

INSPECTION REPORT

EAST BRENT CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

East Brent, Highbridge

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123809

Headteacher: Margaret Wilson

Reporting inspector: Geoff Burgess
OIN: 23708

Dates of inspection: 4th to 7th December 2000

Inspection number: 224124

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior
School category: Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils: 4 - 9
Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Church Road
East Brent
Highbridge
Somerset

Postcode: TA9 4JG
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors:

Date of previous inspection: December 1995

Information about the inspection team

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Geoff Burgess 23708	Registered inspector	Mathematics	Results & achievements
		Information Technology	Teaching & learning
		Music	Learning opportunities
		Religious Education	Leadership & management
		SEN: EO	School improvement
Glynis Tyrrell 09858	Lay inspector		Personal welfare & care
			Partnership with parents
Anne Pratt 15545	Team inspector	Under fives	Attitudes, values & personal development
		Science	Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development
		Art: DesignTechnology	
Peter Buckley 28014	Team inspector	English	Assessment & academic monitoring
		Geography; History	Adequacy and strategic use of resources
		Physical Education	

NB: During the inspection, Geoff Burgess was unavoidably incapacitated and his role as lead inspector on site was covered by Rgl Sylvia Wright URN: 2453. Mr Burgess did however, take over again after the inspection to produce this report.

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The Registrar
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

East Brent First School serves a wide spectrum of families of mainly British heritage in the communities in and surrounding East Brent and Rooksbridge. Very few pupils each year are entitled to free school meals and unemployment in the area is low. The number of pupils on roll is currently 77 which is lower than for several years with a large year group leaving and a smaller intake this year than normal. A below average number of pupils are on the special needs register with one having a statement of special need. Attainment on entry is broadly similar to that found in most schools but with low numbers can vary greatly year on year.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school achieving high standards through very effective teaching with very good leadership and management. Given its financial constraints and poor accommodation the school provides very good value for money

What the school does well

- Consistently good teaching in all classes, with much very good, ensures that pupils of all ages and abilities achieve well and that pupils attain high standards in literacy, numeracy and science by the time they leave.
- Boys and girls enjoy their lessons, are encouraged to work hard and develop very good attitudes to learning
- Pupils' moral and social development has a very high priority. They behave very well, understand their role in the school community and get on extremely well together.
- Staff take good care to ensure that their pupils are safe and happy and able to do their best by carefully monitoring their progress and development.
- Staff and governors work very well with parents & the community in the best interests of the children
- The head provides the energy, determination and vision to make the best of inadequate accommodation and enable governors, staff and pupils to achieve high personal standards

What could be improved

- Standards in information technology are not consistent throughout the school and do not match the high standards observed in other subjects
- The presentation of written work is sometimes spoiled by lapses in handwriting or spelling
- The lay-out, quality and poor condition of the school buildings and outdoor areas make teaching and learning difficult

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Standards in reading, writing and mathematics improved after the last inspection and have been sustained at a high level since. Some gains were also made in standards of work in art and information technology at the time but little effective action was taken to develop the other areas identified for improvement. However, all the remaining issues have largely been sorted out in the last year. Much better support for teachers' planning is being developed. Thorough and effective procedures for judging, evaluating and using information about how well individual pupils are doing and the school is working are in place. School development planning is the focus for all its work and also for ensuring that the school is much more effective than it was and getting better. Overall, improvement has been very good.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

The school has sustained high standards in reading and writing over the past three years with a fall in mathematics to above average this year. However, in the past two years every child has achieved at least the expected level two in all three subjects. The difference has been in the number of pupils achieving higher grades with a below average number reaching level three in mathematics this year. This also resulted in the school being below average in mathematics when compared with schools in a similar situation. Current standards in all three areas and in science are, if anything, even better in each class. Boys and girls are making very good progress in their foundation year. Improvements in provision for pupils who find learning difficult and a new focus on the more able is helping to ensure that they achieve well throughout the school. Standards in other subjects are always at least appropriate for the ages of the pupils concerned and often better.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Boys and girls are very positive about school and join in wholeheartedly with all it has to offer. They are very keen to talk about their work and work hard to complete tasks set.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good behaviour all round the site makes a very significant contribution to the standards achieved and the happy, ordered feel of the school.
Personal development and relationships	Everybody gets on very well with everybody else and visitors are made very welcome. All adults act as excellent role models in this respect and help to foster the family feel of the school. Pupils are growing into sensible and mature citizens and take on any responsibilities offered with a good deal of enthusiasm.
Attendance	Boys and girls enjoy school so much that absence is always associated with real illness or family circumstances. Punctuality is very good.

Awful weather during the inspection week clearly exposed the limitations of the buildings and play areas and tested everyone to the full. Despite everything, the positive, optimistic and levelheaded nature of the children shone through and their contribution to making the week a success was very impressive.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Almost all teaching is at least good with over a quarter very good especially in the younger classes. The best teaching was observed in a range of subjects including literacy and numeracy while the one 'only' satisfactory lesson in information technology was greatly affected by the inadequacies of the equipment being used. All lessons are well planned and prepared with a very good range of practical activities to engage pupils' interests. Teachers establish very good work habits and expectations for behaviour in their charges from their foundation year. In the best of lessons, expectations of what pupils can achieve are at their highest and direct work with children such as in questioning or in making teaching points is of the highest quality. Very constructive use is made of extra help especially in the area of extra needs. Teaching overall is very good

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a suitably balanced range of subjects with literacy and numeracy well represented, much enhanced by a good range of activities in addition to lessons and by very good support from the local community. New planning arrangements are giving teachers the necessary support and structures to substantially improve the levels of challenge and avoid gaps or duplications. With a developing personal, social and health programme, the quality and range of learning opportunities is good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good strides have been made to make existing arrangements more open, clear and better documented. Policies have been reviewed and procedures for identifying pupils with additional needs tightened up. All staff and parents are closely involved and support staff make an important contribution in helping those who need it. Overall provision is good and pupils who find learning difficult are making good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Staff make good provision for pupils' personal development notably in its arrangements for the development of their social skills and attitudes and moral awareness which are very good. Curricular provision for pupils to appreciate their own cultural heritage, learn about and value cultural diversity and reflect on their feelings and life, are satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes good care of its pupils and ensures that they are safe, happy and not at risk. Procedures for promoting good behaviour are very good. Teachers and other staff know the children very well and work closely with parents to ensure that any concerns are quickly sorted out. Good assessment procedures help teachers to monitor progress and suitable personal and academic records are kept to keep a track of significant trends or events.

Parents are very appreciative of the work of the school and especially the high standards it sets and achieves. They feel comfortable in their formal and informal dealings with staff and several provide practical help in class and around the school. The information provided by the school for parents is very good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership & management by the headteacher & other key staff	Very well supported by her small staff team, the head has overseen a fundamental change for the better in the way the school is led and managed. She has added vision, purpose and energy to their hard work & by her enthusiastic example, shown what is possible. All staff have become effective and influential leaders in their own right and management procedures are clear and effective. Leadership and

	management are very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very supportive and eager to do what they can to help the school to succeed. They have very well developed arrangements for fulfilling their responsibilities, know the school well and are keenly aware of its strengths and limitations. The head has ensured that they are fully involved in identifying what needs to be done to improve and as a group and individually they are providing the school with great expertise and necessary practical and moral support.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Great improvements have been made in the way the school looks at what it does and decides what it needs to do to improve. The necessary very fundamental changes already made show just how effective its actions have been. Monitoring, target setting and development are well established and raising standards has become the test of any development. The whole school community is now involved in identifying what needs to be done and improvement planning is of the highest quality. The head regularly observes teaching and learning in the classrooms and staff are given regular opportunities to discuss their professional development.
The strategic use of resources	The school has little room for manoeuvre with its budget but improvements in development planning mean that where it has choice, funds are spent on what staff and governors agree is important. Good use is made of all staff and effective procedures have been introduced to help them look at their work and become even more effective. However, costs in the old buildings are high and the inherent limitations of the accommodation and site make teaching and learning difficult. Despite the best efforts of the staff, it is not a good quality learning environment.

The head has made an outstanding contribution to making the school the success it is today. She is well aware of what still needs to be done and with the continued hard work of the staff and the ever-increasing effectiveness of the governing body, there is every reason to believe it will continue to thrive.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their children enjoy going to school • teaching is good and their children are making good progress • the school is helping pupils to grow up sensibly and behaviour is good • pupils are expected to work hard and do their best • the staff are very approachable and the school works closely with parents • they are kept well informed about their children's progress and homework provides a useful opportunity for them to help • there are plenty of things for children to do in addition to lessons • the school is well led and managed 	

Inspectors strongly agree with all parents' positive comments

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. In the past two years, every seven-year-old has achieved at least level two in national testing in reading, writing and mathematics and by teacher assessment in science. The above average proportion gaining higher grades in 1999 was such that the school's results were well above those of most schools. When compared with similar schools, standards in writing were still well above average with reading and mathematics above. Slightly fewer pupils obtaining higher grades in writing and mathematics in 2000 meant that while results in reading were similar to the previous year, writing fell to above average and mathematics to below average when compared with school's in a similar situation. They were however, well above and above average respectively when compared with all schools. Non-statutory testing undertaken by the school in the summer indicated that the attainments of year fours when they left the school reflected the high standards noted above. Despite this, the school has set itself even more challenging targets for seven and nine-year-olds for 2001.

2. Initial assessment when four-year-olds start school indicates that their attainment profile is similar to that found in most schools but with variations each year due to the impact of individuals on the small year groups. Boys and girls are making very good progress and by the time they are five will have achieved the early learning goals and many will already be working on the National Curriculum. This year they are making very good progress in year one, benefiting greatly by being able to work in a small year group with the head especially in literacy and numeracy. Pupils in year two are currently making good progress and achieving standards which should again be well above the national average in this year's statutory tests in reading, writing and mathematics. Good progress is maintained in the core subjects in years three and four and well-developed literacy and numeracy skills are being used to good advantage in other subjects. Pupils of all ages are able to talk confidently about the structures of language using technical vocabulary and they are encouraged and expected to explore number strategies and use them as well as recalling learned information when working in number. However, accuracy in spelling and the quality of handwriting though sound, do not meet the same high standards.

3. Overall progress is at least sound in all the other subjects with pupils achieving generally appropriate standards in most for their ages but with variations between subjects and classes. Difficulties in provision associated with inadequate resources in information technology and a lack of suitable accommodation in physical education limit attainments in these subjects but staff and pupils do their best. Boys and girls make similar progress. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good overall. Targets on individual education plans are appropriate, well used by teachers and effective in helping pupils to make good progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

4. The attitudes of pupils in both key stages and the foundation stage are very good and this enthusiasm for learning has a significant impact on standards of attainment and progress. Boys and girls enjoy coming to school. They listen carefully to adults and to one another, settle well to their work and concentrate on the tasks they have been given. Almost all are eager to answer questions and to discuss their work. They take pride in what they do, for example, pupils in years three and four making pop up books in a design technology lesson were very keen to share their achievements, read their books and demonstrate how they worked. The behaviour of pupils is very good at all times. They move around a difficult site in an orderly, sensible way. Lunchtimes and playtimes are generally happy, harmonious occasions with pupils of all ages playing well together. They are polite and friendly and show great respect for the school and its environment. No incidents of anti social behaviour were observed and there have been no exclusions.

5. Pupils' personal development is very good with boys and girls responding well to the good role models provided by the adults in the school. Relationships throughout the school are very

constructive, supportive, relaxed and friendly. Boys and girls share resources well, patiently waiting to take their turn with equipment, offering advice and help to one another in a friendly manner. They respond well to the times when they are asked to consider and value the qualities in others, such as when year four pupils are asked to make certificates for one another to celebrate the qualities they like and admire in their friends. Pupils undertake duties and responsibilities willingly and sensibly throughout the school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

6. Almost all teaching throughout the school is at least good with 27 per cent very good and just one satisfactory lesson. This represents very good teaching overall and is a big improvement since the last report when most teaching was described as sound and several aspects of teaching including inappropriate work set and lack of pace. An important factor in this is the contribution made by pupils to their own learning through their good behaviour, effort and enthusiasm for what they are learning.

7. Although the quality of teaching is generally associated with the skill of the teacher involved, the good implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies has had a beneficial effect on the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills throughout the school. A very important factor in the best of teaching is the very good use of the heads time in taking year one in the mornings. This means that the two youngest age groups get very focussed attention with lots of one to one teaching. Consequently, nearly half the teaching in the foundation year and year one is very good and the quality of learning is very high.

8. This was well illustrated in the youngest group where, as part of their toy shop theme, they moved on to working in money after practising their counting skills with numbers up to 10. The teacher made good use of 'Counting Crow', some role play and counting games to remind her charges about 'one less', counting backwards and putting numbers in order for instance. The children did this confidently and with a great deal of enjoyment. She then made good use of the toy shop theme to relate this to buying and selling toys with a wide range of well-chosen activities involving boys and girls in practical tasks. As this happened, both the teacher and the classroom assistant used very good questioning to extend thinking such as asking higher attainers to add up the price of two toys they had chosen.

9. A good example of the benefit derived from having small numbers in year one came in an information technology lesson where, with limited equipment, the two adults were able to help young pupils to begin to understand programming skills. The teacher made good use of the time to involve pupils directly in practical challenges matched to the understanding of individuals. Most were able to estimate the distance and direction needed to move the toy on to their friend and were excited and appreciative of their classmates' efforts when it worked. The level of involvement and the quality of the support meant that the children gained a great deal from the process. It is not a coincidence that the only satisfactory teaching occurred where, in an older class of 29, the teacher did her best to give her pupils similar opportunities. However, with temperamental and mixed equipment and having to keep an eye on the rest of the class, much less was achieved.

10. Other than this, all teaching in the rest of the school was at least good with one very good design technology (DT) lesson in the oldest class. All lessons are well planned and prepared and involve a good range of interesting and stimulating activities to catch pupils' attention. Years two and three thoroughly enjoy 'Christmas' style practical work that has very specific art and design objectives. Well-established classroom rules and ways of working involving pupils in managing their own work areas means that little time is lost and teachers can concentrate on working directly with them. They use this time to check constantly on pupils understanding and progress, frequently modifying work as a result. All of this was observed in the very good DT lesson where the 'real' task of making an interactive book to share with the youngest pupils had caught their imagination. Flaps, sliders and spinners are used to good effect and with some technical skill to produce some very original ideas. The teacher and the classroom assistant are able to move

around the room giving encouragement and helping pupils to work things out for themselves. The results are very impressive and boys and girls are rightly proud of what they have achieved.

11. Classroom assistants (CA) also make a good contribution in the area of special needs. They have good working relationships with teachers and the pupils in their charge and constitute an important teaching resource. The children involved work hard for their helpers. A good example of this involved younger pupils enthusiastically and very happily working on their coordination skills in the hall with a CA. They see this as a special treat and adults can see the benefits in self-esteem and handwriting skills.

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

12. The very good curriculum for the under fives is well planned and relevant to the needs and interests of the children. It is soundly based on first hand experience that takes good account of the nationally agreed areas of learning for young children and provides the stepping stones towards achieving the early learning goals. However, limitations in the available outdoor area and the long outside walk to the hall makes it difficult for the teacher to provide enough opportunities for four-year-olds' physical and social development especially in the winter. In the rest of the school, pupils benefit from a suitably balanced range of subjects with literacy and numeracy well represented. Since the last inspection the school has improved and developed its curricular provision and planning and now fully meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. All subjects now have clear policies and most have schemes of work in place, based on national guidelines. The school has recently successfully reviewed its planning procedures but the taught physical education curriculum is severely inhibited by having to use inadequate facilities.

13. No extra-curricular activities were available at the time of the last inspection but provision now is very good. Children currently learn guitar, keyboard, recorder and the clarinet from visiting music teachers. Music and computer clubs give pupils extra opportunities in these areas. The chair of governors makes good use of her expertise in running the very popular sports club held at the local secondary school. All older pupils experience some tennis coaching and some take it further. The years three and four residential trip gives them the opportunity to learn new physical and social skills.

14. The school successfully promotes the social and personal development of its pupils and has a comprehensive programme of personal, social and moral education. Times are planned for pupils to sit quietly with their teachers to discuss issues and concerns which affect them and their lives. The behaviour policy is clear and pupils understand very well what is expected of them. Boys and girls have equal access to the curriculum that is well organised to meet the needs of those children who find learning difficult. Individual plans for their learning, with clear achievable targets are carefully drawn up and regularly reviewed.

15. Staff make good provision for pupils' personal development. Moral and social awareness are very successfully promoted through a range of planned opportunities and through the generally positive atmosphere of the school. The comprehensive school behaviour policy ensures that everyone clearly understands what is expected of him or her. All classes have negotiated their own set of classroom rules which are clearly displayed and well known to all. The school has a very well planned programme of personal, social and health education and time is regularly set aside for quiet discussion and reflection on moral and social issues such as friendship, bullying, caring for others and making choices. These discussions usually take place in class groups but the school has recently successfully introduced some time for discussion of social and moral issues in mixed age groups, with the older pupils taking the lead.

16. Teachers give children some responsibilities from their first term in school and four-year-olds carry them out sensibly and without the need for direct supervision. Children in their reception year use a planning board confidently to make some choices about the tasks they will undertake during the day. Years three and four pupils look forward to a residential trip each year which encourages their greater independence and responsibility and requires them to undertake

group activities and challenges. Boys and girls throughout the school are taught to think about people less fortunate than themselves, collecting money for charities and often initiating money-raising activities themselves. They enthusiastically collect tokens and stamps to be used for the benefit others.

17. Pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness is less well developed though still satisfactory and the school has already identified this as an area for attention. Assemblies are well planned and a calm quiet atmosphere is encouraged through lighted candles, music and an opening prayer. They usually include a time for meaningful reflection such as the assembly which told the story of Simeon and encouraged the pupils to reflect on their feelings of excitement and anticipation at a special event. However, little evidence was seen of making or exploiting time in lessons for pupils to reflect on what they see or feel through poetry, music or the wonders of the natural world.

18. Satisfactory provision is made for pupils' cultural development. Some visits are made by pupils to art galleries and occasionally theatre groups visit the school. Older pupils take part in an annual music festival in the area. Through studies in geography and religious education, children are gaining some understanding of other cultures and of our own multicultural society. Years three and four have compared life in the Indian village of Chembakalli with life in their own area. They have also looked at the Hindu religion and have benefited from being able to handle a good range of resources related to their studies.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

19. East Brent School takes good care of its pupils by ensuring that they all have the opportunity to do well in a secure, safe and happy environment. At the time of the last inspection, procedures for ensuring the welfare of pupils were said to be 'effective'. Most aspects of personal care are now good with the school's arrangements for encouraging good behaviour very good. Perhaps the best guides to good behaviour the school offers are the staff themselves, who make every effort to provide good role models for the children. Relationships are based on trust and respect, and thus make a very real contribution to the positive climate for learning in the school.

20. The school's concern for the well being of the children is central to its ethos. Staff consistently follow clear guidelines on behaviour management, child protection, and health and safety issues. Every child is very well known by several adults and children are dealt with calmly and fairly, and know themselves to be valued and respected as individuals. Governors and staff are well aware of the potential problems associated with the buildings and site and do what is possible to deal with them as they arise. All members of the school community are encouraged to raise any health and safety concerns whenever they wish so that problems can be dealt with quickly. The induction programme for pre-school children is well planned and much appreciated by parents. Procedures for monitoring attendance are sound and the school quickly follows up any absences.

21. Parents were very keen to note improvements in the way pupils with additional learning needs were dealt with. Several noted a change in ethos whereby pupils with learning difficulties were no longer seen as a problem as it appeared they were in the past. Class teachers identify pupils requiring additional support appropriately and these pupils are further assessed effectively by the special education needs co-ordinator to identify individual problems and to plan a suitable programme of work to meet their individual needs.

22. Procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress and personal development are good, but there has been insufficient time for them to become embedded and therefore fully impact on pupil attainment. Procedures for monitoring pupils' progress in the foundation subjects and information and communication technology are identified as areas for development as part of curricular planning in the school improvement plan. These procedures and their use already show a significant improvement since the last inspection.

23. The assessment policy clearly sets out very good procedures for monitoring individual

pupil attainment in the core subjects which has a positive impact on planning work to meet their needs. The school uses data from the Autumn Package and PANDA to monitor the school's performance against the national picture and benchmark schools. Individual pupil's progress is tracked using results from initial assessments, national reading tests, national test for seven year olds and optional national test for the older pupils. This information has recently been recorded electronically to aid future analysis. The headteacher also monitors outcomes using assessment books. Specific assessment activities for each pupil recorded in these books during the autumn, spring and summer terms are also shared with parents who include their own comments. Marking is thorough and positive and contains good guidance on how to improve pupils' work. The school, through its size and nature, is effective in the informal way it monitors the personal development of its pupils.

24. All the information gathered is well used to guide planning and to help teachers meet the needs of individual children. It is also used effectively as evidence when deciding the school improvement plan and to set individual and school targets.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

25. At the time of the last inspection, the school's partnership with parents was said to be effective. It is now very good and parents are very appreciative of the efforts made by everyone at the school on behalf of their children. They are particularly pleased with the quality of teaching their children enjoy, the fact that they are expected to work hard and behave well and the good progress that they make. Of many recent improvements they noted, home/school communications both formal and informal, the commitment of staff to the renewed parent teacher association (PTA), and the school prospectus featured strongly.

26. The parents' association fundraises very successfully for the school and provides essential resources, including the new outdoor play equipment. Individual parents and other friends of the school come in to help in school and take a role in running extra activities. The PTA and parent governors also act as unofficial mouthpieces for parents providing comments to supplement more official consultations and questionnaires. Curriculum workshops, such as for the numeracy strategy, are welcomed by parents and the school plans more in the future.

27. The quality of information provided for parents is very good. Particularly well presented and informative annual reports on each child are supplemented by individual assessment books of pupils' work which go home each term for parental comment. Parents are also invited in to talk about their children's work each term and are always welcome to chat informally at the beginning and end of the day. Equally impressive are the regular numbered newsletters which are not only useful and informative but are also used to seek parents views on issues of mutual concern such as school uniform. Not to be outdone, the governors' annual report and the school prospectus are very well constructed and produced.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

28. Since the new heads arrival in 1999, levels of professionalism, leadership, responsibility and confidence have increased greatly and the staff team now constitutes a powerful force for good. Governors are becoming ever more efficient and effective in their group and individual roles. Issues remaining from the last inspection have been addressed and weaknesses are becoming strengths. No aspect of the school has been ignored and every opportunity taken to make the most of its human and physical resources. Parents strongly agree with inspectors that the leadership and management of the school are very good.

29. The head has, in her own optimistic, pragmatic and determined way, been responsible for managing a dramatic change in the development of the school. She provides very effective and positive leadership and has worked closely with the staff and the governing body to put in place policies and procedures to improve planning and decision making. Everyone in the school fully understands his or her respective role and is committed to fulfilling it and in constantly improving.

Staff manage their responsibilities effectively and are very conscientious. The headteacher's contribution to the present very healthy state of the school is outstanding.

30. Governors are very supportive and committed to the school, many visiting on a regular basis. They now have a well-defined and understood structure of committees and individual responsibilities and a clear programme related to the priorities identified in the school development plan. Many bring considerable expertise to the governing body and all are very keen for the school to succeed. They take their monitoring role very seriously visiting regularly and receiving feedback from staff on the effectiveness of various developments. As individuals and as a body they know their school and their responsibilities very well. The special needs governor is very supportive and is a regular visitor to the school. She has a clear view of provision in the school and reports regularly to the governing body on special needs issues.

31. Monitoring and evaluation have high priorities in the school community with the lead taken by the head who keep a very close watch on what is happening. Standards, classroom practice and the effectiveness of policies are being kept under review by responsible staff and governors. Recent developments in using more detailed assessment procedures have great potential for making this an even more rigorous process. Individual members of staff are encouraged to think about their own performance and professional development through in-service training has a high priority. The clearly structured and very practical school improvement plan (SIP) was put together from various strands including test results, various audits and parental opinions. It is a comprehensive document which focuses on the essential aim of improving standards and involves everyone in deciding what should be included.

32. Very good overall financial planning through open consultative procedures is used to support the educational developments of the school. The SIP provides a sensible framework to identify priorities, costings, timescales and the person responsible. Agreed success criteria make it possible for judgements to be made about the effectiveness and value for money of improvements. The headteacher delegates appropriate levels of responsibility for spending to staff with management responsibilities.

33. Resources are provided in line with priorities in the SIP. In the last two years, priority has been given to literacy, numeracy and information technology. The arrangements for financial control and administration are very good and audit recommendations have been addressed. The school secretary has effective financial procedures to provide valuable support to the headteacher and governing body. Good use of information technology supports the management of the budget and the school is beginning to store individual pupil information electronically to record academic progress. Specific grants are used for designated purposes. For example, particularly good use has been made of the grant to small schools to support headteachers in their monitoring of teaching. A similar small-schools' grant has enabled a group of schools to employ a computer technician between them.

34. The finance sub committee has considered the principles of best value and the recently updated finance policy includes a best value statement. They challenge existing spending, consult a wide range of people, are beginning to compare the school's performance using local authority data and are competitive in their choice of procurement.

35. Although the number of staff allows little flexibility, the school makes excellent use of the headteacher's teaching commitment to raise standards of attainment in identified groups of pupils. Currently the focus is on teaching the year one children in the youngest class for four mornings a week, a benefit not only to them, but also to the reception children in their first term in school. Generally satisfactory teaching resources are well stored and as readily available as they can be in the separate buildings but the present stock of computers is inadequate.

36. The accommodation, consisting of two mobile classrooms and a hall in the original 19th century school building, is unsatisfactory and affects pupils' learning unfavourably. Walking to the

hall for assemblies, indoor physical education and lunchtimes wastes time and becomes a real problem during wet lunchtimes. The hall has some fixed apparatus for physical education, but the two large oil heaters that protrude from the wall and the storage of tables and chairs in the corner restricts the space available, and for safety reasons limits more vigorous activities. Physical development is further inhibited by the sloping playground that make ball control on the ground impossible and there is no grassed area for games. The library is sited sensibly in a room adjacent to the class for the oldest pupils but this restricts easy access for the other two classes. The staffroom is dingy, separated from the hall by a curtain and inadequate provision for professional teachers. Furthermore, it is isolated from the classrooms causing supervision problems during wet break times. The school has developed successful strategies to manage the movement and supervision of pupils, and while the site in the lee of the Knoll is attractive, with a sense of spirituality enhanced by the adjoining church, the accommodation is ill suited to the education of pupils in the 21st century.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

37. To build on the impressive foundations already laid, the governors, headteacher and staff of East Brent First School should:

- (1) Seek to improve standards in information technology to match high standards observed in other subjects by:
 - as and when possible, bringing the equipment pupils have to use up to date
 - ensuring that all pupils spend sufficient good quality time actually working with equipment to cover all the required elements
 - further exploiting opportunities for work in information technology involving other subjects (Paragraphs 3, 9, 36 & 71)

- (2) Make the presentation of written work as good as the quality of its content by:
 - giving pupils more opportunity to practice their handwriting and more reasons to take care with their presentation such as displays and 'real' letters etc
 - providing pupils with a range of strategies such as rote learning, use of phonics, word lists and use of a dictionary to improve their spelling. (Paragraphs 2 & 52)

- (3) Continue to do whatever is possible to improve the learning and teaching environment for teachers and pupils by providing inside and outside accommodation and facilities suited to the education of pupils in the 21st century. (Paragraphs 3, 12, 36, 47 & 77)

OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL

Improving systems for judging achievement in the foundation subjects	(Paragraphs 22 & 77)
The overuse of worksheets for setting out work in mathematics	(Paragraph 58)
Developing the religious education curriculum to match other subjects	(Paragraph 75)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

22

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

12

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
	27	68	5			

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR– Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		77
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		13
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence	%	Unauthorised absence	%
School data	6.0	School data	0
National comparative data	5.4	National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	10	9	19

National Curriculum Test/Task Results	Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Total	19	19	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
	Total	19	19	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

NB Since the number of boys and girls in each table is 10 or fewer and too small a sample for statistical purposes, separate totals for each are omitted.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	66
Any other minority ethnic group	1

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
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– Y4

Number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.7
Average Class Size	25.6

Education support staff: YR– Y4

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	70

Financial information

Financial year	2000
Total income	£ 201030
Total expenditure	£ 201784
Expenditure per pupil	£ 2125
Balance brought forward from previous year	£ 10697
Balance carried forward to next year	£ 9943

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	77
Number of questionnaires returned	39

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	79	21			
My child is making good progress in school.	50	47	3		
Behaviour in the school is good.	56	44			
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	61	8		
The teaching is good.	53	47			
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	58	8		5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	26			
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	38			3
The school works closely with parents.	46	54			
The school is well led and managed.	72	28			
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	62	38			
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	58	37	5		

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

38. The provision for children in their foundation year is very good. They enter a very supportive caring environment. The school has excellent links with the play groups and other pre

school providers with a well established induction programme which ensures that positive relationships are quickly forged with parents and carers, through visits, meetings and informal contact. Children start school at the beginning of the academic year in which they are five. At the time of the inspection, ten children were in the foundation stage (the first year in school) in a class of twenty-three reception and year one children. Very careful consideration has been given to meeting the needs of these children and ensuring that they have a curriculum which is relevant to their interests and soundly based on first hand experience.

39. Currently the head teacher teaches the year one children in the mornings which enables the foundation class teacher and her assistant to devote all their time and attention to the ten reception children. This, as well as the consistently good teaching, has a very positive impact on their learning and progress. The attainment of the children varies year on year but overall judged to be similar to that of most schools which is confirmed by the initial assessments conducted with these children. However, by the time the children enter year one, good teaching will have ensured that the majority attain the early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development. In mathematical development and communication, language and literacy, teaching is consistently very good and almost all children will exceed these goals.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

40. Boys and girls come to school happily. They have quickly learnt the rules, routines and conventions associated with school playing and working well together. When they arrive in the morning, they sort out their belongings without fuss and take part confidently in group discussions, putting up their hands if they wish to speak and listening to the contributions of others. They are enthusiastic about their learning, as when listening to the story of the 'Hungry Bear' and acting out parts of the story using artefacts and taking part in counting activities with the puppet, Counting Crow. Adults provide very good role models for the children, always treating each other and the children with courtesy and kindness. They encourage the children to be appropriately independent and most are well able to look after themselves and their belongings. Children are confident in using a planning board to make some of their own decisions about what they will do and learn, this is fostering independence effectively and encouraging children to take the initiative. A system of daily 'special helpers' helps in keeping things tidy and taking messages and they take their roles very seriously and responsibly. A significant number of children are already achieving many of the early learning goals in this area and will enter year one with well developed personal, social and emotional skills in place.

Communication, Language and Literacy

41. Children make very good progress in this area and a significant number will exceed the targets set for children of this age in this area of learning by the time they start year one. Most children speak clearly and confidently and are given a good range of suitable opportunities to practise and develop these skills. They are patiently encouraged to explain things and to express themselves clearly. The role-play area is suitably set up as a toy shop and is well used to promote language and literacy skills. A good example of this came when the classroom assistant played with the children in the toyshop using every opportunity to develop and extend their language, encouraging their invented writing and modelling roles for their play. Boys and girls listen well to one another and to adults. They clearly enjoy listening to stories and enthusiastically join in with the familiar bits. They understand how books are organised and talk knowledgeably about the title, author, front cover and illustrator, one child correctly identifies and names the publisher of a book.

42. In lessons where all the children share a large edition of a favourite story and talk about the text, many of the children show that they understand what a sentence is and that it starts with a capital letter and ends with a full stop. Some recognise and name other speech marks such as question marks. Many children can recognise letters by name and sound and enjoy playing games which involve recognising and naming the initial sound of an object. This was well demonstrated when children used an interesting collection of toys to play the circle swop shop game. Many can read some familiar words and enjoy looking at books and talking about stories they know and enjoy. They are beginning to learn how to form letters correctly and most write

their names legibly. A writing trolley and appropriate opportunities for writing in role-play give the children good opportunities to practise the skills of writing with a purpose.

Mathematical development

43. This area of learning is very well taught and by the end of the reception year, most children will have exceeded the early learning goals for mathematical development. In lessons where the whole group takes part in number activities, children count and recognise numbers to ten and many are confident with numbers to twenty and beyond. They understand the idea of one more than and one less than, counting forwards and counting backwards. Most are able to put muddled numbers in order and understand some language related to position, direction and order, such as between, after and in front of. They show obvious delight and interest when the teacher uses a puppet called Counting Crow to set counting challenges and problems.

44. They concentrate hard in these sessions and are eager to succeed and please. When they are working in small groups, activities are very well matched to their needs, interests and ability. The toyshop was very well used to introduce the idea of exchanging money for goods. While most of the children are able to count out money in one pence units, one child quickly grasped the difficult idea for children of this age, of dealing in coins which are worth more than one pence. Several children understand the idea of combining two groups of objects and taking objects away and are beginning to use the language of subtraction and addition. Many other activities are exploited to extend children's mathematical understanding. Early morning registration is well used for counting, identifying and naming the days of the week, stories, such as the Big Hungry Bear for extending and introducing ideas such as halves and sharing.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

45. Boys and girls are gaining a good understanding of the world in which they live. The current theme of Toys is presenting many good opportunities for children to learn about a wide variety of things in this area of learning. An interesting collection of old and new toys has provided an excellent focus for talking about the past and the present and comparing similarities and differences. Children confidently discuss the collection and one child describes the oldest teddy bear as looking old because lots of children have loved his fur off and he has mended bits! Children's scientific knowledge is being well developed and when exploring a collection of toys that move with the aid of batteries, clockwork or electricity the children discover how some of them work and can be controlled. Construction kits are well used for children to design and make their own moving toys and all children have successfully made and designed a vehicle with wood and recyclable materials. They understand how wheels and axles work and can explain their function using the correct language. The computer is in regular use and children are well able to control the mouse to play games and draw pictures. They show a high degree of skill when controlling a computerised vehicle, and understand exactly how to move it forwards and backwards.

Creative

46. Children enjoy singing and moving to music and know some rhymes and jingles but no lessons with a specific music focus were observed. They enjoy painting and other art work and some attractive displays of children's work in this area of learning are in the classroom, notably a frieze of the Christmas story and a gallery of children's portraits of themselves. A photographic record of children's work shows children working in a variety of different media and techniques such as collage, clay, dough and printing.

Physical

47. Boys and girls have many good opportunities to handle small tools such as pencils, scissors and glue sticks and their manipulative skills are developing steadily. They regularly practise forming their letters and writing their names. Children have appropriate planned time in the hall to develop their physical skills. They enjoy these times and use the space in the hall well. An outside space adjacent to the classroom has been suitably developed for the youngest children, but it is mostly grassed and thus cannot be used in wet weather. Greater benefit would be gained from this space if the hard area were extended, so that it could be used in all weathers.

ENGLISH

48. Standards in English are above the national average. Pupils are achieving well throughout the school in reading and writing and with good teaching and positive attitudes to learning there is every reason to believe that weakness in their spelling will be overcome.

49. Since the last inspection, the introduction of the national literacy strategy has been effectively and securely implemented by the headteacher. The teaching of the subject has been thoroughly monitored and as a result, the quality of teaching is now consistently good. Very good assessment procedures include reading tests and written assessment tasks to track individual progress. The procedures and use of assessments have improved since the previous inspection. They are used well to guide teachers in planning suitable and challenging tasks, thus ensuring all pupils' needs are well met. These factors have significantly contributed to an upward trend in results.

50. Pupils attain standards in speaking and listening above national expectations. In whole class shared text work; they are attentive and interested in answering questions. Teachers place a strong emphasis on the development of speaking and listening. In developing speaking, they plan activities in various group sizes, to provide opportunities for pupils to ask and answer questions, express opinions, describe events and predict outcomes. In developing listening skills, pupils respond to a range of stimuli such as poems and nursery rhymes, complex instructions and word games. For example, in the introductory session of a year two and three lesson they listened carefully to questions giving an instant answer with yes/no cards. In a year three and four lesson, boys and girls identified alliterations such as 'burglars and bogymen' in a poem. Pupils in all literacy lessons are keen to discuss the characters in shared stories they read and they express their ideas logically using a suitably growing vocabulary and clear speech. Teaching assistants are skilled at asking questions and encouraging pupils to articulate their thoughts.

51. Most pupils achieve standards in reading above national expectations. The school promotes the value and enjoyment of books very effectively and they clearly gain pleasure from them. The majority of books are housed in classrooms. The library has a satisfactory range of books but it is situated in a room adjacent to the class for the oldest pupils and is not easily accessible to the rest of the school. Boys and girls read texts from a wide selection of books with good levels of accuracy and understanding. Shared reading as a class using common text from a class book and guided reading in small ability groups, not only teaches the necessary skills of reading but enhances pupils' enjoyment of reading and focuses on such terms as author, illustrator, title, fiction and non-fiction. For example, in a year three and four lesson pupils read two contrasting poems on a similar theme as a class, before working in pairs to highlight words or phrases that are effective in showing feeling. Boys and girls are heard to read regularly in school and at home and records of their progress are well maintained.

52. Evidence from written work in pupils' books indicate that they achieve well, and standards in the content of their writing is above the national average, although spelling and handwriting are only average for their age. Pupils of all ages are confident writers and show an increasing fluency in the range and style of their writing as they progress through the school. In a year one lesson pupils make an information book using a Big Book, 'All Sorts of Toys' as a stimulus. They understand that one feature is one sentence and that sentences begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop. Year three and four pupils in a poetry lesson look to improve their poems, for example by changing 'coming' to 'stomping' Some rhyme their poems by the sound of line ending others by rhythm. There is a strong emphasis on encouraging open-ended outcomes in pupils' writing. They structure their work well, punctuating and using increasingly complex sentences. However, though produced confidently, their work lacks accurate rather than phonetically plausible spelling and handwriting is often not well formed. The presentation of the finished product does not reflect the quality of the content, particularly of older pupils' written work

53. Teaching is good overall with some very good. Lessons are very well planned and begin with good, well-paced, introductions. Teachers are skilled in questioning and they have good

subject knowledge. They have sensibly adopted the element of the literacy hour to meet the need of mixed aged classes and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Teachers have very high expectations of behaviour and attainment and pupil management is very good. Teachers use instant recall devices such as a 'letter fan' to give a quick assessment of pupil progress. For their part pupils respond with very positive attitudes to their work, very good behaviour and relationships with adults and each other. This creates a positive environment for pupils in which they can learn and make progress. Praise is used very well to give pupils confidence to try hard and succeed. Classroom assistants make a good contribution to helping pupils who find literacy skills challenging to succeed in their own terms.

MATHEMATICS

54. The last inspection report said that pupils achieve standards that 'meet national expectations' and are 'generally appropriate for their abilities'. Current standards are much better than this and consistent with the results of the last two year's national tests being well above average both at seven and when pupils leave at the age of nine. Work in pupils' books shows that they are covering the whole range of the required curriculum and that pupils of different ages and abilities within the two age-group classes are working at appropriate levels.

55. A key factor in the high standards achieved is the priority which staff across the school give to encouraging and requiring pupils to think mathematically and use appropriate mathematical vocabulary to discuss ways of working. Year one pupils were not only able to use coins to pay specific amounts of money but most were eager to suggest ways of recording this or argue why some would not work. The teacher was careful to accept any contribution and left the children themselves to decide which was the best for them. Pupils in years two and three made good use of previous learning to interpret a graph about preferences. The teacher allowed them to work solutions out for themselves using good questioning to discover the strategies they used to work out their answers. In the top class, pupils' well-developed notions of fairness were used to help them begin to understand equivalence in fractions. The teacher made good use of the story of 'Anansi and the Three Bananas' with visual aids as a focus and a context. Pupils respond positively, often with rapt attention, sometimes with delight at an idea understood.

56. Very good use is made of simple 'instant' recording devices to provide the teacher with quick feedback about the performance of individuals and the class as a whole. Number cards are well used in the oldest class to enable pupils to show 'Who am I' for instance. In years two and three pupils themselves became numbers and were asked to 'sit down if' the digits add up to 11. Year one pupils make good use of number 'fans' to show the double of 6, 8 and 10. They are confident and quick in making their responses in the knowledge that their contribution will be noticed and appreciated.

57. Overall, teaching is good with some very good and none unsatisfactory. A good range of strategies is used to ensure that pupils of all abilities are challenged at the right levels. Good questioning skills are used to draw out better mathematicians. 'If six and six is twelve – what is six and seven?'. Supplementary questions enable those who find concepts difficult to work their way to an understanding. Group work is well chosen to provide sufficient challenge and good use is made of available adults to stretch higher attainers or support those who need it.

58. The school adopted an approach similar to the numeracy strategy some time before it became national policy and found implementing the initiative relatively easy. It is now well developed and having a very beneficial impact within the school as a subject in its own right and in other subjects such as science, where learned skills are often used. However, although pupils are given plenty of opportunity to use their initiative in practical and discussion sessions, more could be expected of older pupils in organising their own ways of writing down their work as opposed to using quite so many worksheets. Arrangements for assessing work, recording progress, setting

targets, monitoring trends and provision are good.

SCIENCE

59. Standards of work in science at the end of Key Stage 1 and in years three and four are above the national average. This reflects the schools most recent statutory assessments for seven year olds. Evidence from past work and teachers planning, indicate that all elements of the science curriculum are being well covered and that experimental and investigative science, identified at the last inspection as a weakness in the subject, particularly in Key Stage 2, is now being well addressed. During the inspection week good science lessons were observed in all classes.

60. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are studying the element of science which looks at physical processes. Year one pupils learning about electricity make good progress in their understanding of how to construct a simple electric circuit using batteries, bulbs, wire and switches. They explain and demonstrate their understanding using the correct scientific language and through their experiments learn that electrical devices will not work if there is a break in the circuit. Year two pupils are studying forces and motion. In a good lesson looking at the movement of toy cars, they were able to make sensible predictions about how their movement could be speeded up or slowed down on a ramp. They showed a good understanding of how to apply their ideas when experimenting with the cars and most understood the idea of a fair test. In years three and four the focus for pupils' work this half term is the human body and how it moves, grows and works. Discussion with pupils indicated that they had already learnt a great deal about the human body and in the good lesson observed they were learning about the effect of exercise on the lungs and heart. By the end of the lesson, they were able to discuss lung capacity, pulse rates, and how much blood there is in the body. A group researching information was fascinated to discover that the word artery means air carrier in Greek.

61. Throughout the school, boys and girls obviously enjoy their science lessons, particularly when they are actively involved in experimenting and making discoveries for themselves. Pupils in year one showed great delight when they found out that they could break their electrical circuit and rejoin it again. Throughout the school pupils are eager to talk about what they are doing and to explain their understanding of a task. They work well together, listening carefully and patiently to one another's ideas and suggestions. Boys and girls respond well to challenges to find things out for themselves and to record things in their own way.

62. Science is consistently well taught throughout the school. Teachers have good subject knowledge and lessons are well planned with a good balance of practical activity and whole class teaching and discussion. Teachers use questions well to extend and challenge pupils' understanding. They make good links with other curriculum areas and themes, for example Key Stage 1 pupils' exploration of electricity and forces and movement is centred around their theme of 'Toys' and the children are very well motivated by being able to explore and work with a variety of interesting resources. In years three and four, pupils use calculators and their mathematical skills when they compile data on the heart and lungs and use information technology to carry out further research.

63. Teachers monitor progress and achievement closely through well set up termly assessment tasks and evaluations at the end of each completed programme of work. The environment around the school is well used for science work and visits are made on a regular basis to places such as Techniquet and Tropiquaria. Science teaching is well supported by a good policy and by the use of a national scheme of work which is giving a good structure and skills framework. The science coordinator is very well qualified to lead in the subject. She is enthusiastic and has very clear ideas of how she would like to further improve teaching and learning in science. Targets include reviewing and extending resources, developing a portfolio and organising time for monitoring the science teaching in the school more closely.

OTHER SUBJECTS

64. Though all the pupils in at least one key stage were observed learning in all the foundation subjects except geography and history, the total number of such observations was inevitably relatively small. Where possible this was supplemented by the scrutiny of teachers' planning, work completed this school year and by discussions with pupils.

65. To avoid repetition and provide a solid base for judgements about teaching and other aspects of provision, art, design technology, geography, history, Information technology, music, physical and religious education are reported on as a group, with strengths and weaknesses pinpointed.

THE FOUNDATION SUBJECTS - ART, DESIGN TECHNOLOGY, GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, MUSIC, PHYSICAL AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

66. Boys' and girls' achievements this year are appropriate for their ages in most of these subjects in both key stages with design technology better in both key stages but standards in information technology lower in Key Stage 2. Boys and girls are making sound progress through both key stages in most subjects including information technology with good progress in design technology throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and making satisfactory progress, especially in the more practical aspects of the above subjects.

ART

67. Standards in art have improved since the last inspection where the school was criticised for underachievement in the subject, with pupils having little opportunity to select and experiment with materials. In the week of the inspection, the lessons seen were more focussed on design and technology than art. However, many good examples of pupils' art work displayed around the school indicate that they have worked in a range of materials and from a variety of stimuli. Year one pupils have created well observed self-portraits using the skills of painting and colour mixing and printed attractive covers for their books about toys. Year two pupils have experimented with their own free designs for flour and water resist fabric paintings and produced some colourful, attractive work on the theme of minibeasts. Years three and four pupils in their studies of India and the Hindu religion have looked at pattern and produced some careful work in the style of Rangoli patterns. Throughout the school appropriate examples of art work in three dimensions, clay tiles, models with dough and pictures made from natural and recyclable materials are on display.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

68. Year one pupils design and make a wheeled vehicle with wood and other recyclable materials. Most understand how simple mechanisms which allow movement, such as wheels, axles and joints, work and they take great care in painting their finished models. They use tools such as saws and scissors safely. Year two pupils demonstrate good cutting and sticking skills and a growing understanding of how to join and fold material and paper while making starry night pictures. In years three and four, boys and girls undertake a range of design and making tasks, often related to their work in other subjects. They make very good gains in the relevant skills when designing and making pop up books. Most show a good understanding of the process, having first carefully planned their designs and tested their ideas. They are able to include a variety of mechanisms such as flaps, sliders and spinners and confidently and safely used tools and equipment such as scissors, split pins and staplers. The books are carefully finished using drawing and writing skills. Pupils are proud of their achievements and eager to share their ideas. They concentrate very hard on their tasks, as was particularly evident in a years two and three group who were trying to master the skill of joining two pieces of material by sewing. There was total silence and complete concentration.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

69. A school study in the summer term entitled 'East Brent 2000' proved a stimulus to giving both history and geography a higher profile in the school's curriculum. This involved first hand

observation, looking, for example, at village walks and studying types of building and materials used for their construction. Research using Kelly's Directory of Somerset provided valuable information and statistics about the school in the 19th century and the occupations of people living in the village. Visitors to the school included former pupils from the 1920's, 40's and 70's. This provided pupils with an opportunity to use their literacy skills in written accounts and their mathematical skills in data handling.

70. The schools rolling programme of work focused on geography during the inspection. Year two and three pupils identified the difference between East Brent and a Scottish island, while older pupils compare their locality with a village in India in terms of health, farming and education. They taste Indian food such as chapattis, lentil and chickpea dhal and vegetable curry. Artefacts from a local resource centre contribute to their learning.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

71. Standards in information technology were identified as an issue in the last report and until quite recently still gave cause for concern. However, a good deal of thought and effort has gone into improving provision and with it standards. Planning is now related to national schemes with a much more systematic approach to the learning of skills and a concentration on using computers in other subjects. Expertise, opportunities and successes are being shared and professional development is on the way. However, limitations in the equipment are currently a stumbling block to real progress. This was well illustrated in a well planned session in the oldest class where few of the pupils involved actually printed out the pattern as planned, partly because of lack of experience and partly because of the equipment. Good signs for the future are the progress being made by the youngest pupils as shown in group work and in a very good year one lesson on programming a toy and a cursor to move where the pupils wanted.

MUSIC

72. Although only one music lesson practising for Christmas in the youngest class was available during the inspection, this is another area which has seen a lot of development recently with a move away from singing with tapes to a fuller music curriculum. The school is fortunate that the new subject manager is an experienced coordinator who brings considerable expertise, enthusiasm and confidence to the subject. Policies and schemes are being reviewed and built up gradually and good help is being given in Key Stage 2 by the partner middle school head of music. This has also meant that older pupils have greater opportunities to experience music from a range of cultures and times. Instrumental lessons provided by visiting teachers and the popular music club are giving pupils with an extra interest or talent the opportunity to develop musically.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

73. Staff are to be congratulated on their very positive attitude to the teaching of physical education despite inadequate facilities. The school hall built in the 19th century has some fixed apparatus for physical education, but the two large oil heaters that protrude from the wall and the storage of tables and chairs in the corner restricts the space available and for safety reasons limits more vigorous activities. Physical development is further inhibited by the sloping playground that makes ball control on the ground impossible and there is no grassed area for games.

74. So what do they do? A clear rolling programme ensures that, within the limitations of the facilities, pupils have access to games, gymnastics and dance, but safety considerations limit the range and depth of the opportunity. Pupils in years three and four swim at the local pool. The older children attend a residential week in the summer term that has a clear focus on outdoor adventurous activities. A very popular extra curricular activity run by a governor at the local secondary school gives several pupils the opportunity to play games on a synthetic turf surface. They compete in local competitions and the annual sports day takes place on the village green. In a dance lesson seen during the inspection pupils work individually, in pairs and in larger groups responding creatively to Vivaldi's Winter Allegro. They perform a range of pumping, rotating and jerking movements associated with machinery. Teaching is good, with pupils well used to demonstrate movements without unnecessarily slowing the pace of the lesson. They respond

positively and enjoy physical education and would thrive on facilities that are the norm in the vast majority of schools.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

75. No formal teaching of religious education was observed during the inspection but bible stories, the story of Simeon and the nativity, featured strongly in two assemblies and pupils showed a keen interest in and knowledge of, both. The amount of written evidence of work covered does not match that seen in other subjects but in conversation pupils reveal that they remember much of what they have been taught. Teachers' planning indicates that pupils are receiving a full and rounded experience based on 'Awareness, Mystery and Value', the local authority agreed syllabus. While mainly Christian, pupils are given the opportunity to learn about other faiths such as in studying Guru Nanek and Hanukah. With its very full agenda, this is an area which the school recognises is ripe for development and training for the new coordinator will be a priority next year.

TEACHING AND OTHER PROVISION IN THE FOUNDATION SUBJECTS

76. Almost all teaching outside the core subjects is good with a very good information technology lesson in Key Stage 1, a very good design technology lesson in Key Stage 2 and a satisfactory information technology lesson in the same class. In most cases, the quality of teaching is related to the interest and expertise of the teacher in the particular subject. All lessons were well planned and prepared using the documentation agreed by the school for the particular subject. Both activities and pupils were well managed and interesting and relevant activities provided for pupils to take part in. As ever, the pupils themselves make a very strong contribution to their own learning by the way they wholeheartedly have a go at everything they are offered.

77. Curriculum leaders have put a great deal of effort into their several responsibilities and each subject is now backed up by planning to support teachers in their work. Good use is being made of national schemes of work. Teachers are already much more aware of standards in the foundation subjects but the school recognises in the school improvement plan that more formal systems for assessing and recording pupils progress will need to be built up. Resources are generally in good supply and well stored and maintained. However, some of the school's stock of computers is dated and this makes teaching the subject difficult. Several factors make life difficult in physical education (PE) – no grassed area for games, the seriously sloping playground and the many obstacles in the hall make providing a full PE curriculum a challenge even in the summer.