

INSPECTION REPORT

WHYBRIDGE INFANT SCHOOL

Rainham

LEA area: Havering

Unique reference number: 102285

Headteacher: Miss L. Hatchard

Reporting inspector: Mr. D. Rosenthal
14524

Dates of inspection: 7-10 November 2000

Inspection number: 224050

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ford Lane Rainham Essex
Postcode:	RM13 7AR
Telephone number:	01708 551712
Fax number:	01708 551736
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms. C. Whytefield
Date of previous inspection:	5 February 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr. D. Rosenthal	Registered inspector	Geography Music Religious education Equal opportunities Special educational needs English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? The schools' results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
Mrs. R. Hall	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mr. A. Jenner	Team inspector	Mathematics History Physical Education	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Mrs. C. Pryor	Team inspector	Under Fives English Art	How well is the school led and managed?
Mr. N. Sagar	Team inspector	Science Information technology Design and technology	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.

The inspection contractor was:

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
Community Inspection and Advisory Service
Westbury Centre
Ripple Road
Barking
IG11 7PT

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The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	10
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	12
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	14
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	17
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	18
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	20
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	22
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	26

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This infant school educates 188 boys and girls between the ages of four and seven, mainly from the local area. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is around average. Thirty-four children have been assessed as having special educational needs. A small number of pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds and speak English as an additional language. In general, these pupils are confident in English. As in other local schools, pupil numbers have declined in recent years. As a result, the school has recently needed to form two mixed age classes.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

In most respects, this is an effective school. Good foundations are laid in the reception classes. National test results for seven-year-olds improved significantly last year. The school serves children well in the development of basic skills. The curriculum, which gives too little attention to arts subjects, needs improvement. Teaching is generally good and the children respond positively to their lessons. They work hard and behave well. The headteacher provides strong and efficient leadership and the governing body makes a good contribution to the work of the school. Value for money is satisfactory.

What the school does well

- Children's achievement is above average in reading and well above in writing.
- They have good standards of numeracy.
- They use computers well.
- Most teaching is good and much is very good.
- Children respond well to their lessons and most have very good behaviour.
- Pupils are very well cared for.
- The school is well led and managed by the headteacher and governing body.
- Information provided to parents is very good.

What could be improved

- There is too little provision in the curriculum for cultural development, including creative and exploratory work.
- Standards are too low in art, music and physical education.
- Although generally above average, boys do less well than girls in tests.
- The organisation of teaching for children with special educational needs is unsatisfactory.
- The planned curriculum gives teachers insufficient guidance over what to teach in some subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Satisfactory progress has been made overall. Good progress has been made with the school's systems for assessment and in making lessons more purposeful. The quality of teaching is better than at the time of the last inspection. However, the curriculum still makes too little room for creative and exploratory work throughout the school. It gives children too little independence, particularly in Years 1 and 2.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
reading	B	C	B	A
writing	C	C	A	A
mathematics	A	E	C	C

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

The national tests taken by seven-year-old pupils in May 2000 showed that this school does well in reading and (particularly) in writing and is about average in mathematics. Significant improvements were made in the test results for reading, writing and mathematics in 2000. The overall trend in test results over the last few years has been upwards, although rather unsteady and variable between subjects. Girls do considerably better than boys in the tests and the difference is much greater than in the national picture. High standards in reading and writing are being maintained in the current year and children are also doing well in number work.

By the age of seven, children's achievement in the use of computers and in design and technology is good. In art, music and physical education it is below national expectations.

Most children in the reception classes make a generally good start to their education and are well used to the routines after only half a term in school. Children are establishing good early skills in literacy and numeracy. Progress in creative development is slow.

Children who speak English as an additional language make good progress. Progress is generally satisfactory for the children who have special educational needs.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good.
Personal development and relationships	Good.
Attendance	Good.

Children's attitudes to their lessons are a strength of the school. Behaviour is very good in all but a few lessons.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good

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

In 94% of lessons teaching is satisfactory or better. It is very good in 18%. Most teaching of English and mathematics is good. The school has adopted the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies well. In general, staff teach basic skills very effectively. Particular strengths of the teaching are the good use of time (very little time is ever wasted); the focus on learning (teachers are clear what the children should gain from each lesson); the effective use of resources (as in mathematics and geography lessons); and the good relationships and business-like atmosphere of the classes. Teachers match the work well to the needs of their pupils. There are weaknesses in the teaching of handwriting, music and physical education, and occasionally in the management of pupils.

Overall, the teaching leads to good learning. Children show interest during whole class and individual activities and usually work at a good pace.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Unsatisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Mainly sound. Some important weaknesses in organisation.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Needs are well met.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Most aspects satisfactory, but cultural development is poor.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well.

The school works very well with parents and provides them with high quality information about the school and its work. The curriculum is strong for the basic subjects, but weak in creative subjects. The planned curriculum gives teachers too little guidance on the teaching of art, music and physical education. Children benefit from high levels of care throughout the day. Supervision is very well organised. Children's progress and development are very carefully monitored and records are very well kept.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good, strong and effective. Special educational needs provision needs better management.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good.
The strategic use of resources	Good.

The headteacher gives a strong lead to the staff and is an excellent organiser. Senior staff provide helpful leadership to their colleagues. Co-ordinators for some subjects need to be more active in mapping out the curriculum. Governors are very involved in the life of the school and are well organised to carry out their responsibilities. The school has capable and experienced teachers, who are assisted well by support staff. The building is a real asset. It is spacious, well maintained and well organised. Resources for most subjects are adequate, but more money needs to be spent on the library. The school takes appropriate measures to get best value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school and are making good progress • Behaviour is good • The school listens to complaints and questions • The school expects children to work hard and do well • The school is well led and managed • The school helps children to become mature and responsible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about children's progress • The range of activities provided outside lessons

The inspection findings confirm parents' positive feelings about the school, although children do not do as well as they should in creative subjects. Inspection findings do not support the less positive views. The information sent home about children's progress is of good quality. Staff are readily available to discuss any concerns. As in most infant schools, Whybridge Infant School does not provide any out of school activities. There is currently no requirement that it should.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

National tests

1. **The national tests taken by last year's Year 2 pupils show that overall attainment was above the national average in reading and well above average in writing. It was around average in mathematics.**

2. In relation to similar schools (schools with a similar number of children entitled to free school meals) pupils did particularly well in writing, with above average attainment in writing and average attainment in mathematics.

3. Assessments made by teachers in July 2000 show above average attainment in science.

4. **Since 1997, attainment in all subjects has risen, but improvements have been unsteady, particularly in mathematics.** The improvements made in 2000 were significant and work seen during the inspection indicates that the school is on course at least to maintain its 2000 scores.

5. **A particular feature of the school is the difference between boys' and girls' results each year. Girls do better than boys and the difference is more marked than that found nationally.**

The inspection found no significant explanation for this in lessons but some features of the school's provision might contribute to the picture. These include: the early start made with writing in the reception classes, which may advantage girls over boys; some of the arrangements for special educational needs, where children (often boys) miss some important lessons; and the school's view that some boys find greater difficulty than girls in interpreting questions in national tests. These issues are explored elsewhere in the report.

Evidence from the inspection

6. **The inspection findings confirm that pupils are doing well in reading and (particularly) in writing. Attainment in mathematics overall is around average; children are doing well in number work.**

7. Overall standards in English are high. By the age of seven children read confidently and accurately, often using their good knowledge of letter sounds to tackle unknown words. Standards in writing are high, particularly in terms of spelling and grammar. Handwriting is legible but often rather immature and sometimes poorly formed. In lessons across the curriculum, children do not always listen carefully enough to others. They have good vocabulary and can express themselves quite well, but they need to be encouraged to be more articulate in class. Inspection evidence confirms that girls generally do better than the boys.

8. Attainment in mathematics is around average. New approaches to the teaching of number work mean that children carry out calculations well. They are gaining good mental arithmetic skills. Pupils work quickly and accurately and understand the way numbers work.

9. Children have the skills to apply reading, writing and mathematics in other subjects of the curriculum. Particularly in the case of reading and writing, they have insufficient opportunity to do so at present.

10. **By the time children reach the top classes, attainment in science is around the expected level. Children are taught to use computers well and standards are good overall. Work in design and technology is also good.**

11. **Because the school places very heavy emphasis on writing in English, written work in some other subjects is very sparse.** Therefore, the evidence of pupils' achievement in history,

geography and religious education is thin. In geography, children show good levels of knowledge about the work studied and satisfactory use of skills, such as using pictures to learn about other places. In religious education children also show good knowledge of work covered recently.

12. **Three subjects fail to meet national expectations by age seven.** In art, children show some adequate technical skills but their work shows little imagination or creativity. Drawing is weak. In the small number of music lessons seen, performance was frequently less precise than is expected. In physical education, attainment is unsatisfactory. Children show little precision or control in the work they undertake.

13. When children enter the school, overall attainment is around average. **In the reception classes, most children make rapid progress in establishing basic skills.** Pupils make generally very good progress in communication, language and literacy. They make confident contributions during oral work. A significant group of high attainers was already writing quite confidently at the time of the inspection. Very good progress is made in mathematical development. Many children are confident with early counting and pattern work. **Good progress is made in personal, social and emotional development** so that children settle well into school and take some responsibility for their work. Children develop satisfactory knowledge and understanding of their world. In most respects, physical development is satisfactory. **In creative development opportunities for learning are too limited** and progress is likely to be unsatisfactory over time. Some children, particularly boys, are pushed on to formal written activities before they are ready and they do not find sufficient success in this aspect of their work.

14. **As they move through the school children of all attainment levels generally make good progress in basic skills** and in technological areas of learning, such as in the use of computers. However, the school places too little emphasis on cultural, creative and exploratory aspects and here children do not do as well as they might.

15. **The small numbers of children who speak English as an additional language are well integrated into the school and generally do as well as other children. Children with special educational needs are well supported by classroom assistants and so are enabled to make similar progress to other children.** These children also receive additional help out of class. Although the additional teaching provided is sound, the time spent away from class often causes these children to miss work, for instance relating to mathematics and literature. This is likely to impede their progress in these areas.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. **Children's positive attitudes and good behaviour are strong features of the school.** Pupils are influenced positively by the purposeful, professional ethos created by the staff. Almost all pupils are enthusiastic and show interest in their work. Many exhibit a very disciplined approach when undertaking their tasks.

17. There is generally a strong sense of order, both in school and in the playground. Unfortunately, a small number of pupils occasionally show inappropriate behaviour in one class. There is no evidence of bullying or oppressive behaviour in the school. Children are punctual and attendance is good.

18. **Children generally respect each other, and form positive relationships with their teachers and other members of staff.** They are happy to support each other in various ways. For example, the oldest children take very seriously their responsibility for looking after the youngest pupils, and newcomers. Equipment and resources are carefully used and property is respected. There have been no exclusions in recent years.

19. Children work well on independent tasks and they occasionally take responsibility in lessons, but this is relatively infrequent in years 1 and 2. Most lessons are highly directed and this means that children rarely make a considered, personal response. Because of some weaknesses in the curriculum children seldom make choices creatively, for example in physical education and art. This aspect was weak at the time of the last inspection and too little improvement has been made.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

20. **Ninety-four percent of lessons were graded satisfactory or better, with a high proportion good or very good.** Teaching in the reception classes is particularly strong.

21. **In the reception classes**, one hundred percent of teaching is satisfactory or better. Forty percent is very good. Lessons are well planned and teachers maintain a strong focus on learning. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and their teaching is supported by good working relationships between all involved. Teachers ensure that children spend their time productively and that they participate well when the class works together. Staff demonstrate new ideas clearly and give interesting explanations. Good use is made of apparatus, books and visual aids, which help develop the children's understanding and maintain their interest. Lessons provide a good balance of teaching methods. There is direct teaching to the whole class and to groups within it, together with a good range of purposeful individual activities. Activities are well supervised and supported by other adults in the classrooms. Assessment is used effectively by teachers to identify children's strengths and weaknesses. The particular needs of individual pupils are known and acted upon.

22. **As a result of the teaching in the reception classes, children generally develop well the basic skills associated with literacy, numeracy and use of a computer. Teachers' high expectations also lead to generally mature social behaviour.** Children respond well, showing interest and generally good levels of concentration. They show some independence in selecting, using and maintaining resources when required. This is, however, not a particular strength in the school.

23. **A weakness in the teaching in the reception classes arises from the current planning of the curriculum.** Some children (notably boys) are pushed to formal tasks, particularly of writing before they have the maturity and the skills to tackle them. Evidence from books indicates that a significant minority of pupils currently make weak progress in these tasks and it is possible that they lose confidence as a result. More emphasis needs to be given to developing manipulative skills (through such activities as threading, construction, colouring, drawing and pattern making) before writing begins for these children.

24. **In Years 1 and 2 teaching is frequently good or very good.** Ninety-two percent is satisfactory or better and eighteen percent is very good.

25. In most subjects, lessons are very purposeful. Teachers are clear what children are to learn and ensure they are aware of the progress they are expected to make. The teaching of most aspects of English is particularly strong. Lessons are well structured and the approach is systematic. The teaching of punctuation and grammar is effective. Children understand new work well and the teaching leads to high standards in these aspects of work. However, handwriting is not taught systematically enough and the exercises covered do not transfer to children's personal writing. Teaching of mathematics is also systematic and there is helpful encouragement for pupils to develop their own methods for working out mental calculations.

26. **A particular feature of teaching throughout the school is the efficient use of time.** Almost all lessons are brisk and business-like. Resources, such as books, mathematical and scientific apparatus, pictures and maps are well used in lessons to develop understanding. In a Year 1 mathematics lesson, for example, the teacher used a good variety of games and equipment to reinforce the learning of number facts. The activities were well-managed and led to good gains in understanding.

27. **Teachers know their pupils well and generally respond appropriately to their needs.** This is seen in the way staff interact with pupils and through the different activities they plan for them. Higher attaining children are stretched. They do well as a result of the whole class direct teaching they are given, together with the ensuing activities. Children with special educational needs receive good support in class. They are enabled to participate in lessons fully and to make progress. Such children are sometimes given extra lessons outside the classroom. They receive sound teaching here but the way the support is organised means that they miss the stimulation of other higher attaining children; they also miss lessons which are important to their development. This withdrawal arrangement was criticised in the last inspection report and continues to be a weakness.

28. The school has recently formed two mixed age classes. The teachers concerned take care to ensure that the two age groups in their classes are stretched. They use classroom support staff well to make sure children get the help they need.

29. **As a result of generally good teaching throughout the school, children develop basic skills well. They carry out written and practical tasks willingly and at a good pace**, even when the work is of a routine nature. Children use time well and get through their tasks quickly. The effort and care put into written work are generally good.

30. **In Years 1 and 2 the teaching and learning have some weaknesses.** In many lessons, including English lessons, the expectation that children will listen carefully (particularly to other pupils) is not high enough. Teachers repeat too many answers and this means pupils do not see the need to speak up sufficiently. Teachers' demonstrations of handwriting are not clear enough and children do not make as much progress here as in other aspects of English. Several teachers lack subject knowledge in physical education and some in music. As a result, children make slow progress in the lessons concerned. Occasionally children are asked to discuss things together in a group. They do not do this particularly well because too little instruction is given on issues such as turn taking and listening to each other. Children's drawings, carried out as exercises in a number of subjects, are rather cursory. This is because teachers expect too much to be done in a short space of time and do not demand enough detail, precision or accuracy. Children show little independence in most lessons, mainly because the work is so highly organised and directed. There are odd examples of weak management of pupils. Here, indifferent behaviour is not dealt with sufficiently strongly. Minor disruption impedes the learning of the class.

31. **Overall, the school has made satisfactory progress with the recommendations made in the previous inspection report.** Lessons are now generally more purposeful; teaching challenges and supports children of all attainment levels and assessment of learning is good. Children still lack opportunities for independent activity, making choices and showing initiative.

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

32. **The school's work covers all National Curriculum subjects in Years 1 and 2 and takes full account of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. The curriculum policies for other subjects meet statutory requirements. Some subjects receive too little depth of coverage.**

33. For Years 1 and 2, the school meets the requirements of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies fully, so enabling all children to make good progress with basic skills. More than two-thirds of curriculum time is allocated to English and mathematics. This is significantly more than the current national recommendation. Because of the significant time given over to English and mathematics as subjects, skills of literacy and numeracy are little used across the wider curriculum. As plans for other subjects are developed in more detail, the school should ensure that opportunities are provided for pupils to apply their skills in a variety of contexts.

34. The other National Curriculum subjects and religious education receive an amount of time that enables minimum requirements to be tackled. However, on the evidence of this inspection, the creative subjects receive too little depth of coverage. In music, some lessons are too short and in art there is too little opportunity for children to work creatively.

35. In most subjects the national schemes of work are being used as a basis for the school to map out its own curriculum. This works well in some subjects, for instance information and communication technology. Here, the co-ordinator has amplified the national scheme by providing detailed guidance on how knowledge and skills should be taught in lessons. In most subjects, more detailed guidance is needed on the content to be covered and the way it should be taught. A successful beginning has been made in, for example geography and design and technology. The process now needs to be completed across the curriculum. Planning for creative subjects is weak. On their own, the national schemes do not provide teachers with sufficient guidance. In art, the work is not currently sufficiently broadly based to ensure effective coverage of the National Curriculum requirements. In music and physical education

current planning does not contain sufficient detail to help teachers provide a progressive and worthwhile experience for all pupils.

36. In religious education the school has successfully adopted the Locally Agreed Syllabus, and the Local Education Authority's additional guidance, which gives good support to teachers.

37. **In the reception classes, the curriculum generally moves children effectively towards the Early Learning Goals** particularly in the development of basic skills. However, provision for creative work needs improvement.

38. Reception teachers have planned carefully the programme of study for each area of experience. The plans generally set out clear learning objectives and describe a range of appropriate learning experiences. A suitable balance between whole class, small group and individual work has been struck. However, opportunities for free play are restricted and pre-writing skills need to be developed more effectively for a number of children. More opportunities are needed for pupils to make choices when carrying out physical and creative activities.

39. **Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs are supported appropriately but too many pupils miss important classwork** in English mathematics and other subjects when they are withdrawn from lessons.

40. **The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language are enabled to access the full curriculum and to benefit from the work provided.** Those who are in the early stages of learning English are assessed appropriately and receive effective support.

41. **As in most infant schools, there is no provision for activities beyond the school day.** However, parents of Year 2 pupils have the opportunity to borrow mathematical games that can be played at home.

42. **The 1996 inspection indicated that more needed to be done to stretch the highest attainers.** Work seen indicates that these pupils are challenged appropriately in the context of normal classwork.

43. **The last inspection recommended that detailed schemes of work should be written. Changes to national requirements and the introduction of national schemes of work mean that this detailed school level work remains incomplete.** The school's plans for English and mathematics are now thorough and effective. In other subjects, the approach is too ad hoc. Before new schemes for the remaining subjects are firmed up, the school needs to make the format more consistent. This should make the plans more accessible for teachers.

44. **There is generally satisfactory provision for children's spiritual, moral and social development. However, provision for cultural development is poor.**

45. **The provision for the children's spiritual development is satisfactory.** The planned religious education lessons are likely to make a good contribution, as do assemblies. Assemblies provide appropriate acts of worship and meet statutory requirements. Children listen to good classical music in assemblies and are likely to benefit from this experience. However, other important opportunities for spiritual development are currently missed because of failings in the curriculum for the arts.

46. **The provision for the children's moral development is good.** There is a strong sense of order in the school. Pupils are effectively encouraged to develop an understanding of the difference between right and wrong through assemblies, stories and discussion.

47. **The provision for the children's social development is satisfactory.** Good social behaviour is praised in assemblies. Pupils are clear about rules, and behaviour and relationships in the playground are good. Older pupils are partnered with younger children and are given the responsibility to make them feel safe and happy. The older children take this responsibility seriously. Harvest festival is used to encourage children to consider those less fortunate than themselves. More needs to be done to

encourage children to operate collaboratively in some lessons. At present they do not have the skills to discuss issues together effectively in some group tasks.

48. **The provision for children's cultural development is poor.** Children experience some good literature, but they know little about the work of particular authors. Some opportunities are taken to acquaint children with the work of musicians and artists. However, such opportunities are few in number and are not systematically planned for in the curriculum.

49. Overall, there are too few opportunities for children to learn about their own and other cultures. The library contains some books about people from different cultural backgrounds and some stories used during the inspection had a multicultural flavour. However, there is little evidence that the curriculum systematically equips pupils to take their place in our multicultural society.

50. Personal, social and health education has recently been introduced as a subject in the curriculum. The school has yet to plan in detail for its implementation.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

51. **The care and welfare of pupils are a high priority for all who work at the school.** Each child is known as an individual. The very good relationships that have been formed between staff and pupils ensure that children are well supported in their personal and academic development. The school is very well organised. Agreed systems and procedures are consistently implemented. Good informal knowledge of each child is backed up by detailed recording and monitoring. There is good communication between all staff.

52. **Procedures for Health and Safety are very good and show attention to detail.** There is a full Health and Safety policy and risk assessments are carried out regularly. The school keeper monitors health and safety with others, as part of her role on the governing body. There is good provision for first aid and detailed records are kept of any accidents. Staff have received training in child protection and are aware of the procedures to be followed. The school is well supported by the education welfare officer.

53. **Attendance is recorded accurately and absence is rigorously followed up.** The school keeps a careful eye on pupils whose attendance is less regular. The headteacher also monitors entries in the late book closely.

54. **The high standards of behaviour in and around the school are underpinned by the constant reinforcement of the three school rules in lessons and in assemblies.** Pupils are very aware of the rules. Classes are awarded certificates for good behaviour in the playground and teachers nominate individual pupils who have worked hard or behaved well for recognition in assembly. Their names are put on a display of kites entitled *High Fliers*. Incidents of poor behaviour, including any that take place in the playground, are logged. Records are scrutinised by the headteacher, who takes action as required. The log of incidents and children's personal files, which detail social development, enable the school to monitor closely the behaviour of individuals and of the school as a whole. Good record-keeping ensures effective communication between teaching and support staff. There are procedures to deal with any incidents of bullying. However, there is no evidence of incidents of this nature; relationships between pupils are positive.

55. **Lunchtime is an enjoyable experience.** Children are helpfully encouraged to develop social skills at this time. They are supervised well in the playground and enjoy using a range of equipment. The Parent Teacher Association has purchased this equipment, along with picnic tables and attractive flower tubs. Playground provision, which was criticised at the last inspection, has been significantly improved since 1996.

56. **Arrangements at the end of the day were raised as a concern at the last inspection. These have been improved.** Children are now collected from the door of their classroom by parents,

a system which ensures safety and also allows parents the opportunity to speak to the teacher when necessary.

57. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are comprehensive and thorough. The last inspection identified this area as a key weakness. Good improvements have been made. Staff regularly assess pupils in all subjects. The quality of assessments is particularly good in mathematics, reading, writing and information technology. Further improvement in the quality of assessments in other subjects will be possible as the school makes its expectations increasingly clear through its curriculum planning. All staff are methodical in their record keeping. Information is used well to monitor the progress of individual pupils towards the standards the school has predicted they will achieve in mathematics, reading and writing. It is used to identify those who need further support.

58. The strengths and weaknesses of children with special educational needs are assessed and recorded very carefully and the support they receive focuses on their difficulties.

59. There is detailed monitoring of attendance, behaviour, social and academic development of pupils. As a result, staff are well placed to support individual pupils as they progress through the school. Detailed records on each pupil's attainment are held in separate files. It is therefore difficult for the school to access information in order to spot trends or any widespread weaknesses. The school should consider altering the format of some of its records to address this problem.

60. The school analyses baseline assessment and national test results very carefully. In her monitoring of teachers' planning the headteacher helpfully checks that issues raised by assessment are being addressed in lessons.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

The views of parents in the survey and at the meeting

61. Parents and carers are supportive of the school and most of the views expressed are positive. In the questionnaire, over half of the parents strongly agree that they would feel comfortable in approaching the school, that the teaching is good and that their child likes school. Parents also feel that the school is well led and managed. Although most parents are satisfied, a significant minority would like to see better information about their children's progress and the provision of a range of out of school activities. Parents who attending the meeting express overwhelmingly positive views of the school and its work. These parents are, for example, pleased with their children's progress, particularly in reading. They feel that communication with teachers is good and that all teachers and the headteacher have the interests of the children at heart.

Findings of the inspection

62. The inspection team generally agrees with parents' positive views, although attainment in music, art and physical education is not as high as it should be. In terms of the criticisms, inspectors judge the information provided about children's progress to be very good. In common with many other infant schools the school does not provide activities outside the school day. There is currently no requirement that it should.

63. The school's links with parents are of high quality. They enable and encourage parents to become involved in their children's learning and to make a positive contribution to the life of the school. Parents receive very good information on the daily life of the school, the curriculum taught and the individual progress of their child. The Prospectus is informative and is supplemented by termly sheets detailing the curriculum to be taught. Spelling lists are sent home to enable parents to support their children. An informative newsletter is produced each half term. The school hosts meetings for Reception parents and also briefs parents about national tests. Meetings such as these are generally well attended but others, such as the recent meetings on literacy and numeracy proved less popular.

There are good opportunities for communication with parents. Teachers and the Headteacher are available at the end of each day and parents appreciate this.

64. At the meeting parents commented that pupils are keen to do their homework. Parents support their children well, especially in learning spellings and in reading at home. Children's reading diaries, in which teachers write down the areas for pupils to focus on when they read at home, are particularly helpful.

65. **The annual reports on children's progress are detailed and meet requirements.** They helpfully show how the child could improve in English, mathematics and personal development. The points raised are discussed with parents at parents' evenings, which are very well attended.

66. **Parents help in the classroom regularly and are well briefed.** This enables them to make a valuable contribution to children's learning. There is a very active Parent Teacher Association, which raises funds for the school. Among other items it has purchased picnic tables, flower tubs and playground equipment. These have significantly improved the outside environment and the provision for pupils at play.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

67. **The school is strongly led by the headteacher.** A professional, business-like ethos has been created, which places the needs of the children at the heart of the school's work. As a result, pupils are positive in their attitudes and are keen to learn.

68. The headteacher has worked effectively with key staff to raise standards by bringing about improvements to the quality of teaching and implementing effectively the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. Members of the senior management team, each of whom leads a year group, provide a good example to their colleagues. Expectations of achievement and behaviour are high.

69. **The school is highly organised.** Routines and procedures are clearly established and understood by staff and children. Consequently the school runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

70. **The governing body is strong, well co-ordinated and effective.** It fulfils its statutory responsibilities well. Governors are actively and positively involved in the life of the school and are frequent visitors. They are keen to develop community links. The headteacher and chair of governors meet regularly and share a commitment to raising standards, and improving the school's standing in the local community.

71. Governors keep well informed about the work and performance of the school through their day-to-day involvement and as active members of committees and working groups. They listen to advice from the headteacher and by questioning successfully fulfil their role as critical friend. Governors with specific responsibilities meet regularly with subject co-ordinators. Members of the governing body have a helpful range of expertise in finance, health and safety and personnel issues. They regularly attend training, which helps them to carry out their roles effectively.

72. **The school's aims are reflected well in most aspects of its work. However, the school's policy and management of special educational needs is unsatisfactory and needs to be revised.** The policy currently gives little guidance on how the Code of Practice is to be implemented and how support is to be organised. It does not ensure equality of opportunity for some pupils with special educational needs. The arrangements for withdrawal from lessons result in pupils missing important parts of the curriculum. The size of withdrawal groups is smaller than it needs to be for efficient teaching.

73. **Co-ordinators for the core subjects have played a key role in raising standards.** The co-ordinators for English, mathematics and information and communications technology have worked with commitment and enthusiasm to implement national strategies and initiatives and to move the school forward. Because of recent national priorities for English and mathematics, the development of some other subjects has not been a priority in recent times. **The role of the co-ordinators in most other**

subjects is rather limited and consists of basic administrative work associated with the curriculum and resources, and the passing on of information. There are currently no co-ordinators for history, art or music, and this may hinder development. Most co-ordinators have recently had only a limited influence on the curriculum and teaching and do not have a clear role in raising standards. New, national schemes of work have been adopted for most subjects. Co-ordinators now need to develop more detailed guidance to help staff teach these subjects as effectively as possible. This is particularly the case for arts subjects, which should be tackled first.

74. The school benefits from a stable and experienced teaching force. Teachers work effectively together, and with members of the support staff. Teachers plan collaboratively and support each other well. Classroom support staff are managed effectively and work very productively with children. They make a substantial contribution to the quality of the school's work.

75. The school has made a good start on the process of self-evaluation. The headteacher has a clear view of strengths and weaknesses in the teaching of reading, writing and number skills, and how to improve them. There is a strong commitment to further improvement. Good analysis is made of test results. This has focused the attention of all staff on the improvements that need to be made. Additional strategies implemented as a response to the weaknesses identified have been successful in raising overall standards of English and mathematics.

76. The school has a well-developed system for monitoring pupil's attainment. There has been good progress since the time of the last inspection, when assessments did too little to help teachers to meet the needs of pupils.

77. Planning is carefully monitored to ensure consistency and continuity between classes, and coverage of the National Curriculum. Pupils' work is regularly scrutinised and some children are heard to read by the deputy headteacher. Monitoring of teaching by the head and deputy head has identified weaknesses. An appropriate programme of support and guidance, including the opportunities for observing good practice, has apparently led to improvements. Suitable performance management systems are in place.

78. The school improvement plan is suitably focused on raising attainment, particularly of the high and low attaining pupils. However, the school has not yet devised any significant strategies for raising the attainment of boys, who lag behind the girls. This now needs to be a priority.

79. The school takes care to get best value from its spending decisions about which are appropriately linked to educational priorities. Governors discuss the relationship of the school budget to the school improvement plan and ensure that appropriate funds are allocated. However, the plan itself includes no detailed financial planning. Methods of allocating money for the purchase of resources need to be more systematic.

80. Spending on resources needs to be linked more closely to an audit of needs. Resources for the teaching of English, mathematics, religious education and information and communications technology are good. Basic classroom resources are plentiful and are in good condition. Although resources for subject teaching are generally adequate, the present method for allocating money to curriculum areas results in too much disparity between subjects. Resources for geography, for instance, are very thin. The school needs to carry out a thorough audit of resources and to make a financial plan, which will address shortcomings over the next few years.

81. The development of a library has been a recent initiative, largely accomplished through the enthusiasm of the literacy governor and the deputy headteacher. The book stock was completely reviewed and improved in 1999. However, the quantity and range of non-fiction books is still very limited and the stock needs to be enhanced. The library is well organised and well managed. However, the current method of organising books does not support the school's aim to teach children to use public libraries. A more conventional system of organisation is needed.

82. The school building and grounds are pleasant and well maintained. Classrooms are, without exception, very well organised and stimulating for the children. Displays around the school are

bright and attractive, and support the children's learning in the core subjects well. The hall provides an excellent indoor space for physical activities and has appropriate equipment, particularly for gymnastics. The facilities are very well cared for by the school keeper and cleaning staff.

83. The headteacher and the office staff carry out day-to-day financial administration very efficiently. Financial control is very good. Minor recommendations made in the last financial audit report have been acted on. Specific funds that are allocated to the school are used appropriately to support pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. Recent national funding for information and communication technology has been used to good effect.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

84. In order to improve standards and the quality of education further, the school should:

- 1) Improve cultural development.
 - Give arts subjects a stronger place in the curriculum. (Paragraphs 34, 35, 48, 49, 129, 149).
 - Improve children's access to exploratory, creative and expressive work. (Paragraphs 31, 34, 94, 127, 131).
 - Improve standards in art, music and physical education. (Paragraphs 12, 30, 94, 127)
- 2) Improve the attainment of boys.
 - Direct class teaching towards identified weaknesses in boys' attainment. (Paragraphs 23, 78, 114, 115, 121).
- 3) Improve the organisation of teaching for children with special educational needs.
 - Make sure these children have full access to the curriculum. (Paragraphs 39, 72, 112, 121).
- 4) Ensure teachers have better guidance on what they are to teach, and to what standard. As part of this, specify any written work to be carried out by pupils.
 - Devise or complete detailed plans for history, geography, art, music and physical education. (Paragraphs 43, 125, 129, 139, 142, 149, 155).

Minor issues

- 1) Improve teachers' subject knowledge in the teaching of music and physical education. (Paragraphs 30, 147, 154).
- 2) Improve the teaching of the skills that need to be mastered before the youngest children attempt to write. (Paragraph 23).
- 3) Improve the teaching of handwriting for all pupils in Years 1 and 2. (Paragraphs 30, 106).
- 4) Expect children to speak more precisely and audibly in class discussions. Teachers should repeat fewer answers and expect the children to listen more attentively to each other during class discussions. (Paragraphs 30, 109).
- 5) Enhance children's skills of working together as a group during some activities. (Paragraphs 30, 109, 137).
- 6) Enhance the provision in the school library. Provide more books. Over time, organise the library with systems more like those found in a public library. (Paragraphs 81, 140, 142, 158).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	48
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	15

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	22	43	28	6	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons. Because of rounding errors, the percentages do not add up to 100%

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	197
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	30

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	65

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	9

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.6
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	40	34

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	36	39	36
	Girls	34	35	33
	Total	70	74	69
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	95 (80)	100 (88)	93 (83)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	36	35	37
	Girls	35	34	33
	Total	71	69	70
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (83)	93 (86)	95 (87)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	1
White	133
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y2

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26.5
Average class size	27

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	108

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	478632
Total expenditure	493924
Expenditure per pupil	2470
Balance brought forward from previous year	34298
Balance carried forward to next year	19006

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	191
Number of questionnaires returned	71

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	53	41	4	-	1
My child is making good progress in school.	43	53	3	-	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	36	57	4	-	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	37	48	13	3	-
The teaching is good.	53	43	-	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	35	20	4	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	36	4	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	41	3	-	3
The school works closely with parents.	27	48	14	3	8
The school is well led and managed.	30	55	4	1	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	51	4	-	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	21	27	18	7	27

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

The nine parents who attended the parents' meeting were very positive about the school and raised no concerns. A very small number of those responding to the survey added additional remarks in writing. These were generally positive; the odd critical comment was not generally supported by other parents.

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

85. When children enter the school, assessments show that overall attainment is around average. In the reception classes, the teaching of the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy is very good. As a result, most children make very good progress. They are likely to exceed the goals¹ set nationally for communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. Children make satisfactory progress with knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development. Progress in creative development is likely to be unsatisfactory because children have too few opportunities to respond to experiences and to express their ideas through exploring a range of media and materials. All children make good progress towards the Early Learning Goals for personal, social and emotional development.

Personal, social and emotional development

86. Reception children are keen to learn. They listen carefully to their teachers and act on instructions very well. They settle to tasks directed by their teachers quickly and purposefully. Behaviour is very good. Teachers and support staff have developed very good relationships with the children and always treat them with respect and consideration. The children play and work together extremely well. They take turns and share resources. They show consideration towards each other and remember to say *please* and *thank you*. Children handle resources such as books and musical instruments carefully.

87. All the reception classrooms are well organised. Equipment and resources are accessible and clearly labelled. This enables the children to organise themselves effectively and to clear away after activities. Displays are stimulating and attractive and support the children's learning well. Classroom routines have been clearly established and already, after only half a term, children are well used to what is expected of them. They are learning to become independent when dressing and undressing for physical education lessons.

Communication, language and literacy

88. Reception class teachers have high expectations of children's listening skills. As a result pupils respond appropriately to questions and listen carefully to others and to take turns to speak. Teachers provide good models of speaking through clear instructions and explanations. By asking carefully constructed questions they encourage children to use language precisely, for instance when describing the similarities and differences between objects. Consequently many children are beginning to express themselves clearly using a wide vocabulary. Reception children are developing well the confidence to speak in front of others.

89. Elements of the National Literacy Framework are well used by teachers in the reception classes. They teach basic reading skills, such as recognising words and sounds, very effectively. Teachers make good use of big books and visual aids to maintain children's interest and attention. As a result, children enjoy listening to stories and join in enthusiastically with the repetitive parts of a book. Almost all pupils understand that print carries meaning and know the difference between words and pictures. They show an interest in the sounds and meanings of new words and many recognise familiar words and sentences. All are becoming confident in hearing and saying sounds in words and linking the sounds to letters. They are beginning to use this good knowledge of sounds in their reading and when attempting to write words.

90. Most children know the difference between drawing and writing. Many are learning to write their own names independently. Many form recognisable letters, although not always correctly. A significant group of high attaining children are already writing confidently and carefully. However, some children are pushed to formal writing tasks too soon and currently they find little success. More emphasis needs to be given to developing skills that lead to pencil control, such as colouring, drawing and pattern making.

Mathematical development

¹ The Early Learning Goals describe the level of attainment most children should reach in the six *areas of experience* by the time they leave the reception class.

91. This area of learning is very well taught. Many children are confident with early counting and pattern work. All children are able to count accurately to 10 and some to 20. Many recognise numerals 1-9 and can order numbers to 10. All are developing a good understanding of mathematical language such as *more than*, *less than*, *taller than*, and *shorter than*. Most children are able to talk about, recognise and recreate simple patterns. Cooking activities such as baking cakes provide good opportunities for mathematical learning, for example through accurate weighing and measuring of ingredients.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

92. Children are suitably encouraged to use their senses to observe objects and processes. Through very good, carefully constructed questioning, children are helped to identify and describe similarities and differences in the size, colour and texture of objects. They are encouraged to observe the changes that occur when ingredients are cooked.

93. Children are learning to use computers confidently and many are able to use a mouse to control simple counting and graphics programs. Little evidence was seen of children being given opportunities for developing designing and making skills.

Creative development

94. Most children are able to sing simple songs from memory. They join in enthusiastically and enjoy making accompanying actions, which they perform accurately. Opportunities for role-play and painting are available but not enough time is allowed for free play and creative and exploratory activities. Few art activities were seen during the week of the inspection. Those that did take place were over-directed by adults. When painting, children are given insufficient opportunity to choose and mix colours for themselves. Pupils need more opportunities to explore different media and materials and to use their imagination in art, music and role-play. On the basis of the work seen, children make unsatisfactory progress in creative development.

Physical development

95. Through cutting and sticking activities children are learning how to use small tools such as scissors safely and with control. Most are learning how to use a pencil, although some need more experience of other manipulative activities before they will be truly ready to do so.

96. Children generally make satisfactory progress in the development of physical skills during PE lessons. They move safely and with growing confidence. They learn to run, jump, roll and stretch. Children show control and co-ordination, for instance when moving around on different parts of their bodies. They use space well showing a good awareness of others. They are learning that physical activity makes their hearts beat faster.

97. All reception age children have regular access to short periods of outdoor play. However, the opportunities that the outdoor environment provides for learning across all areas of the curriculum are not fully exploited. There is a lack of large play equipment.

98. The teaching of children in the foundation stage is usually good and frequently very good. It is never unsatisfactory. All lessons are well planned with a strong focus on learning. No time is wasted. Even when waiting for slower children to change for PE, good opportunities are taken for singing and counting. The teaching is characterised by clear explanations and demonstrations. All teachers have high expectations of behaviour, including listening in oral work. Instructions are clear, insisted upon and followed by the children. Questioning is well used to encourage the precise use of language. The children are extremely well managed and know the classroom routines well. There is an appropriate balance between direct teaching, small group and individual activity. However, some children are pushed to formal tasks, particularly of writing, too soon. The youngest children in particular would benefit from further opportunities to play, to make choices and engage in creative and physical activities. They need more time to explore, discover and follow their own interests independently.

99. The curriculum for the foundation stage is carefully planned. There is a very strong emphasis on developing language, literacy and numeracy. There needs to be more emphasis on exploratory and creative activities and giving children more opportunity to initiate and direct their own learning.

100. Support staff are effective and very well deployed. They work directly and productively with the children for most of the time. Staff are clear about where and with whom they are working, and for what purpose. Children with special educational needs are well supported. All of the staff make regular observations to identify children's achievements and any learning difficulties they may have, and to note their progress over time. These assessments help identify the next steps for individual children.

ENGLISH

101. Standards in English have improved well since the last inspection and are now high. National tests for seven-year-olds in 2000 show standards above the national average for reading and well above for writing. Standards are well above those achieved by pupils in schools with similar intakes. Test results for reading and writing have risen over the past four years but this upward trend has been unsteady, apparently owing to previous inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Girls perform better than boys in reading and particularly in writing by age seven. Inspection findings confirm the positive May 2000 test results.

102. Standards in speaking and listening are average. Most pupils listen carefully to teachers and other adults. They respond appropriately to teachers' questions and are able to follow instructions. Most older pupils are able to express themselves confidently using a range of vocabulary. Some pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not speak with sufficient clarity, audibility or precision. Because of this pupils sometimes fail to listen as attentively as they might to each other.

103. Attainment in reading is high. The teaching of reading skills, in particular the use of letter sounds to read unknown words, is systematic, structured and relentlessly pursued. As a result children of all ages make very good progress with reading. Most older pupils read independently and accurately. Many read with fluency, expression and good comprehension at the literal level. Most are confident to tackle challenging texts. However, although they use their knowledge of letter sounds well to read unknown words, they often fail to use the full range of available strategies and cues, such as context and grammatical structure. Children enjoy reading but many find it difficult to talk about their preferences and are not knowledgeable about authors.

104. Children of all ages read regularly at home and school. They are well supplied with a range of books for borrowing. Reading diaries provide a useful and well-used means of communication between parents and teachers.

105. Attainment in writing is high as a result of the systematic teaching of basic skills. Pupils are given frequent and extended opportunities to write for different purposes, including stories, letters and instructions. Although children are expected to spend an above average amount of time in practising writing each day, they do not lose enthusiasm. They work consistently hard and consequently make very good progress. Most older pupils write independently using interesting vocabulary. Many write in grammatically correct sentences using full stops and capital letters accurately. Many spell simple words correctly and use their knowledge of sounds to make plausible attempts at others. Children regularly take home words in order to learn to spell them. However, an over dependence on phonic strategies sometimes leads children to incorrect spelling of common words, for example *mayc* for **make** or *becos* for **because**. Children now need to learn how to identify common spelling patterns and words that do not conform to phonetic rules.

106. Standards of handwriting and presentation are not as high as they should be. Too many pupils have rather immature handwriting, which although legible, lacks regularity. Many older children form letters incorrectly.

107. The teaching of English is satisfactory overall. In half of the lessons seen teaching is good or very good. All teachers have a good understanding of how to teach basic reading and writing skills and do so in a systematic and structured way. This ensures all children learn them effectively. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored. Assessment information is suitably used to plan lessons and to set individual, and year group targets.

108. All English lessons are well planned and prepared with clear objectives for learning. Teachers throughout the school know precisely what children are to learn in each lesson. They explain the key teaching points well, making good use of visual aids to engage children and keep their interest. In a reception class a fishing net was used to catch sounds, which were then displayed in a sound tank for the children to refer to. In another class *Phoneme Fred*, the ventriloquist's dummy kept the children enthralled during a routine and potentially boring session on blending sounds. Teachers make good use of big books to model the reading process to the whole class. Questioning is well used to develop children's understanding of a text or to focus attention on particular words or aspects of writing such as punctuation. Practice activities give appropriate opportunities for reinforcement. A range of strategies is suitably taught during group teaching when teachers effectively guide the reading of a group of children each with the same book. Lessons are successfully concluded by a plenary which helps to fix the key learning points in the children's minds.

109. In the odd example where teaching is unsatisfactory the expectations of listening and behaviour are not sufficiently high. The conventions of taking turns to speak and listening to others are not established firmly enough. This results in inattentive listening and a lack of engagement in the lesson by some pupils. This in turn leads to inappropriate, off task behaviour such as moving around the classroom unnecessarily.

110. Although a regular feature of the timetable, the teaching of handwriting is generally not as good or as systematic as it should be. Expectations are not high enough in general work, and the right habits of letter formation are not established from the start. Teachers do not intervene in order to correct the errors children make. As a result, they practice their errors and embed them further.

111. Pupils enjoy their English lessons. They participate fully show interest. Children behave well and get down to work quickly. They work hard and concentrate well. Relationships between pupils are good and they work co-operatively when required. They handle books with care and respect.

112. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by classroom support staff and are enabled to make satisfactory progress in lessons. However, some children are withdrawn from class lessons, usually to do more practice of sound work and individual reading. They sometimes miss other important activities, for instance when the class study interesting texts. These withdrawal arrangements are unsatisfactory.

113. The high priority given by the school to the teaching of reading and writing is reflected in the large percentage of the total teaching time allocated to English (42%). This is much more than the National Literacy Strategy suggests. As a result the breadth and balance of the curriculum as a whole is restricted. In order to use time more effectively, the opportunities for developing speaking, listening, reading and writing in the context of other subjects need to be developed and planned for.

114. The literacy co-ordinator has played a key role in raising standards. He has worked with commitment and enthusiasm to implement the National Literacy Strategy fully and effectively. Monitoring of lessons, teachers' planning, and pupils' work has suitably focused on improving teaching and so raising standards. Analysis of performance data and assessment information has generally led to successful strategies for improving achievement. Monitoring now needs to focus on establishing the reasons for the under-performance of boys in relation to girls so that appropriate remedial action can be taken. Current strategies such as the organisation of fiction books on the basis of assumed preferences by boys and girls run counter to the school's equality of opportunity policy. They are unlikely to be successful and inhibit the choice of reading material for both sexes.

MATHEMATICS

115. The standards reached in national tests over the last few years have varied widely and were disappointing in 1999. The results for 2000 showed a significant improvement. The pupils who took the tests in 2000 performed in line with national averages. The school is unusual in that girls consistently outshine boys in the tests.

116. Inspection evidence shows that children in the top classes are attaining average standards overall but are above average in number work. Their skills of computation are good. Most pupils have a secure understanding of place value and higher attaining pupils can record calculations accurately, usually with very little teacher intervention. Many pupils are able to recall simple addition and subtraction facts and use appropriate mathematical language when explaining their work. Written work seen during the inspection shows that most pupils are attaining the expected standards in work on shape, space and measures. Little evidence of work on data handling was seen, but the inspection did take place relatively early in the school year.

117. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is good overall. Some teaching is very good. Lessons are generally well planned and the purpose of each lesson is helpfully made clear to the pupils. Teachers make good use of a wide variety of high quality resources, such as number fans and personal white boards, on which the children write down answers in oral work. In the best lessons, the pace is brisk and business like. There is extensive use of whole class discussion and this is effective. Teachers make the transitions between different parts of a lesson smoothly and efficiently. Staff generally have high expectations of their pupils, in terms of the work set and the speed at which children are expected to complete it. Pupils are challenged to explain their answers and to find ways of working which suit them best. As a result of teachers' high expectations and efficient organisation, lessons are generally productive and children make good gains in understanding. On rare occasions the management of pupils is weak. This results in some inappropriate behaviour and so some children make less progress than they might.

118. Teachers are familiar and confident with the requirements of the National Numeracy Strategy, which has been adopted successfully. They organise their lessons in the way recommended and their planning follows the format suggested.

119. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and often very good. Most pupils enjoy their lessons and show an enthusiasm for the subject. They work well with a partner when given the opportunity. For example, in one lesson children were asked to work in pairs to solve a problem by using their knowledge of number facts. This they did with interest and commitment. In nearly all lessons pupils work hard. They handle resources sensibly and are keen to participate in discussion work.

120. Some teachers provide opportunities for numeracy skills to be practised in other curriculum areas, for example in science and information and communication technology. However, this application of mathematics across the curriculum is not planned for in any detail. This now needs to be done.

121. The school has generally made good progress since the last inspection. As is the case nationally, pupils are now attaining higher standards, particularly in number work. The co-ordinator has worked hard to implement the National Numeracy Strategy across the school and her impact has been positive. Planning and teaching are now more focused and the recently acquired resources do much to enhance learning. Assessment strategies have been improved and the school now does its best for higher and lower attainers. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) many of whom are boys make satisfactory progress. They are generally well supported. However, some pupils with special educational needs sometimes miss mathematics lessons because they are taken out of class to do other work, usually English. This is likely to disadvantage them. The school has identified that lower attaining pupils find it difficult to interpret some of the questions in the national tests for seven-year-olds. It may be helpful to make the teaching of this aspect (which was not observed during the inspection) more systematic.

SCIENCE

122. Attainment in science is broadly in line with expected standards. Most children in the top classes are able to classify materials. They understand aspects of their own growth, and their use of the five senses. Children are achieving a satisfactory grasp of scientific thinking and all are making suitable progress. They make accurate observations and can pose simple questions. Children are using computers to enhance their understanding of science. For example, during the inspection they used CD ROMs to find out more about the five senses. Children have gathered data and produced bar charts, which they are able to interpret, asking for

instance, *Which hair colour is most common?* Pupils are able to sort and group objects in a satisfactory way, for example when classifying objects as made or natural.

123. All of the teaching seen was satisfactory or better. Teachers have clear objectives for their science teaching. The work is well planned and consistent between classes in each year group. As a result of good questioning and well-planned methods of recording, children are learning methods that enable them to make appropriate scientific enquiries. Teachers use a satisfactory combination of discussion, practical investigation and direct teaching to reinforce learning. They choose resources well to underpin the work. Stories, which are sometimes used as a stimulus, provide a useful context for learning. However, in some examples seen the story blurs the concepts being taught. The children are managed well and this leads to good levels of concentration. Good teaching in the reception classes develops a strong basis for scientific thinking.

124. Children generally respond well to scientific enquiry. They listen carefully and are generally prepared to take account of the ideas of others. Children usually sustain their concentration in practical sessions and take the work seriously. In the odd example, they are less focused. This arises when the explanation from the teacher lacks clarity.

125. A newly reviewed curriculum is providing an appropriate range of learning experiences. Further detailed planning, outlining the approaches to be used in tackling the major concepts in each unit of work, would enhance the teaching further.

126. The school has made significant progress in the teaching of science since the last inspection. Teachers' questioning is more sharply focused and helps children to develop their investigational skills. Resources, although modest in number, are generally well used and appropriate.

ART

127. At the time of the last inspection in 1996 standards in art were average. On current evidence, the attainment of the oldest pupils is below national expectations. Children's drawing is immature. They have an under-developed sense of proportion and perspective. The amount of artwork seen during the inspection was very small and limited in range. Work on display was highly teacher directed, with few examples of observational drawing or creative work. No three-dimensional work was seen. Children have too few opportunities to record work from first-hand observation, experience or imagination.

128. In the two lessons seen, drawing techniques of using a pencil to show shade and texture were demonstrated appropriately by the teachers. The children were given suitable opportunities to discuss the work and to express opinions about it. They enjoyed their lessons and approached the task of drawing a face with care. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour were very good.

129. The school has adopted the national scheme of work for art. This now needs amplification to help staff plan a progressive and worthwhile experience for children in the subject. Art currently receives too little depth of coverage. Children are given too few opportunities to apply skills and techniques or to express themselves creatively.

130. Basic resources for art and design are satisfactory, but narrow in range. Good links with information and communication technology were seen in the work on display. Pupils used a painting program on a computer well in order to make their own abstract pictures based on the work of the artist, Mondrian. However, there is little evidence that the school places sufficient emphasis on children learning from the work of other famous artists.

131. The development of art and design has not been a priority for the school in recent years. It seems that the recent national emphasis on improving standards of literacy and numeracy has taken the school's attention away from the subject. It now gives too little emphasis to stimulating children's creativity and imagination. The finding of the previous inspection that art was firmly established in the school and a valuable creative outlet for pupils no longer applies.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

132. No design and technology lessons took place during the inspection in Years 1 and 2. Displays of previous work show that children are progressing steadily as they move through the school. They are achieving a good standard of practical work through tasks that are technically demanding.

133. A good foundation is laid in the reception classes. During the inspection, children were introduced to food preparation in a well-organised activity. They baked cakes to be sold at the school fair. They were introduced constructively and effectively to the tools, processes and hygiene routines required. This was effective in developing early skills and in introducing children to the skills of planning.

134. Year 1 have designed and constructed models using well-made wooden frame structures. They have then used other materials imaginatively, for example to create the impression of an undersea scene. Year 2 have designed and made a *coat of many colours*. This has been considered carefully. Initial, annotated ideas were set out in children's sketchbooks. Children experimented with fixing and decorative sewing and painted techniques in focused tasks, prior to making the finished product. This disciplined approach is producing work of quality.

135. The range of work has been improved since the last inspection. The school now uses a clear scheme of work, which sets out what is expected at each stage. This is likely to enable teachers to approach the work confidently. The curriculum and resources are managed effectively. Resources are modest, with only sufficient tools to enable small group working.

GEOGRAPHY

136. Attainment by age seven is above national expectations and generally children make satisfactory progress. Children of all attainment levels are developing good knowledge about the island of St. Lucia. In general, they use pictures well to identify and discuss physical and human features. They are beginning to use a suitable range of geographical vocabulary.

137. The best teaching includes very good use of resources, such as photographs for discussion purposes. High quality questioning elicits clear explanations and encourages children to observe carefully. Tasks are explained well and support is well organised to assist the children who need it. Resources are well organised and this means that tasks are accomplished without fuss. In some lessons group discussion is not handled well enough. Tasks are a little unclear and children receive too little instruction on how to work together as a group. The result is that pupils generally fail to discuss collaboratively and some potential for learning is lost. In some cases teachers' questioning needs to be improved in order to encourage children to explain and describe what they have observed more clearly and in more detail.

138. With the exception of the weak discussion when asked to work in small groups, children generally show good levels of motivation and behave well in lessons. They are interested in their work and are keen to learn. In one lesson, some lack of clarity in the teacher's instructions led to odd bouts of noisiness. In this same lesson resources were poorly organised and this meant that children were slow to settle.

139. The school has adopted the national scheme of work for the subject and this provides a good starting point for its own planning. The current term's work has been planned in sufficient detail by the co-ordinator to guide teachers' work in Year 2. Similar planning needs to be completed for the rest of the course. Because of the school's heavy emphasis on writing in English, very little work is recorded in geography. It would be helpful to apply some of the skills acquired for instance in English and art lessons to work in geography. The school now needs to plan for this.

140. Since the last inspection, the school has generally made satisfactory progress. National curriculum demands are now met; activities are challenging; there is suitable emphasis on the development of geographical skills. Although the lessons seen were well resourced, resources for geography are still sparse. In particular, library books are in very short supply.

HISTORY

141. No teaching of history was seen during this inspection. The very limited amount of work in pupils' books means that no judgement on achievement can be made.

142. The school has recently adopted the national scheme of work for history. This is likely to need amplification in order to provide teachers with sufficient guidance on what to teach and to what standard. As at the time of the last inspection resources are very limited. A wider range of books, artefacts and other resources is required. Progress since the last inspection has been meagre in this respect.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

143. By the time they reach the top classes, generally children's attainment exceeds national expectations. Pupils are developing good skills in using a range of software, including word processing, data handling and graphics programs. Their skills are enhancing learning in other subjects, for example in science. In all classes, children also use software to support the development of basic skills of literacy and numeracy. The oldest children are beginning to search for information very effectively when using CD ROMs.

144. Much of the direct teaching is conducted at the beginning of a week and was not observed as part of the inspection. In one example where demonstration to the class was used, the teaching was organised effectively and children made good gains in their understanding of how to use software. The class discussed and decided on ways in which questions would be framed when searching a CD ROM for information. Pupils were invited to demonstrate the processes to the class. This helped them to clarify what they knew and also contributed to their communication skills. In several other classes the positive impact of previous teaching is seen in the clear progress the children make in applying new skills. Staff are meticulous in ensuring that all children receive opportunities to use the computers. In individual activities, children are well supported. Teachers efficiently revise the skills taught previously and provide timely help when required. They show good understanding of the software they introduce. Work is well planned. Planning is focused on clear learning intentions. Pupils are given adequate time to practice and explore. Well-chosen assessment tasks are included in the plans.

145. A well-written curriculum has been provided. Clear units of work systematically guide teachers towards an understanding of expected standards. Computers are plentiful and they are well organised to ensure that pupils have access. New machines are purchased in a planned way. Internet access will apparently be available shortly, when the necessary cabling is installed.

MUSIC

146. Only a few music lessons were seen, together with observation of singing in assemblies. Some of the lessons were very brief. Based on the available evidence, attainment in music is below national expectations by age seven. In the best lesson singing was accurate and children showed a good sense of rhythm when playing simple instruments. Singing is generally accurate and tuneful in assemblies. However, in some lessons children show a weak sense of pitch, and a lack of precision in rhythmic work.

147. The teaching seen is too variable. One teacher, labouring with a sore throat did well to lead the class and succeeded in generating good rhythmic performance. The children made gains in accuracy and enjoyed their work. In other examples teachers were ill at ease with the requisite teaching skills, they had a poor sense of pitch and did little to improve children's performance. In these lessons children's progress was unsatisfactory. Teachers' lack of confidence in teaching music was pointed out in the last inspection report and is still a weakness.

148. In general, children behave well in their lessons and they are happy to join in singing, clapping and instrumental work. In one lesson the response of a number of children was rather casual, although others joined in with gusto.

149. The school has adopted the national scheme of work for the subject. This is not proving to offer sufficient guidance to teachers. Lessons are often too short to offer children a worthwhile experience (although informal singing in odd moments should certainly continue). It is unclear that the full range of requirements of the national curriculum is being provided. The school needs to plan in more detail and to provide teachers with better guidance on how lessons should be structured and the content to be covered.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

150. At the time of the last inspection, achievement in physical education was always sound and often good. A clear progression in skills had been identified and the quality of teaching and learning was generally satisfactory. This inspection shows a considerable decline in standards and in the quality of teaching.

151. Overall, attainment is below national expectations. During this inspection, all lessons seen covered either dance or gymnastics. By the age of seven most pupils perform simple travelling actions, usually showing some control and co-ordination but the overall quality of movement is poor. In particular, pupils show little precision, poise or variety in basic travelling actions, or when maintaining balances in dance or gymnastics. There is no evidence of pupils linking actions into repeatable phrases. Largely because they are not expected to do so, pupils fail to evaluate their work or that of others as is expected in the National Curriculum.

152. The attitude of pupils in physical education is generally positive. Behaviour is invariably very good and pupils are very interested and involved in what they do. Pupils generally change quickly and clothes are neatly stored. In the best lesson, pupils make good use of the opportunities provided to enable them to make decisions about their work.

153. The teaching of physical education is variable, ranging from good to unsatisfactory. The majority of teaching is unsatisfactory. In the best lessons there are high levels of activity and a good pace. Here, teachers have detailed subject knowledge that enables them to move pupils on. This is the key.

154. In the ineffective lessons, teachers' knowledge of the subject is weak. Many lessons provide little challenge. Teachers do too little to focus children's attention on key learning points in order to improve their performance. Planning sometimes fails to provide an appropriate series of increasingly demanding activities. As a result pupils have no opportunity to develop and improve their work.

155. The co-ordinator is relatively new to post and is keen to make a start on improving provision. The introduction of the national scheme of work will be helpful. However, it does not provide teachers with sufficient guidance over what to teach in individual lessons and how to structure them. Further guidance is needed to help teachers translate the national scheme into effective lesson plans.

156. The planned curriculum meets national requirements and sufficient time has been allocated to each area of activity. Resources are satisfactory. The large school hall is an asset.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

157. It was not possible to see enough work in religious education to make overall judgements about children's learning or the quality of teaching. On the basis of one lesson in which detailed discussions were held with children, pupils in Years 1 and 2 show satisfactory knowledge and understanding of work covered recently on Judaism and the story of the Jews' captivity in Egypt. They enjoy the work, which is well taught.

158. The scheme of work is based on materials supplied by the Local Authority to support the Local Agreed Syllabus. This provides good guidance to teachers over the work to be covered and the

approaches to be used. Resources for the subject are plentiful and well organised, although the library provision is weak.

159. The co-ordinator has a systematic approach to her work. She advises colleagues, and regularly assesses the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus and scheme of work. This is likely to lead to satisfactory provision at classroom level.

160. There is virtually no recorded work for religious education in books belonging to pupils in the school this year or those who left last July. Writing about the topics covered and detailed drawing, particularly of the artefacts studied, could usefully support children's development in literacy and art as well as religious education. Such work now needs to be planned for.

161. Visits are made to the local church. These are likely to support children's study of Christianity and their social development through the sharing of harvest gifts. The school could usefully plan further visits to support the study of Judaism (its other focus).

162. Appropriate termly assessments of pupils' progress are now made. In this respect there has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection.