is significant that almost all of the pupils at Key Stage 2 stay on after school on one evening to take part in a games club, and that the school choir is well attended. A number of residential visits, (one is planned for Wales next year), contribute also to the pupils' good social and personal development.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

15. During the inspection, no unsatisfactory teaching was noted in the twenty-three lessons, or parts of lessons that were observed. Over 36% of the lessons were good, and a further 40% were very good. Good teaching occurs at each stage, but the overall quality is better in the later part of Key Stage 2 than elsewhere. During the previous inspection in 1995, the quality of the teaching varied widely. There were shortcomings in 53% of the lessons seen. The 1997 report states that the teaching then was almost always sound. Since then, the school has improved the quality of its teaching very significantly indeed. This is helping to promote the pupils' learning and general progress to an overall good level, and raising the standards of their work. It is also strengthening the breadth and balance of the curriculum, and is increasingly ensuring the positive ethos of the school.
16. Since January 2000, the school has done much to improve the quality of the teachers' planning, and to ensure that the objectives for the pupils' learning are at the forefront of the teachers' work. It has been very successful in this. The good and very good teaching is characterised by lessons that are well planned, and activities that are made varied and interesting. The lessons offer appropriate challenges, and the teachers' clear instructions help the pupils to focus on the targets for improvement that have been set. As a result, they proceed purposefully and at a good pace. This good, and often very good teaching extends to subjects across the curriculum. While the subjects may be different, the teachers' expectations for hard work and good standards remain high. The pupils know what they have to do, and how they need to approach it. Their ideas and views are encouraged, and they are treated with great respect. The work of the classroom assistants, and helpful parents, is organised efficiently to provide good additional support for the pupils. This helps greatly to overcome the difficulty of the large numbers of pupils in two of the classes. All the pupils are supported well, including those with special educational needs.
17. The good teaching promotes the pupils' learning successfully. The progress that most make is good and often very good. It also ensures that most of the pupils enjoy working hard. During the inspection, a number of the pupils expressed the view that lessons are interesting, and that although the challenges are sometimes hard, they enjoy them, and value the feeling of success that ensues when they achieve something. Scrutiny of the pupils' work indicates that standards are rising emphatically at all stages, and that the improved teaching is having very positive effects.
18. Nevertheless, there are some aspects of the teaching that could be improved. On a few occasions, it does not take sufficiently into account the need to organise the accommodation and resources to ensure that all the pupils participating in an activity are focused on the work in hand. Interruptions caused by individuals going to read to a parent helper during an important stage in a music lesson, for example, interrupted their attention and therefore their involvement and overall progress. Moreover, the steps in the learning are sometimes not broken down into sufficiently small units to ensure that the pupils can see fully how they could perform better, and the teacher's instructions are over-long. This was evident, for example, in a physical education lesson.

19. Overall, the teachers' subject knowledge is sound. They are working together efficiently and effectively, and trying hard to meet the challenges of promoting higher standards. They are using well the guidance offered by new schemes of work and strong emphasis is given to promoting the pupils' basic learning skills. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught with skill, and are applied effectively in other areas of the curriculum. However, the pupils' numeracy skills are not so effectively used, particularly in subjects such as science.
20. Work is currently being done in developing the assessment systems. They are firmly established for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and are being extended rapidly to other subjects, notably information technology. There is a need to extend the system of formal assessment to the non-core subjects of the curriculum so that the pupils' all-round progress can be monitored and evaluated. The involvement and efficient use of improvement targets for all pupils is helping to establish what needs to be done by individuals, and to see what has been achieved over time. Homework is used to promote further learning and to provide practice opportunities. The teachers' marking is sometimes good and is used to guide individuals and help their good progress. However, the good quality of the marking is not yet uniform throughout the school. This has already been noted as an area for further development.

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

21. During the previous inspection in 1995, the curriculum was found to only partly fulfil the school aims and the requirements of the National Curriculum. Uneven curricular balance resulted in skills and concepts not being developed systematically. The work in the books of the present Key Stage 2 pupils shows that during the first term of this academic year, when there was considerable disruption in teaching, the curriculum planning at Key Stage 2 lacked continuity. Scant attention was paid to some subjects, such as geography, and the school had fallen behind in its implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy.
22. Since January 2000 curriculum provision has improved rapidly, based on commonly agreed systems. Increased rigour in planning, and shared teaching approaches, ensure that the curriculum is moving towards meeting the school's aims very effectively. The school now has a shared commitment to providing a broad and balanced curriculum, and is achieving it. Presently, its quality is satisfactory and the needs of the pupils are driving further development. All statutory requirements are now met, and this has contributed towards an improvement in standards.
23. The quality and range of the curriculum for children under five is good overall. It is very carefully and very effectively balanced to ensure that they have opportunities to learn through structured play activities as well as through more formal methods. The very good relationships and the good use of resources in a stimulating learning environment promote the development of all the children very positively. The foundation curriculum is integrated well with the Key Stage 1 curriculum, which is specifically based on the identified needs of the pupils, and is of sound quality. This is ensuring that the pupils' good progress in learning is maintained from one stage to the next.
24. The time allocated to the teaching of literacy is high and this reflects the school's strong commitment to raising standards in English. Effective teaching strategies have enabled good progress to be made in an increased range of writing, and in reading development across the curriculum. For example, the older pupils use CD ROMS, cookery books and package labelling to research methods of biscuit making before planning the steps in making their own in design and technology lessons. The National Numeracy Strategy is now almost fully implemented and is effectively raising standards for all the pupils. The strategies for teaching numeracy skills are also satisfactory, but have yet to be fully incorporated into other aspects of the curriculum, such as science and geography. In all areas of the curriculum the purposes of the activities are clearly identified and made explicit to the pupils so that they fully understand the purposes of their learning.

25. The curriculum provides equal access for all the pupils, especially those with special educational needs, who learn mostly alongside their peers carrying out the same activities. The curriculum provision for the pupils with special educational needs is very good. Newly revised planning and assessment systems support the work of all the staff well and help to ensure that the pupils receive very good support, both individually and in groups. This regular support is well targeted, focusing on the individual needs of pupils very effectively and beneficially.
26. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities that help to develop the pupils' abilities well in sport and music. Along with planned visits, including a residential visit by the Year 6 pupils, they also contribute to the good development of the pupils' social skills, and their enjoyment in learning and being together. The views of some parents' that there is insufficient extra-curricular activity are not supported by inspection findings.
27. The provision for the pupils' health and personal education, including sex education and information about drugs misuse, is good. The carefully planned programmes for these aspects aim to help the pupils to explore values and moral issues in order to promote self-awareness and self-esteem. The pupils are encouraged to make decisions, and to be self-assertive and co-operative in learning situations. The success of this approach is evident in the confident manner of most of the pupils, and the socially confident way they respond to visitors, to staff and to each other.
28. The school community is extended through the good links with other local village schools. Many social and academic events are shared in order that the pupils' experience being part of a larger peer group. Through e-mail and pen-pal links, the older pupils gain an insight into larger and multicultural school communities. The planned visits from pupils in these schools will enable the Rearsby pupils to explain how a village school works. The school uses other visits, such as the recent Year 5 and 6 visit to the Millennium Dome to enhance and enrich the pupils' learning. Good relationships with local secondary schools enable the Year 6 pupils to look forward to entering the next stage of their school life with confidence.
29. The provision for the pupils' moral and social development is very good, and their cultural development is good. For their spiritual development it is satisfactory. The pupils' growing awareness of their spirituality is developed positively in collective worship and religious education, but also through other forms of experience and expression, such as poetry writing. The school's Millennium resolution illustrates the pupils' respect for the earth, and their joy in learning is being fostered carefully. All the adults in the school community provide very good role models and the relationships are very strongly supportive. Expectations that all pupils will take responsibility for their actions and demonstrate their understanding of the difference between right and wrong are made very clear. The unwritten moral code and strong ethos of care and responsibility permeate all aspects of school life. The pupils' social development is enhanced by the many opportunities for pupils of all ages to mix. This influences the older pupils to become good role models. There are many opportunities, such as the litter pick, and the May Fayre, for the school to demonstrate its commitment to village life. The school takes many opportunities to promote an awareness of local culture through social occasions and field trips, as well as through stories and music. The school is aware of the need to promote the awareness of the values and traditions of other cultures and is taking positive steps to this end. For instance, there are plans to visit Leicester to celebrate Diwali and Holi in order to extend the pupils' learning about different religious festivals.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

30. The school has good procedures for ensuring the pupils' welfare, and pastoral care is a strong feature of the school. The parents are pleased with the care and support their children receive from staff that know them well. The headteacher is the designated person for Child Protection and health and safety. The statutory requirements are met, and there are good procedures in case of fire, for the security of medicines and for First Aid; the staff is vigilant and aware of requirements.
31. The pupils are taught about safety appropriately within the curriculum. Bullying, which is rare, is discussed and discouraged in assemblies, and in personal and social education lessons. The pupils'

behaviour is monitored well by teachers and the mid-day supervisory staff. Attendance is well monitored by the bursar, who works closely with the headteacher. The attendance registers are accurately completed in accordance with requirements. Despite the school actively discouraging holidays for pupils in term-time, a small number of parents take their children from school each year. The headteacher has written to parents about this and about the need for punctuality. A few pupils are sometimes late.

32. Overall, the procedures for securing the health and safety of the pupils' and promoting their welfare are good.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

33. The parents are generally pleased with the quality of the care and the education provided by the school. The school has good links with the parents. There are regular newsletters, and numerous letters and information sheets about specific and general matters are sent home. The annual reports on the pupils' progress are satisfactory. They provide a reasonable level of information, and the parents are generally satisfied with them. No reports have been provided during the tenure of the present headteacher, and the school aims to review the reporting style during the current year, to see if it can be improved. The parents also have the opportunity to discuss their children's progress at meetings in the autumn and summer terms. The school intends to introduce termly meetings in the next academic year that will include discussion of the targets provided for the pupils' individual development. The parents are pleased that the school makes contact with them if there are any concerns about their child, and that they can meet with the teachers and headteacher at mutually convenient times.
34. The parents receive a termly 'curriculum framework' indicating what work the pupils are going to be doing. They are also requested to sign the homework and reading diaries, which are a major source of contact and communication between school and home. Specific evening meetings are held to provide further information, such as the 'Sit a SAT' event for parents with pupils in Year 6. Meetings about the National Numeracy Strategy and about sex education have also been held.
35. A number of parents help in school with activities such as reading practice, information technology, cooking, school trips, and the organization of resources. There is a very effective Parents' Committee that raises money for resources and equipment and organises social events and functions. Overall, the parents' involvement with the school makes a good contribution to the pupils' learning and general development. However, some parents, in responding to the inspection questionnaire, indicated that they were dissatisfied with the quantity and type of homework provided, the information provided about their child's individual progress, and about the limited amount of extra-curricular activities. None of these concerns were borne out by the inspection findings. The homework provision is in line with that found in similar schools. The range and the quality of the information provided by the school are good. The range of extra-curricular activities is also good, given the small number of staff.
36. The school's continuing attempts at partnership with the parents are also good. However, the school's aim of working closely with parents was not evident to a number responding to the questionnaire. The current headteacher and staff are working very hard to provide a welcoming environment, and an informative situation for the parents, and the pupils. The parents interviewed during the inspection were enthused by the headteacher and the changes taking place. Nevertheless, although the inspection findings do not confirm some of the parents' views, they indicate that the school needs to do more to ensure that parents have the information that they feel they need.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

37. The leadership provided by the headteacher is excellent. Since taking up her post in January 2000, she has led the school forward with a great deal of enthusiasm and expertise. She has been responsible for ensuring that the National Numeracy Project is developed in the school, despite its late start. She has also ensured that new schemes of work have been introduced to support the teachers in their work in planning the curriculum, and that assessment systems are developed alongside these to provide information about how well groups of pupils and individuals are doing. Many other aspects of the school's work have already been tackled, for example, improving the provision for information technology, improving the quality of the teaching, and the re-organisation of the resources. The pupils' learning opportunities are improving rapidly. The staff has been welded into a team with the central aim of providing a good education for the pupils of St. Michael's, and good working relationships with other schools and support agencies have also been fostered. There is still much to be done, especially with regard to the raising of standards generally, but an excellent start has been made. The rigorous targets the school has set for itself are being met.
38. The headteacher is supported very well by the teaching and non-teaching staff, and by the governors. All show great commitment to school improvement. Issues and developments are regularly and fruitfully discussed, and action is promptly taken to ensure that things get done. There is a comprehensive school improvement plan for the next three years that is central to the school's planning and general development. All members of staff take their responsibilities very seriously and are working hard to raise standards in all facets of the school's life and work. The governors are ably monitoring and supporting the work of the headteacher and the school. They are aware of the current strengths and are taking action to rectify its weaknesses. It is too early for these robust improvements to have had a significant effect on standards as measured by national assessment data, but it is very clear through inspection, that the school has taken on a new 'lease of life'. Standards are rising emphatically.
39. Following a very turbulent period in the school's history, the staffing is now matched well to the needs of the school. The teachers' good, and often very good, expertise and skills are meeting the needs of the pupils well. The delegation of responsibilities is appropriate. The accommodation is being carefully improved, for example a new computer suite is to be developed shortly, and the school is kept clean and tidy. It provides a secure and inviting place in which to work. The quantity, quality and range of the learning resources have been reviewed. They are currently satisfactory, and the improvements are ongoing. The resources are generally well organised and accessible.
40. The school uses its finances carefully. Grants are used to maximum effect, and the bursar is adept at ensuring that the school gets the best value for money that it can. The administrative systems are very good, and the work of the non-teaching staff, which is effectively organised, is used to support every aspect of the school's work very well. The school provides satisfactory value for money, and this aspect is improving.
41. Very good initiatives are now taking the school forward vigorously. Much of the recent development has still to 'bed down' before firm continuity and good progress in the pupils' learning is achieved. Nevertheless, an excellent start has been made, and the school is much improved since the previous inspections.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

42. The school has made an excellent start in achieving all-round improvement. With the aim of improving standards further, and continuing the positive work already done, the headteacher, governors, and staff should:

1. extend the development of systems of assessment and monitoring of the pupils' progress in learning to the non-core subjects of the curriculum in order to better inform the teachers about the standards being achieved; **(Paragraphs: 20, 76, 86, 89)**
2. supplement the school's good practice of individual target-setting by reviewing the policy and practice for the marking of the pupils' work to ensure that they gain a clear idea of what they have achieved, and what they need to do next to improve; **(Paragraphs: 56, 72, 86)**
3. ensure that the parents have precise information about the progress in learning their children are making. **(Paragraph: 35, Results of the Survey of Parents and Carers)**

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	23
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	12

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0%	23%	36%	41%	0%	0%	0%

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/A	80
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	N/A	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/A	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/A	16

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	96.5
National comparative data	94.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
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	1999	2	2	4

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	2	1	2
	Girls	2	2	2
	Total	4	3	4
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (68)	75 (77)	100 (92)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	1	2	2
	Girls	2	2	2
	Total	3	4	4
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	75 (77)	100 (92)	100 (92)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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 pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	1999	6	1	7

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	1	1	5
	Girls	1	1	1
	Total	2	2	6
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	29 (78)	29 (56)	86 (66)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	1	2	3
	Girls	1	1	1
	Total	2	3	4
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	29 (78)	43 (78)	57 (77)
	National	68 (65)	69 (59)	75 (72)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	80
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.2
Average class size	26.7

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	62

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.

Financial information

Financial year	1998/9
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	£
Total income	168839
Total expenditure	166788
Expenditure per pupil	2085
Balance brought forward from previous year	12706
Balance carried forward to next year	14757

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	80
Number of questionnaires returned	27

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	63	37	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	30	59	7	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	48	48	0	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	52	22	0	4
The teaching is good.	44	37	4	4	11
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	30	30	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	33	0	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	30	0	0	11
The school works closely with parents.	37	37	22	4	0
The school is well led and managed.	37	44	4	0	15
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	63	4	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	19	48	19	4	11

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

While all parents who replied to the questionnaire hold the view that their children like school, but a substantial minority considered that the amount of homework provided was not enough. A similar minority holds the view that the school does not work closely enough with parents, and they do not feel well informed about their child's progress. A minority feel that the school does not provide an interesting range of activities outside lessons. A striking feature of the information gained from the questionnaire returns is also the number of parents who simply 'don't know'.

The parents at the pre-inspection meeting acknowledged that the school is successfully emerging from a very turbulent period. The school is working hard to provide as much information for parents as it can, and is currently reviewing this aspect to see what improvements can be made. The first annual progress reports under the auspices of the new leadership are now about to be issued, but the previous reports are judged to be satisfactory overall. Given the voluntary nature of the provision of extra-curricular activities and the small number of staff at the school, inspection evidence clearly shows that the school provides a good range of activities. They include games, music, trips to places of interest, and involvement in local activities. The school is clearly seeking to establish much closer links with parents, who will need to play their part in this development.

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

43. At the time of the current inspection, there were three children under the age of five in the Key Stage 1 class. They enter in the term in which they are five, which means they make the transition to the greater demands of the Key Stage 1 curriculum after a comparatively short time in school. Most of the children enter the school having had some pre-school experience in either a playgroup or a nursery. This, and the warm, welcoming attitudes of the staff and the older pupils, helps them to settle into the routines and work patterns of school life quickly, happily and confidently. The children's language, mathematical and social skills are broadly average when they start school, and the standards they achieve by the end of the foundation stage of learning are generally in line with expectations for this stage. Their social skills and attitudes to work are above average. The good progress they make in lessons is due to the carefully planned teaching programme that fosters the children's imagination and learning skills through a well-balanced mixture of structured play and more formal methods. This approach has been strengthened by the recent employment of a qualified, full-time nursery nurse, who spends much of her time with the youngest children. The partnership between her and the class teacher is of great benefit to the children, as they not only receive teaching that is specific to their individual needs but also experience and enjoy being part of a larger group, mixing with older pupils, and occasionally sharing their learning.

Personal and social development

44. The children are welcomed into a well-ordered, supportive and caring environment. At the start of the day they are expected to join the other pupils in choosing work to do in their busy books. This gives them early responsibility for their own learning, and establishes good work patterns. They respond to this challenge readily and eagerly. In their work and play, they are encouraged to work either individually or collaboratively, as appropriate, and they achieve high levels of co-operation. They are confident in larger groups, such as whole-school assemblies, and at play times they happily play with older pupils. In class discussions, they listen carefully and are encouraged to contribute their own ideas. They enjoy tidying up at the end of lessons, and do so quickly and efficiently. The children respond well to the good teaching, the high expectations of the adults, and the generally positive approach taken to each child as an individual.

Language and literacy

45. Most children have average speaking and listening, reading, and writing skills when they start school. Well-planned lessons that specifically aim to extend the learning of each child in many different situations and contexts, enable them to make good progress and attain the early learning goals identified nationally. The children are encouraged to listen carefully in all situations and to answer questions logically in sentences. Role-play in the 'Post Office' encourages a satisfactory level of dialogue. The children enjoy singing and joining in rhymes, and generally articulate the words clearly. Their interest in, and enjoyment of books is fostered well. They are used to handling books and to 'reading' stories to themselves. They know what an author, illustrator and title page are, and use the pictures well to help them describe what is happening. Their confidence is developed through good teaching, and the children can recognise frequently occurring simple words, and accurately identify the initial sounds of many words. The children have many opportunities to practice their early writing skills, for instance, through ordering the sequences of stories and recording their news. They make good attempts at writing simple sentences and spelling more difficult words.

Mathematics

46. The children make good progress in counting to five and in matching objects to numerals. They acquire an early knowledge of addition and subtraction by counting forwards and backwards. They use the terms 'bigger' and 'smaller', 'heavier' and 'lighter' accurately in different, and lively practical situations. They use their fingers to count with confidence, and sort objects into sets and

pairs. Through water and sand play they have regular opportunities to gain an understanding of capacity and volume as they fill containers and sift, scoop and trickle the contents. The staff take care to use mathematical terms correctly and to ensure that the children do likewise. Consequently, the children are set firmly on the path to achieving the early learning goals by the time they are five.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

47. The children make good progress in developing their computer skills. They use programs confidently and effectively to develop numeracy, and sound and letter recognition. They are able to describe how they use the screen menus and make choices as to what level they will work at. They are developing a sound knowledge of the past through considering past events in their own lives, such as visits to the seaside, and through photographs and stories of their parents' childhood. They understand they live in a village, and that it has certain facilities such as a post office and a playground. They can choose what clothes are appropriate to wear in hot weather and dress a doll for a holiday in a hot country. They use construction equipment well to make, for example, a slide or swing, and cut and stick successfully to make their own models and pictures. The children sort toys accurately according to whether they are made of wood or not, and give logical reasons for their decisions. These activities give the pupils a sound knowledge of their own environment, and provide them with a wide range of practical activities that support the development of their language and mathematical skills effectively.

Physical development

48. By the end of the foundation stage the children's physical development is satisfactory. They develop fine manipulative skills to the expected degree, through painting and writing, and using scissors and small construction equipment. In outdoor play they use push and pull and pedal toys with confidence and sustained concentration. They have a good awareness of space and can maintain it when working in the hall in gymnastics lessons. They think hard in developing their own movements at low and high levels, and follow the teacher's spoken instructions carefully. The children change into the appropriate footwear and shorts independently and successfully.

Creative development

49. The children's attainment in this aspect matches expectations. Some are able to maintain a musical rhythm and move in time to music. They confidently join in singing hymns and rhymes confidently and can make their voices either louder or softer according to the conducting of the teacher. Their paintings show enthusiasm and a bold use of colour and space. They control the limited range of media available well, mixing colours and using a variety of mark-making techniques to convey their ideas visually. The home area provides opportunities for imaginative role-play and the exploration of ideas important to them. Many opportunities are planned to develop the children's imagination within their learning.

The teaching of the Under Fives

50. The teaching of the children under five is good. The adults have a firm understanding of the needs of young children. The learning environment is attractive, and the activities are well managed. Very good use is made of the available interior space, and the outside areas. Every aspect of care is attended to diligently, and the staff has high expectations of the children's achievements and behaviour. Individual targets for literacy and numeracy are reviewed regularly. Although the records of the children's progress in other areas of learning are largely informal, the teacher uses her knowledge of individual children's attainment and progress effectively to plan the next stage in their learning, ensuring that expectations remain high. She is vigilant in meeting their intellectual needs while protecting their right to play and be children.

ENGLISH

51. At the time of the previous inspection in 1995, standards in English were broadly in line with the average, but a significant number of pupils were underachieving. The report of 1997, indicated that there was improvement, and that the pupils' attainment in English was increasing. Standards now, are average in all aspects of English, and there are clear signs of increasingly good attainment. Careful scrutiny of the pupils' work shows that standards are now in line with the average, and that the pupils at all stages are making at least satisfactory, and often good progress in their learning. There has been a sharp upturn in the quality of the work produced since January 2000.
52. The test data collected over the period from 1996 to 1999, however, does not reflect this picture of improving attainment; in fact, it indicates a steady decline in standards. Comparisons with national averages, and with the attainment of pupils in similar schools, suggest that overall standards in English at St. Michael's are significantly lower than expectations. However, the test data is unreliable, due to the small size of the groups of pupils taking the tests, and the influence on results of the significant number of pupils with special educational needs. A further influential factor has been the turbulence in staffing in recent times, which has prevented the school from maintaining continuity in both teaching and in learning.
53. The pupils enter the reception class with average levels of attainment in their language skills. These are fostered in an interesting variety of ways and contexts, so that by the time they start on the National Curriculum Programmes of Study, the majority have a sound level of knowledge and skills in listening and speaking, and in reading and writing. Their good progress at the foundation stage, and this good progress is continued at Key Stage 1. By the time they are seven, the pupils demonstrate generally good reading skills, a secure knowledge of the different purposes of writing, which they use ably across other subjects of the curriculum, and generally good listening skills. A significant number also use their increasing information technology skills well to promote their understanding and use of language. The example of a child in the reception group extending her spelling skills through 'easy, hard and harder' categories in one session, illustrates this progress well. By the end of the session, she had learned to spell correctly such words as 'camera' and 'queen' without intervention from the teacher.
54. At early Key Stage 2, the pupils' achievements are consolidated. They make steady progress in developing their language skills, and their overall attainment in all aspects of English is average. The current cohort of pupils at this stage includes a significant number of pupils who have special educational needs. Their general attainment reflects and matches their abilities, but there is a need for the teaching to challenge further the pupils of average and above average ability. At the later stage of Key Stage 2, the pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills are promoted well. Although test data does not yet reflect it, the general standards in English are firmly in line with expectations, and there are numerous examples of good attainment. The pupils' listening skills are good, and their speaking skills are satisfactory. There is room for further development of the pupils' speaking skills. Further opportunities need to be given for the development of this aspect. Their reading skills are good. The pupils show obvious enjoyment in books and are able critics. Their skills in the use of reference materials are good, largely due to the strong attention the school pays to developing this aspect of the work. Most are developing lively writing styles in stories, accounts of events, correspondence, and in poetry. The older pupils' poetry often shows sensitivity and an apt use of descriptive words and phrases. This was evident, for example, in poems about 'The Dark' that clearly expressed their thoughts and conjured up interesting ideas and feelings. The standards of spelling and handwriting are satisfactory. The school has recently promoted work in the art of calligraphy, and this is helping to improve presentation skills effectively. By the time they are eleven, the pupils' gain a sound level of literacy.
55. The teaching is good both for the children under five, and at Key Stage 1. It is satisfactory at the early part of Key Stage 2, and very good in the later stage. The lesson planning is good at every stage. The school has adopted the National Literacy Strategy and this is having a beneficial effect on the quality of the teaching and on the pupils' learning. All the teachers ensure that the pupils know what the aims of each lesson are, and what they will be looking for when they come to

evaluate the work. Time is used efficiently, and the pupils are managed well in the mixed-age-group classes. The support of the classroom assistants is organised well to extend the pupils' learning opportunities. The work provided is carefully and appropriately matched to the pupils' levels of achievement, and usually offers further challenges for improvement. The pupils who have special educational needs are supported well and this enables them to make good progress, alongside their peers.

56. The good and very good teaching is characterised by the teachers' thorough understanding of the needs of the pupils and the aspects of the subject being taught. The objectives for the learning are firmly pursued. The pupils know what they are aiming for, what they have to do, and what results are expected. They are challenged specifically to improve and to try their best. In order to increase their levels of independence, the pupils are offered opportunities to bring their own ideas to their work and to develop them. The teachers' expectations are high, and any critical analysis of the pupils' work is sensitively and firmly given. It is often matched against the previously set individual targets for improvement. The satisfactory teaching contains many of these elements. However, the teachers' expectations, for example, for concentration, effort and presentation, sometimes do not match those of their colleagues. Their marking of the pupils' work is also inconsistent and less effective in ensuring that the pupils know how well they are doing. Some individual improvement targets are less specific than they need to be to be fully helpful. As a result, the progress of the pupils in their learning, including the abler pupils, is therefore slower in comparison.
57. In order to ensure that the National Literacy Strategy and the whole of the English curriculum is developed upon a firmer foundation, the teachers have taken collective responsibility for ensuring the development of the subject. The headteacher, who is the subject coordinator, has overseen the process, and is currently monitoring developments jointly with her colleagues and governors. Policies, systems and procedures have been recently reviewed and revised, and the resources have been matched carefully to the curriculum needs. This has given greater impetus to the school's work in the development of the pupils' language skills, and is proving very beneficial in raising standards both in the teaching and the learning. Given the short period of time the revised arrangements and strategies have been in place, the improvements have been very significant, both for standards, and for the ethos in which the subject is taught. The school is on target to meet the exacting targets for improvement it has set itself.
58. A very beneficial effect of the ongoing initiative for language development is the increasingly positive attitudes of the pupils' to their work. They are working harder, enjoying their work, having greater levels of success, and feel rewarded for the efforts they make. Displays around the school indicate well the increasing pride they are taking in their work, and the good levels of success that they are having. During the inspection, older pupils stated that they feel that they are appropriately challenged and often excited about the work they are expected to do. They feel that standards are rising, and they are right.

MATHEMATICS

59. The previous inspection found that almost all pupils at both key stages achieved national expectations in mathematics, but that a significant minority of the children underachieved. Standards in numeracy were sound. In the four years from 1996 until 1999, the data shows a trend of declining standards in mathematics at both key stages. This trend has now been arrested and reversed. Recent school test data shows that the majority of the present Year 2 and Year 6 pupils are attaining at expected levels, with an increased percentage achieving standards beyond that. The school is on target to meet its ambitious targets for mathematics at Key Stage 2. Scrutiny of the pupils' work, both completed and in progress, shows that they make good progress in their learning in many lessons, and that standards are broadly in line with national expectations across all aspects of this subject. During the inspection no significant differences were noted in the attitudes and standards achieved by boys and girls.

60. The new mathematics co-ordinator has worked hard to ensure that the school is now implementing fully the National Numeracy Strategy, and that a common teaching plan is followed. This has contributed significantly to the raising of standards, especially in the pupils' use and application of mathematics. The increased emphasis on practical and investigative mathematics has helped to achieve a more balanced curriculum, and to deepen the pupils' enjoyment and confidence in the subject. The new system of setting individual targets and reviewing them, regularly helps all pupils to be closely involved in the evaluation of their learning. Older pupils review their own targets and this gives them a good insight into the progress they are making.
61. The teaching of mathematics is good overall. It supports the pupils' learning well. The lessons are well structured, and planned carefully to meet the differing abilities of the pupils. The close partnership between the teachers and classroom support assistants is beneficial in ensuring that all pupils achieve in a supportive and encouraging atmosphere. This enables the pupils with special educational needs to make very good progress. The development of the pupils' numeracy skills is a particularly strong feature of the teaching, and the pupils are given many opportunities in mathematics lessons to reinforce and use their knowledge of number operations. As yet, however, these skills are not used sufficiently in other curriculum subjects, such as science and design and technology. There is a good range of teaching approaches, and the use of published worksheets is well balanced with other forms of recording work. More practical work, in interesting contexts, helps the pupils to see the relevance of mathematics in their own lives. The teachers take great care to use mathematical vocabulary clearly and correctly, and the pupils' development of this aspect is rapid. The teachers also use plenary sessions effectively to ensure that the pupils understand their work, and to teach the pupils how to explain their mathematical strategies.
62. The pupils in the Reception class make good progress overall, and have well-established knowledge and understanding of number, and number patterns. Most can add two numbers to total up to ten. They collect data to survey traffic in the village. They can tell the hour in analogue and digital format, and are confident in their identification of two-dimensional shapes in the environment. They mostly form numerals correctly and take care with their work. This good start is built on efficiently throughout Key Stage 1. The pupils have a secure knowledge of multiplication tables to five. They use their knowledge of the four number operations to solve problems, sometimes involving money, using their own strategies. In all other aspects of the mathematics programme, progress continues steadily, so that by the time they are seven the pupils have a thorough working knowledge of more complex mathematical concepts and patterns.
63. At Key Stage 2, the pupils' maintain good working attitudes and show an interest in mathematics, co-operating in problem-solving and helping each other where appropriate. They use mathematical terms confidently to explain their workings. Most of the pupils make satisfactory progress, but those of higher ability make good progress. This is due to the good questioning techniques of the teachers, their high expectations that pupils will work and concentrate hard, and the good pace of mental mathematics sessions. By the age of eleven, the pupils are working with accuracy and confidence in mental calculations, in written work, and in using calculators to work with larger numbers in more complex contexts. They estimate sensibly to check the correctness of their answers. They make good progress in their use of algebraic formulae, for example, to work out equations for shapes. They have secure knowledge of fractions, decimals and percentages, and convert between the forms accurately.
64. The systems for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics are good. Regular tests and work in the pupil-tracking books helps to inform the teachers and pupils of individual levels of attainment. The teachers' marking is often of good quality, especially at the end of Key Stage 2, and analyses the pupils strengths and weaknesses. The best examples also challenge and extend the pupils' thinking through pertinent questions and comments. The marking is accurate and reflects the teachers' good knowledge of mathematics teaching. The co-ordinator has worked hard to ensure that agreed systems form the basis for planning, teaching and assessing. She has monitored provision effectively and her diligence has contributed well to improving standards.

SCIENCE

65. The previous inspection found standards in science matched national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, but there was significant underachievement at Key Stage 2. Since 1995 standards have fluctuated, reflecting a period when lack of agreed approaches to planning and teaching led to limited continuity in provision, and erratic progress of groups of pupils.
66. The 1999 Key Stage 1 teacher assessments show science to have been something of a strength of that particular, small cohort and their results were very high in comparison with schools nationally at the expected level. However, no pupils achieved at the higher levels. The unpublished results of this year's teacher assessments show that attainment does not match last year's national averages, the majority of pupils attained average standards, but none achieved at the higher level. The inspection findings confirm that standards in all aspects of the science curriculum match national expectations at Key Stage 1, and that the teacher's assessments are accurate. The Key Stage 2 test results for 1999, showed the percentage of pupils reaching the expected level was close to the national average, despite it being a small cohort with a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. However, only a small percentage attained above the expectations. The unpublished results of the 2000 tests indicate an upward trend with increased attainment at both the expected and the higher levels. The inspection findings confirm that standards of work broadly match national expectations, but in experimental and investigative science standards are lower than expectations.
67. In order to improve standards the school has adopted a national teaching scheme which ensures that the pupils receive continuity in the teaching and make progress across all aspects of the subject. At Key Stage 1 the teaching is planned carefully in order to help all pupils to reach average standards. However, it is not sufficiently supportive to enable pupils who are able to ask their own questions and explain science observations in more general scientific terms, to attain at higher levels. At Key Stage 2 the urgent need to make up for significant shortfalls in the pupils' prior learning has led to an intensive programme of teaching science knowledge in the abstract. Although the pupils now have practical experiences designed to develop their skills of scientific investigation, they are starting from a low base.
68. The teaching of science is underpinned by clear intentions, within the school improvement plan, to improve overall standards in teaching and learning. It is beginning to do so successfully. The aims for learning science are clearly expressed in the teachers' planning and practice. These are made plain to the pupils.
69. By the time they are seven, the pupils have a sound knowledge of a range of living things, and what their needs are in order to survive. They know, through observation, the properties of some materials around the school, and can sort them according to their own criteria in order to describe them. They have a satisfactory understanding of a range of physical phenomena, such as the sources of light, and know that 'pushes' and 'pulls' are forces. The pupils have many opportunities to explore science events and phenomena, and they respond well to suggestions of how to find things out. Their observations are carefully made, and are recorded neatly and colourfully. However, very few of these observations are either measured using standard units or recorded in table form, which would help them to see patterns and to explain what is happening. Currently, this limits the achievement of some pupils. At the age of eleven the pupils know about changing states of matter and can list reversible changes. They know that sound is caused by vibration, and that the rotation of the Earth causes night and day. They have a good knowledge of life cycles of animals and plants, and of how to maintain a healthy body. The pupils are able to make scientific prediction and plan a fair test, but their investigative skills are largely confined to describing their observations. There are too few opportunities for them to collect data and display it graphically in order to interpret patterns or trends in their results that would enable them to draw conclusions. The pupils' literacy skills are developed satisfactorily through science although, at Key Stage 2, their diagrams and drawings are unsatisfactory in size and detail. The use of their numeracy skills is, at present, under-developed in science.

70. Although the teaching of science is satisfactory overall, there are gaps in the teachers' knowledge, especially at Key Stage 2. This prevents them from consistently extending the learning of the more able pupils through questioning and more demanding activities. The marking of the pupils work at Key Stage 2 is sometimes inaccurate as teachers are not sure of what questions to ask, or what comments to make, in order to develop science skills and concepts to higher levels. However, the structure of the teaching benefits the lower attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, who make very good progress in their science knowledge.
71. The teaching approaches and the content of lessons at Key Stage 2 have been largely influenced by the urgent need to address the school's priorities in other subjects. They have also been determined by the need to teach the required science programme in a short time, to prepare the pupils for national tests. The school is aware of shortfalls in its provision at Key Stage 2 and is now working hard to overcome them in a planned way. There is a good balance in all classes, of pupils' own work, worksheet-based tasks and copied work. The learning experiences are planned to interest and engage the pupils. They respond with concentration and good behaviour, indicating a good attitude to science. They have made good gains in learning in a short time.
72. At both key stages, the pupils' tracking books inform the teachers and themselves of their levels of attainment, and give a broad overview of individual progress. The teachers' assessments are accurate. In order to raise standards further, there is a need to invite the pupils to reflect upon their own progress by marking in a more focused and science-specific way in order to confirm and challenge the pupils' thinking and perceptions. Although there is still much to do to develop the science curriculum, especially at Key Stage 2, the school has made good progress towards its targets in a very short time, and it is well placed to effect further change.

ART

73. No lessons in art were seen during the inspection. It is, therefore, not possible to make judgements about the quality of the teaching. The judgements made are based on the evidence from a scrutiny of the children's previously completed work, and brief discussion with some of the older pupils.
74. At both key stages, the standards of the pupils' work matches the national expectations. Overall, their attainment and progress are satisfactory. The pupils work capably in a range of two-dimensional media, and create bright, interesting pictures and designs. The youngest experiment successfully with colour-mixing, create collages, and illustrate stories. The pupils at Key Stage 1 create lively images of people, and places, and study artists, such as Van Gogh, in order to experiment with similar styles in their own work. At Key Stage 2, the studies of artists' styles include the work of Derain and Vallodon. Carefully detailed images of good quality are made, often by groups, and the resultant work is sometimes combined to produce larger pictures that form striking images. The pupils at Key Stage 2 draw and paint still-life pictures with care and precision. Images and designs of Ancient Greek vases illustrate well the pupils' developing skills. Many of the pupils are acquainted with the work of Monet, Renoir and Picasso, and they can talk about their works critically, expressing their own likes and dislikes. Some of the pupils' pencil drawings of people with umbrellas showed good drawing and observational skills. Much of the pupils' work in art is linked to other areas of the curriculum, such as history, geography, and science. There is also some effective poster work on health education, and work, and some good calligraphy.
75. There is some evidence of three-dimensional work at Key Stage 2, in the creation of picture frames in a range of media, including clay. This is linked to work in design and technology. However the range of work in three-dimensions is generally insufficient, and needs to be extended.
76. At Key Stage 1, the teacher has begun to collect representative samples of the pupils' work to use in assessing the standards and general progress they make in the subject. This procedure needs to be extended across the school, with the inclusion of notes about the standards achieved, so that whole-school judgements can be made about the pupils' individual and collective progress, and about any inadequacies in the range and relevance of the curriculum offered. Sketchbooks for the

pupils to use in recording their ideas, trying out designs and making notes about ongoing work, have recently been introduced at Key Stage 2. These are being used purposefully, but it is too early to say whether they can be helpful in creating a record of attainment and achievement.

77. Given the priorities needing to be given to other areas of the whole curriculum at this stage in the school's development, the school is maintaining the profile of art satisfactorily. When the opportunity arises, it will be necessary to review the overall provision for the subject to ensure the extension of three-dimensional work in various forms to provide a broader curriculum.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

78. It is impossible to make secure judgements on standards and progress in design and technology as there is no evidence of planning, and no products available to scrutinise at Key Stage 2 prior to January 2000, when the school began to offer a more stable and purposeful learning environment. There is very little work to be seen at Key Stage 1, as the pupils have taken nearly all of it home.
79. Very quickly after the headteacher took up her post, the decision was made to adopt the national scheme of work for design and technology as there were no coherent plans in place. Now that more urgent priorities have begun to be addressed, the scheme is being implemented in a measured and realistic way. This has been supported by a new policy of good quality, which sets out progression in developing pupils' skills, and in their use of tools. All the staff is committed to teaching design and technology as part of a broad and varied curriculum. They are confident in their use of this scheme, and show in their planning that they understand the requirements of the teaching programme in all its aspects.
80. Evidence gained from the small sample of work saved from recent projects, and a few photographs, indicate that the pupils are offered experiences that interest them and that they enjoy. For instance, at Key Stage 1, a project on homes linked well to work in geography on houses in the village. The pupils designed and made their own large models of three-dimensional houses, cutting and joining the various components carefully. Some had cylindrical chimneys and pitched roofs. All were very painstakingly and imaginatively finished, and reflected well the original designs. Similarly, Year 3 and 4 pupils have made picture frames in a range of materials, designing them first before making the prototypes of stands. They showed considerable ingenuity in this work. The finished frames were bright and well-made, and they fulfil their purpose well.
81. In the one lesson seen, the very good teaching skilfully built upon previous research into biscuit ingredients, recipes, packaging and costs. This prepared the pupils very well to make decisions about their own design and marketing of 'special occasion' biscuits. The teacher's enthusiasm, good knowledge, very high expectations for effort and independence, and the very good relationships with the class, had the pupils 'buzzing' with effort and urgency to realise their designs. The levels of technical talk and cooperation were very high. All the pupils were totally committed to the group project, and talked fluently about what they were doing and the reasons for their decisions. In all this, they were constantly evaluating and amending their plans and considering the consumers. In this lesson the pupils were making very good progress and attaining in line with expectations.
82. As yet, the methods of recording the pupils' attainment and progress are informal, but the information so gained is used effectively to plan further help and to focus support. The school has made a very good start in structuring provision for design and technology, and is well placed to make rapid progress.

GEOGRAPHY

83. In Key Stage 2, the patchy nature of the work in the pupils' books prior to January 2000 indicates that provision for geography was uncoordinated, and of very varied quality. Since then all the teachers have worked together to implement the newly adopted teaching scheme. Now, the Key Stage 2 pupils experience a curriculum that builds effectively on that for Key Stage 1. The teaching enhances the good start made by the Key Stage 1 pupils, and standards at both key stages

match expectations. All previous criticisms that geography skills were insufficiently integrated into the study of themes and places have been fully addressed. There is now good coverage of all elements of the geography curriculum, which is carefully planned within themes that develop the pupils' awareness of place through study of both their own and more distant localities. Field trips and planned residential visits enhance the learning and give the pupils opportunities to use their geographical skills in interesting and enjoyable contexts.

84. The pupils at Key Stage 1 study features of Rearsby and recognise those that make it distinctive. They have a good understanding, gained through practical experience, of the characteristics of a village and can contrast them in detail with the features of towns that they know. They also contrast life in Rearsby with that in Tocuaro, a village in Mexico. Through this work, and the teachers skilful questioning, they build up a comprehensive picture of their own culture, and that of another community. The teaching develops the children's interest well, giving them plenty of opportunity for focused discussion, while maintaining a good pace in the learning. The teaching is planned very well so that children of different ages, experience, and abilities are offered activities that enable them to make good progress in their learning. Computer programs, for example, CD ROMS, are used effectively to extend the pupils' knowledge of different places, and to broaden their enquiry skills.
85. At Key Stage 2, the good progress is maintained. The pupils use secondary sources of information, such as maps, effectively to increase their knowledge of places, and their understanding of the characteristics of place. They are beginning to understand the relationship between people and their environment, and how the environment can be managed to make it pleasanter.
86. The assessment of the pupils' attainment in geography is informal, and the teachers' marking of the pupils' work needs to be improved in order to extend and develop their geographical thinking. Nevertheless, the teachers use the information they gain in class discussion to develop lessons effectively. This helps to ensure the good progress of their pupils' learning in geography.

HISTORY

87. At the time of the previous inspection, there was evidence of underachievement in history. Standards had improved by 1997. No lessons were observed at Key Stage 1 during the current inspection, but scrutiny of the pupils' work combined with lesson observation at Key Stage 2, indicate that standards are now in line with expectations at both key stages, and that the pupils' progress is sound throughout.
88. By the age of seven, the pupils have developed a sound sense of the past and the present, both in their own and other people's lives. They can make simple comparisons between their own experiences and those of people who lived in the past. By the time they are eleven, they have gained a firm knowledge of some aspects of British history, know some of the major events of the past, and have made studies of ancient civilisations, such as the Greeks and Romans, and of Viking, Anglo Saxon and Celtic history. They demonstrate their knowledge and understanding through writing, research, art-work and discussion to a satisfactory standard. Many of the pupils can discuss historical events and provide reasons about why things happened as they did. They use sources of information, such as books and CD ROM, to gain evidence for their opinions and ideas, and the older pupils are adept in asking questions. They make comparisons between, for example, the lives of school children in Ancient Greece and their own experiences.
89. The teaching seen at Key Stage 2 was at least satisfactory, and in Years 5 and 6 it was very good. The pupils are enthused by their history studies. They show good interest, and the teachers' high expectations, coupled with the good level of challenge in the tasks that are provided, cause the pupils to work hard. The lessons are managed well, and the good deployment of the classroom support assistants ensures that the pupils are supported well, especially those with special educational needs. The assessment systems are as yet informal, and there is a need to establish these more firmly in order that the school can monitor the pupils' overall progress more effectively.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

90. Standards in information technology are satisfactory at all stages. This is an improvement since the inspection in 1997. The pupils have regular, well-managed opportunities to use computers in their daily work in school. Consequently, they make sound, and often good, progress in their learning.
91. The pupils use information technology to explore and solve problems in English and mathematics, and use CD ROM effectively to obtain information for work in geography and history. They also create art-work of good quality. Good examples were noted of the youngest pupils using the mouse and keyboard independently, adeptly, and very confidently to follow a program, that helped to advance their skills both in language, and in information technology. The pupils in Year 2 have been introduced to control technology, and can program a floor robot efficiently. The pupils at Key Stage 2 gain sound experience in a range of processes, and most can edit their own writing, change fonts and format, select information, print, and save work on their personal floppy disk. Through the use of simulation programs, they gain good experience of controlling and modelling, and of making independent decisions. They also collect and use data, using spreadsheets and graphs.
92. No lessons in information technology were observed. However, there were numerous opportunities to witness the pupils working individually and in pairs in a range of activities. The teachers' planning shows that new programs are often introduced initially as class lessons. Individual and group work follows over an allocated period of time, and is supported regularly by the classroom assistants, and monitored by the teaching staff. The classroom assistants and the pupils are carefully supported in the teaching, and in the learning, by a series of instruction and reference cards that are used to guide the activities. This arrangement helps to maximise the pupils' learning opportunities and ensures equality in the amount and type of support they receive. Each class has a computer log, which is used to record the pupils' use of the computer, and show what they have done. Evaluation sheets have recently been introduced, and plans have been made to monitor the overall results of the school's work in information technology at the end of each term. Some parents also help by providing good additional support, an example of which was the training of the pupils in the use of e-mail systems during the inspection. The pupils with special educational needs are supported well, and those whose skills are generally better developed, help their peers willingly and capably.
93. The pupils are keen to use technology at all stages. They apply themselves well, help each other when needed, and share the equipment amicably and sensibly. Their behaviour is very good. They often work independently and out of the direct supervision of the teacher, especially the older ones, in the library area. They behave maturely, and work hard at the tasks they are given. They also enjoy the challenges they face. They are confident, but quick to seek help when they need it.
94. Plans are in hand to construct a computer suite for the school in the near future, so that class lessons offering the pupils' more 'hands-on' opportunities can take place. Funding for this has been gained. The headteacher is the information technology curriculum manager. She carries out the work of coordinator very well. Her work has generated a lively and developmental impetus that is rapidly helping both the pupils and the staff to a better understanding of the uses of technology, and it is increasing the skills of all.

MUSIC

95. Standards in music broadly matched expectations at the previous inspection. The subject has been given a further impetus recently with the new appointment of a coordinator for the subject. The effect has been beneficial. Standards in singing, composition, listening and appraising are satisfactory. Standards in individual instrumental playing are good. The pupils at all stages make generally good progress.
96. Most of the pupils sing with enthusiasm. They learn a range of songs and hymns by heart, and perform them brightly in music lessons and in assemblies. At times, the pupils' ability to maintain a key is suspect, but their diction, and the energy they put in to their choral work is mostly good.

The youngest pupils are more tentative in their efforts, but they are encouraged to contribute to the whole-school choral activities. The establishment of a school choir has been beneficial in extending the pupils' involvement in music. This voluntary choir is well attended by pupils of all ages, and they show enjoyment in their efforts. The pupils learn to use percussion instruments, and most are gaining a firm knowledge of the language of music, for example, pitch, tempo, and dynamics. Tuned instrumental work is developed through the use of glockenspiels and xylophones, and there is a good range of woodwind and brass peripatetic tuition available.

97. The lessons seen at both key stages were satisfactorily organised. They advanced the pupils' knowledge and skills progressively, and offered a good range of experiences of music, in listening, composition, and performance. The teaching is satisfactory overall. In order to improve standards further, there is a need to develop more accuracy in the pupils' playing and in their singing, and to ensure that all the pupils are involved fully in the tasks. To some extent, this would be helped by better arrangement of the accommodation during music lessons. In order to ensure continuity and progress in the pupils' learning through different stages, the school uses the local education authority's scheme of work for music as a basis for its work. Music from other cultures is included in the programme. The lessons include a variety of activities to maintain the pupils' interest, to develop their own ideas, and to work in partnership to create sounds and musical pieces. The practice of recording the pupils' efforts for later listening, discussion, and evaluation is a good one. Firm attention is given to using instruments appropriately, and to ensuring that a full range of sounds is explored.
98. The peripatetic teaching is of a good standard. The brief time available for lessons is very purposefully and efficiently used. Sympathetic and supportive teaching encourages the pupils well, and the levels of challenge are raised appropriately as the pupils become increasingly successful in their playing. A very positive feature of the work of the peripatetic teaching is the use of humour, and the modulation of voice and demands to suit the individuals receiving tuition.
99. The coordinator for music has a good grasp of the subject and its needs for overall development within the school. She gives time voluntarily to the management of the choir, and this is beneficial to the general ethos of the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

100. The previous inspection noted that there was underachievement in physical education. This has been firmly rectified. Due to the timing of the inspection, the observations of physical education lessons were limited to gymnastics at Key Stage 1, and games skills at Key Stage 2. They indicated that at least satisfactory standards are being achieved, and that at the later end of Key Stage 2, standards are good. At both key stages, the pupils' progress is generally good.
101. The teaching of the younger pupils ensures that they work hard both physically and mentally. The calm approach, and steady pace encourage relaxed but purposeful learning. Expectations are high, and good attention is given to matters of health and safety. Demonstrations by the pupils are used well to exemplify what is required, to offer further challenges, and to encourage greater individual effort. This leads to good attitudes amongst the pupils and an eagerness to succeed. Class organisation is good, and this maximises the use of time and the use of equipment, with beneficial effects. At early Key Stage 2, the teaching is satisfactory. The lessons are well planned, and they involve a range of challenging activities to promote the pupils skills. Demonstrations are used purposefully to show how greater accuracy can be achieved with improved techniques, for example in throwing or rolling a ball to a series of targets. The teaching is technically competent, but sometimes teacher talk takes longer than the time given to the practise of skills. Consequently, some pupils get frustrated in their eagerness and tend to listen less attentively. Their achievements, while satisfactory, are then not sufficiently extended to reach the good levels of which they are potentially capable. At the later part of Key Stage 2, the teaching is very good. The lessons are brisk in pace. They include a range of interesting and challenging activities, including warm-ups, skills practice, and competitive team games. The skills to be learned are broken down into small components, for example, the position of the hands, feet and body in catching securely, or fielding positions when attempting to retrieve a ball. The teachers' instructions are clear, and based on a

good knowledge of techniques, safety issues, and the need for healthy exercise. Very good use is made of the support of the classroom assistants to extend the pupils' learning opportunities.

102. The pupils enjoy their work in physical education. By the time they are eleven, most develop good skills in, for example, running, catching, fielding, and batting. They acquire a strong sense of fair play, and are very supportive of one another, voluntarily applauding each other's success. They work hard to increase their own individual achievements, and work well together in teams. This is further demonstrated by the pupils' eagerness to play team games during lunchtime breaks. They use the school's equipment responsibly, which the older pupils responsibly and efficiently collect from and return to the equipment store.
103. The curriculum provided, which is still developing, is linked positively to the full range of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. The coordinator for physical education is ensuring that the pupils' learning experiences are as wide as possible within the small school context. A well-attended and well-staffed after school club offers further opportunities for learning, and enjoyment in sport. These features are having a positive influence over the pupils' attitudes, and the development of their skills. They also contribute significantly to the positive ethos of the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

104. This area of the curriculum was subject to an inspection under Section 23 of the Education Act 1996.