

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **ST MONICA INFANT SCHOOL**

Sholing, Southampton

LEA area: Southampton

Unique reference number: 116106

Headteacher: Gill Hart

Reporting inspector: Geoff Burgess  
OIN: 23708

Dates of inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> October 2000

Inspection number: 224125

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Bay Road Sholing Southampton
Postcode:	S019 8EZ
Telephone number:	023 8039 9870
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Steve Hellier
Date of previous inspection:	June 1996

## Information about the inspection team

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23708		Physical Education	Teaching & learning
		Religious Education	Strategic use of resources
		SEN	School improvement
Frances Hurd	Lay inspector		Partnership with parents
09487			Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development
			Personal welfare & care
			Attendance
Anne Pratt	Team inspector	Under fives	Learning opportunities
15545		Geography; History	EO
Peter Buckley	Team inspector	English	Attitudes, values & personal development
28014		Art: Design Technology	Assessment & academic monitoring
Tony Burgess	Team inspector	Mathematics	Leadership & management
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The Registrar  
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Monica Infant School serves a wide spectrum of families of mainly British heritage coming from a mix of housing including flats, rented accommodation and privately owned housing. About a fifth of pupils are entitled to free school meals, an average number, and this is a very stable, settled area. The number of pupils on roll has been steady between 260 and 270 for the past five years with some pressure on places at the school. An average number of pupils are on the special needs register with one having a statement of special need. Attainment on entry is similar to that found in most schools.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a good school where very good leadership and management is enabling good teaching to help children to achieve ever-higher standards. With its generous funding and enviable resources, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Consistently good teaching with much of it even better, and very good work by support staff ensures that pupils of all abilities achieve well in each class
- Boys and girls are encouraged to work hard, enjoy their lessons and take a pride in their achievements and they develop very good attitudes to learning
- Pupils' social and moral development have the highest priority. They behave very well and are growing into mature, sensible and responsible citizens
- It forms a very constructive partnership with parents and keeps them well informed much to the benefit of all children
- The school takes very good care to ensure the safety, welfare and happiness of its pupils
- The head, with the considerable help of her deputy, has made it possible for all staff with management roles to make a significant contribution to the success of the school. Together they form a powerful team.

#### **What could be improved**

- The teaching of numeracy though satisfactory, does not match that of literacy and currently progress is not as good
- Pupils in years one and two do not achieve as much when teachers plan a wide range of activities at the same time as when subjects are taught separately
- Pupils do not have sufficient time or opportunity to reflect on their feelings and experiences or discuss spiritual matters, or to study and celebrate the richness and diversity of their own heritage or that of other cultures.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

Since its last inspection in June 1996 when standards in reading, writing and mathematics were below average, they have improved considerably to being above average in national tests in 2000. One in five lessons were then unsatisfactory. All teaching is now at least satisfactory with three-quarters better. Most of the issues raised at the last inspection were addressed at the time but several have been recently updated to good effect notably in raising expectations and in planning and assessment. Overall improvement is good.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
reading	C	C	B	B
writing	C	C	C	C
mathematics	C	B	B	C

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

The school made steady gains in reading and mathematics from below average in 1996 to above average in 1999. Writing has also improved more than the national trend. The improvement continued in reading and mathematics in 2000 with a significant boost in writing such that all results including science are likely to be above average both nationally and when compared with schools in a similar situation. Current standards for the oldest pupils are not quite as good but pupils are achieving well throughout the school in reading and writing and there is every reason to believe that by the time they leave, pupil's attainments in these aspects will be close to this years'. Standards in all other subjects are appropriate for the ages of the pupils concerned.

## 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 listen attentively, work hard without prompting and are proud to share what they have learnt.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good behaviour in and out of class with minimal need for adult supervision, makes a very significant contribution to pupils' achievements and the calm and ordered feel of the school.
Personal development and relationships	All children get on well together and visitors are made very welcome. Adults act as very good role models in their dealings with children and help to foster the family feel of the school. Pupils are growing into mature and sensible citizens and those who have only just started are already prepared to use their initiative and take personal responsibility for their learning.
Attendance	Boys and girls enjoy school so much that absence is always associated with real illness or family circumstances. Punctuality is very good.

Pupils make a very good contribution to their own learning by their very good behaviour and willingness to do their best. Adults set a tone of mutual respect which children follow, and encourage self-esteem so that boys and girls are confident and happy.

## 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.*



Three quarters of all teaching is at least good with none unsatisfactory. More than one in every ten lessons is very good. Teachers generally manage their charges very well, especially in their foundation year and in most lessons pupils understand exactly what is expected of them in terms of behaviour and work habits. Literacy skills are particularly well taught and the school has made a good start at developing the teaching of numeracy. In the few satisfactory lessons, several involved groups of pupils working on a range of activities independently with little direct intervention by the teacher to help pupils improve. Learning support assistants form a very important resource especially in helping pupils who find learning difficult and in making it possible for teachers in the foundation classes to work with individuals on their first assessments.

#### 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. The move from a system where a range of activities happened simultaneously to more focused teaching of the basics has helped raise standards. Comprehensive planning procedures ensure progression and that pupils in parallel classes have a similar diet. The planned curriculum for under-fives is rich and appropriate for their needs.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Procedures for identifying need, setting targets and monitoring progress are very effective and pupils' progress is good. Very good provision, mainly through the good work of learning support assistants, is made for pupils who find learning or conforming difficult. Other pupils are well supported in class by their teachers who provide work at the appropriate levels. Parents are kept well informed and are involved at all stages.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Staff make overall good provision for promoting pupils' personal development with moral and social growth having the highest priority. However, pupils have few planned opportunities to reflect on more spiritual matters and less time is spent in studying and appreciating pupils' own cultural heritage or the richness and diversity of other cultures in any depth.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes good care of its pupils. All areas of their health and welfare are taken very seriously and governors and staff are constantly checking to ensure that all is well. Physical arrangements and procedures for ensuring pupils' safety are well known by the whole school community. Good attendance has the highest priority. Assessment procedures are much improved especially in reading and writing and more and more use is being made of information provided by this and national testing to track pupils' progress and guide planning.

Parents are very pleased with the school and play an important part in their children's education. The school is rightly proud of its provision for pupils who find learning difficult and all aspects of pupils personal, social and health education.

#### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership & management by the headteacher & other key staff	Very well supported by her deputy and other senior staff, the head has overseen a fundamental change for the better in the way the school is led and managed. Other staff have been given the opportunity to follow their example and leaders and managers in all areas of the school have become effective and influential. Jointly they form a very good leadership and management team

How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very supportive and keen for the school to succeed. Effective procedures and committee structures have evolved in recent years. Several long-standing members, notably the chair, continue to make an outstanding contribution in the development of the school. Natural wastage means that several of the present governors are new to the job. Their commitment is shown by the way they are actively seeking to develop their knowledge and understanding of the role. All statutory requirements are met in detail.
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. Procedures for evaluating teaching, planning and children's work are now established and a necessary shift of emphasis onto raising standards has made this the main focus of improvement planning. Good use is being made of available information on attainment and all staff are involved in the process of planning for improvement in their own areas of responsibility. Everyone is committed to improvement and is working hard to achieve these ends.
The strategic use of resources	Very wise use of generous funding over the years has ensured that the school has enviously spacious, well-maintained accommodation both inside and out, a strong teaching team, very well trained and used support staff and very good books and equipment for all subjects. Good organisation ensures that little time is lost and very efficient administration supports the work in the classrooms. All spending is planned to meet the school's identified priorities with curriculum leaders bidding for their share of available cash to fund their own priorities. The school is increasingly monitoring the impact of this spending against expected improvements in standards.

Recent years have seen a significant improvement in the way the school is run. Everyone now has an important role to play and the improvements brought about by their hard work are plain to see.

#### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

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

Inspectors strongly agree with all parents' positive views.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. National assessment results in reading, writing and mathematics have improved from below to above the national average over the past five years with the school achieving its best ever results in everything this year. Attainment improved by more than the national trend in reading and mathematics from below average in 1996 to above average in 1999 and continued to improve last year. Writing has also improved more than the national trend with a significant boost in writing and spelling in 2000 so that all results including science are likely to be above average both nationally and when compared with schools in a similar situation. Current standards for the oldest pupils are average in all subjects; that is, not quite as good. However, with much of the year to go and pupils achieving well throughout the school in reading and writing, there is every reason to believe that by the time they leave, seven-year-olds attainments in these aspects will once again be above average. Progress in mathematics is not as marked and it is likely that average standards will be maintained.

2. Standards in all other subjects including science, are as might be expected with variations within subjects where teachers have particular expertise or interest. Standards in most of these subjects are higher where they are taught individually than where they are taught alongside other subjects. Improvements in provision in several areas, notably information technology, physical education and religious education mean that it is likely that pupils' achievements in these subjects will accelerate over the year as new arrangements take effect. Boys and girls in the foundation classes are well settled in and familiar with school routines so that when initial assessments are completed, they will be more than ready to make good progress. Very good arrangements for supporting pupils who find learning difficult, mainly through very effective learning support assistants working alongside teachers, ensures that all pupils do as well as they are able.

#### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

3. Pupils' attitudes to learning have improved since the previous inspection and are now very good. The day starts positively, with pupils arriving at school and going straight to their classrooms. They have a keen interest in their work, and are eager to come to school. Boys and girls respond well to questions and challenges set by teachers. Their involvement in the range of activities provided by the school is very good. School is such a positive experience that any absence or lack of punctuality has a very good reason and attendance rates are good.

4. Boys and girls are involved in the school's behaviour policy and respond very positively to both praise and sanctions. They appreciate the strategies such as the child-friendly behaviour sign posts placed at strategic points around the school. Behaviour in and around the school is very good and this has a positive impact on standards. Lunchtimes and playtimes are happy, sociable occasions and behaviour in assemblies is impeccable. They move round the school quietly and with a sense of purpose. At the end of break times when the teacher raises her hand, they move calmly from the playground to their classrooms and are ready to start lessons promptly. Pupils are polite and courteous and show a respect for each other and all adults. Parents support inspectors' views and are very pleased that behaviour is so good.

5. Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and adults are very good and no incidents of oppressive behaviour were observed during the inspection. Pupils in, for example, 'circle time' take the opportunity to listen to and respect the views of others and think about the results of their actions. Boys' and girls' personal development is very good. The way that 'new' pupils in their foundation year have already learned the 'St Monica' way and are looking after themselves is impressive. Older pupils enjoy taking responsibility around the school and are proud of what it has to offer such as the millennium garden. Increasingly, as they get older, they work very well together collaboratively and exchange views and ideas amicably.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

6. At the time of the last inspection, almost twenty per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory.

Great improvements have been made in this area so that now all teaching is at least satisfactory with three-quarters better, of which more than a tenth is very good. Teaching is consistently good in each year group but marginally better in the foundation year with nine per cent more good and very good lessons.

7. Although four-year-olds have only been in school a short time, teachers in each of the three reception classes have made it possible for them to adapt very well to school and quickly become a part of the school community. Most sessions involved boys and girls working independently or with the help of learning support assistants on a variety of well-planned and purposeful self-chosen tasks while the class teacher worked with a small group to find out what they knew and could do as an initial assessment. Children already know what is expected of them and most have become very self-assured in making choices and looking after themselves.

8. Learning support assistants make a vital contribution by sharing the general supervision and working on specific tasks with groups of children in turn. This ranges from responding to the feel and texture of clay to entering text on the computer and printing. In each case, four-year-olds benefit greatly from the help they receive and the discussions they are involved in. Whole class sessions as in physical education show how well teachers in each class control and manage their children 'en masse' and how well boys and girls generally have adapted to school. As important is the sensitivity and professionalism with which the one or two children who are still getting used to St Monica's are gently encouraged but not pushed into joining in.

9. In Key Stage 1, at least half the lessons in almost all subjects are good and better with reading and writing skills being particularly well taught through the well developed operation of the literacy strategy. In these lessons, the learning intentions are made very clear to pupils, 'Learning to read with expression' for example, and teachers use their good knowledge of their pupils to direct appropriate questions to lower and higher achievers. Well planned activities in the group work sessions keep pupils engaged and teachers and learning support assistants ensure that pupils benefit from a lot of discussion and suggestions to help them improve. The exception is in mathematics where, though all lessons are at least satisfactory, work is not yet sufficiently well matched to pupils' attainment and they are not sufficiently involved in discussions about ways of using number so that they can improve their speed and understanding.

10. Most lessons taught as a class, such as in physical education and music, are good but where teachers plan work involving a range of activities such as geography, art, science, information technology and English, usually without any support, pupils achieve less. In these lessons, learning objectives are less clear and often less challenging and the teachers role is more about organising and managing the groups than actually helping pupils to improve.

11. Provision made for pupils who find learning difficult is very good. Their needs are diagnosed very early and detailed plans are drawn up to help them achieve in consultation with parents. Most of the actual classroom help is provided by learning support assistants who between them have a great deal of professional expertise and form a considerable resource. They work in close consultation with class teachers who provide most of the activities and monitor progress.

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

12. The 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. A clear policy for the early years and the reception class teachers working and planning closely together ensures good continuity of experience for the youngest children in school. The well-resourced and often used outdoor area ensures that the physical and social development of four-year-olds is well addressed.

13. 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. Teachers of parallel classes plan and work closely together which ensures that all pupils cover the same ground. However, occasionally some teachers plan to cover too many subjects in one lesson and pupils do not achieve as much as when these subjects are taught separately.

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 and 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. Other than those elements required by the National Curriculum science orders, the school does not formally teach sex education or drugs education. Issues are dealt with as they arise. Boys and girls have equal access to the curriculum that is very 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. In 1996, inspectors commented that the high moral and social expectations of pupils were an important strength of the school, and this is still true. Pupils know what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and know right from wrong. All staff encourage values such as honesty, fairness and truthfulness; they treat children with respect and make each one feel valued. The result of this very good practice is that pupils quickly learn to accept school rules and work independently. The 'circle time' sessions held in all classes on a regular basis are a strongly positive influence on the children's development which encourages them to consider others and try to understand their feelings. It was particularly impressive to see reception pupils, only in school for three weeks, already moving round the classroom confidently and finding what they needed without needing to ask an adult for help. Teachers give children small responsibilities from their first term and four-year-olds carry them out sensibly without the need for direct supervision. They know their contributions to school life are appreciated and take pride in them. Parents are very appreciative of the values and behaviour that the school encourages, and strongly support its approach.

16. Pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness was said to be less well developed in the last report and though satisfactory, this is still the case. Pupils had little opportunity for reflection and the consideration of important values and beliefs in the three assemblies observed. A burning candle was standing in one corner of the hall but the opportunity was not taken to use it as a focus for quiet thought. Religious education lessons are well planned to give pupils a good understanding of the basic practices and beliefs of Christianity and Judaism, but again, offer little opportunity for the development of spiritual awareness. The inspection team did not see any occasions in lessons where the children were led to feel astonishment, delight and awe at what they were studying. Little evidence could be found of use being made of the school's extensive and attractive grounds as a stimulus to imagination in science, art and literature.

17. The last report commented that multicultural awareness was underdeveloped and this is still true, although the school does have a reasonable number of books from different cultures. Awareness of music and art as a cultural resource is underdeveloped. Though the school has a wide range of musical instruments from different cultures, they are not used as a means of introducing the children to those cultures. The inspection team saw no evidence that the children are exposed to artistic traditions from non-European sources. The school has not visited any museums, theatres or historic sites in the past year. However, pupils enjoyed the visits of a local storyteller and a travelling theatre group. The development of the spiritual and cultural awareness of pupils is satisfactory but it has not improved since the time of the last report and is much less well developed than provision made for their social and moral development.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

18. The care the school gave its pupils was seen as one of its major strengths at the time of the last inspection and this is still very much the case. It offers a supportive and secure environment based on mutual respect and affection between staff and pupils. Staff know their pupils well and parents particularly value the independence the school encourages in their children. They also appreciate the school's emphasis on security: the school's premises have

been made very secure externally, and safety is a high priority at all times. Pupils are well supervised outside the classroom by appropriate numbers of staff, who encourage children to play with the outside toys provided and to join in traditional playground games. A well-established routine of risk assessment is in place, with an annual whole-school formal assessment by the head, caretaker and the health and safety governor and coordinator. All members of staff make use of a risk-reporting book in the staffroom and the school carries out the monthly safety checks as recommended by the local authority.

19. At the time of the last inspection inconsistency in marking of absences led to higher than average unauthorised absence rate. The school now has excellent procedures for monitoring attendance. New staff are carefully briefed on these and a printed summary is included in each register. All absences must be reported verbally on the first morning and explained with a written note when the child returns. Parents are fully aware of the school's stance and generally cooperate well over such issues as holiday absence in term time. Children arrive punctually and the school day starts swiftly and efficiently in all classes. The school is just about to begin using a computerised system for monitoring attendance which will save staff time whilst allowing them to maintain current high standards.

20. In the past two years, the school has reassessed its handling of behaviour following some decline in standards amongst the children. A new behaviour policy was written, closely related to a new syllabus for personal and social education. Behaviour management is now very positive and consistent and produces good results nearly all the time. On the few occasions where it is less successful, individuals find conforming difficult during active, stimulating lessons. A well understood balanced system of rewards and sanctions is used. No evidence of bullying or oppressive behaviour was observed during the inspection. Annual reports discuss children's social and moral development.

21. Child protection procedures are very good. The deputy head is the designated Child Protection Officer, and she briefs all staff when they join the school on the appropriate procedures to follow. Provision for first aid is very good with one fully qualified first aider: the other left last term and a replacement will undertake training this term. The school has a large number of well-stocked first aid boxes: one in each toilet and one in the school office. Each box has first aid guidance beside it and is regularly checked and restocked.

22. Procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress and personal development are good. In the previous inspection report this area was identified as a key issue and the coordinator for pupil progress and assessment and the school have worked hard and successfully to improve this. This has also had an important impact on the school's provision for pupils who find some aspects of their school work difficult who are identified very early using initial assessments. Well developed procedures for monitoring the impact of any support provided and progress made is helping such pupils to do as well as they can. In addition, by involving parents fully in the process from the start, and keeping them regularly informed, everyone involved, including very effective learning support assistants who carry out much of the work planned by teachers, is aware of what needs to be done.

23. The assessment policy clearly sets out the procedures for assessing individual pupils' attainments, which has a positive impact on planning work to meet their needs. Good records are kept of pupil progress against national programmes of study particularly in English and mathematics. Reading records and test results are used effectively to raise standards. Termly assessment tasks in reading, writing and mathematics contribute to individual collections of work used to record progress. The tracking of progress and individual target setting in English and mathematics represent good practise that can be extended to other areas of the curriculum. Targets are set for pupils in the reception classes after their initial assessments.

24. Information is used effectively to guide planning and to help teachers meet the needs of individual pupils. It is also well used to set school targets. Pupils' records of achievements support teachers' assessment. Work is marked, where possible with the pupil, and written comments in pupils' English books are sensitive and encouraging. In mathematics, work is not always marked or corrected but the school has identified this as an area to be addressed. Written reports with clear literacy and numeracy targets for pupils and good opportunities to discuss their child's progress are much appreciated by parents.

## **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 already well developed. Parents were able to contact teaching staff formally and informally and the school produced a good range of information. However, there was no parent-teacher association. A 'Friends' Association' has been set up in the last couple of years, which has already staged a number of highly successful social and fundraising events such as the fashion show which took place during the inspection. The partnership between home and school is now very good.

26. The range of information for parents is now very good. It ranges from a pre-school information pack, to regular weekly newsletters (with half-termly curriculum details), and a particularly impressive range of user-friendly brochures to enable parents to help their children with reading and numeracy. Parents appreciate these and make good use of them. The school runs a 'Share' course for parents to help them help their children with homework, and parents greatly appreciate the opportunity to work with a member of staff. The school also held a Parents Online week in September to introduce them to various educational websites.

27. Parents (and grandparents) gave much help last term in the extensive work undertaken in the grounds, with the development of the Millennium Garden. They have also readily contributed artefacts and information when asked to support aspects of the curriculum. The school makes it clear that parents are very welcome to help in class, but few have found it possible to do so. However, their enthusiasm for the school is shown by their responses to the inspection team and the way they support school events and their children's learning at home.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

28. With the considerable support of the deputy head, senior teachers and the chair of governors, the head has made very necessary changes to help improve teaching and learning and bring about year on year improvements in attainment. Together with an able and hard working staff team, they have created a caring and secure environment where children behave well and have a positive attitude to school. Parents share this view with 96% feeling the school is well led and managed. Overall, the leadership and management of the school are very good.

29. Since the last inspection, the procedures put in place to check up on and make judgements about the effectiveness of teaching and learning have helped raise standards. The head observes teaching in each class once a term as part of the new monitoring policy with an agreed focus and literacy and numeracy leaders observe teaching in their areas of responsibility. Subject leaders manage their subjects very well and are committed to improvement. They work with other staff to develop schemes and policies, monitor planning and assess standards by collecting work samples. However, most do not yet have the opportunity to observe classroom practice to be in a better position to support their colleagues. Local authority representatives visit the school regularly to provide an independent assessment of the work of the school. Key issues from these visits are discussed and reviewed by the senior management team and fed back to the governing body.

30. Governors are very supportive and have a clear long-term view of the school's development. The chair and headteacher meet regularly to discuss all aspects of the work of the school. Other individual governors help and visit frequently and are beginning to make formal planned visits. Since the last inspection, governors have identified the need to introduce committees to fulfil their role more effectively. The headteacher and subject leaders make regular reports to the governors and results of national tests are discussed and analysed. However, governors recognise the need to keep a closer eye on subjects and the curriculum committee is beginning to look at policies and schemes.

31. The School Improvement Plan (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. Subject leaders identify improvements in their subject areas and submit bids saying how much money will be required. A budget is then allocated and managed by each subject leader. The deputy head, as staff development and curriculum manager uses part of her planned two-days curriculum release time to monitor staff targets as agreed in the SIP. An informal cycle of monitoring and professional development interviews has allowed the staff to get used to the process of self-

evaluation in readiness for national developments.

32. It is obvious from the way that the very good accommodation has been developed and maintained and the very high quality of the resources around the school, that good use has been made of the school's generous funding over the years with much credit going to the chair of finance on the governing body. Current financial planning continues to place quality ahead of cheapness and improved strategic planning is ensuring that available funds are directed at identified priorities. High levels of classroom support have also been a long-term priority and the quality of learning support assistants and the impact they make is testament to the value of this decision. Recent improvements to the administration of the school mean that this is a very efficiently run and administered organisation which provides all the necessary support to allow teachers to get on with their jobs in a high quality working environment.

### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

33. To make the most of recent improvements and continue to raise standards the governors, headteacher and staff of St Monica School should:

- (1) help children achieve as much in numeracy as they do in literacy by:
  - providing work for various groups of pupils more closely matched to their ability (Paragraphs 9 & 52)
  - encouraging pupils to discuss various ways of reaching their answers to improve their understanding of number (Paragraphs 9 & 52)
  - making better use of 'marking' to encourage and help pupils to improve. (Paragraphs 24 & 53)
- (2) weigh up the pros and cons of the various teaching styles and organisations used when several activities are planned at the same time by making the impact they have in raising standards, the measure of their effectiveness and making sure that:
  - clear, challenging and progressive learning objectives are planned for each activity and are known by pupils (Paragraph 10)
  - the teachers role is to help pupils achieve and not just to organise and monitor the activities (Paragraphs 10)
  - the quality as well as the quantity of time spent on each subject is similar (Paragraphs 13 & 61)
- (3) ensure that pupils have enough opportunities to add depth to their learning, reflect on their experiences and understand and celebrate cultural richness and diversity by:
  - looking for opportunities to include these elements when planning work in all areas of the curriculum (Paragraphs 16, 17, 58 & 64)
  - taking opportunities as they arise to develop pupils' thinking and awareness about deeper issues and the wider world (Paragraphs 16, 17 & 73)

### **OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL**

- Most subject leaders do not observe classroom practice in their subjects (Paragraph 29)
- The presentation of written work and mathematics could be improved (Paragraphs 46, 50)
- There are few written or drawn responses to work in religious education (Paragraph 77)

## **PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS**

### ***Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection***

Number of lessons observed

64

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

23



### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
	11	64	25			

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	269
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	33

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	90

#### English as an additional language

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

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.3
National comparative data	5.9

#### 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
	1999	44	46	90

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	34	34	38
	Girls	44	42	43
	Total	78	76	81
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	87 (85)	84 (77)	90 (90)
	National	82 (81)	83 (82)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	32	39	42
	Girls	43	43	45
	Total	75	82	87
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	83 (86)	91 (91)	87 (100)
	National	82 (79)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

### Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	2
White	265
Any other minority ethnic group	2

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	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**

Number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.7
Average class size	29.9

### **Education support staff: YR– Y2**

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	225

## ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999
	£
Total income	491398
Total expenditure	499946
Expenditure per pupil	1866
Balance brought forward from previous year	30077
Balance carried forward to next year	21529

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	269
Number of questionnaires returned	78

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

My child likes school.

My child is making good progress in school.

Behaviour in the school is good.

My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.

The teaching is good.

I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.

I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.

The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.

The school works closely with parents.

The school is well led and managed.

The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.

The school provides an interesting range of

Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
67	29	4		
64	33	3		
64	32	1		3
49	44	6	1	
73	27			
52	40	5	2	
64	36			
64	36			
49	50		1	
51	44	4		1
56	41			3
42	36	17		5

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## **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**

34. The school has three parallel reception classes housed in a separate, spacious wing of the school with a large attractive, well equipped secure outside space. Reception classes are all very well resourced and organised and are well taught by hardworking, caring teachers ably supported by full time classroom assistants. Children start school at the beginning of the academic year in which they are five. At the time of the inspection most children were still four, with a significant number not reaching their fifth birthday until the summer term. A well planned programme introduces the new children and their parents to school and ensures that positive relationships are quickly forged with families. All children attend part time for the first few weeks, with the youngest children attending part time for most of the first term. Links with play groups and other pre school providers are well developed through frequent visits and meetings. During the week of the inspection all the reception class teachers were necessarily spending a large amount of time working with individual children to find out what they knew and could do to establish a baseline. Most children were still attending part time and a normal timetable had not yet been established.

#### **Personal, social and emotional development.**

35. Children in all the reception classes are happy and settled. They have quickly learnt the rules and conventions associated with the classroom and school life. A great deal of time and attention has been given to organising the environment and activities to enable children to make choices and decisions and develop independence. At the start of each session, children sort out their belongings confidently, select their name and place this in the area in which they want to start to work. They play and work happily together and know the rules associated with taking turns, tidying up and listening to others. This was well shown when three four year olds playing a game of snakes and ladders rigorously applied the rules and insisted on absolute fairness at all times.

#### **Communication, language and literacy**

36. The attainment of the children in communication, language and literacy is variable but overall judged to be appropriate for four-year-olds who have just started school. Many purposeful activities in the classroom make a valuable contribution to this area of learning. The role play area is currently well set up so that the children can play birthday parties. They use their invented writing to write party invitations, make birthday cards and party lists. Discussing and planning the party food and the games, they decide whose birthday they will celebrate and who will be invited to the party. Most already speak clearly and confidently and they are sensitively supported by adults when they share stories and talk about things of interest.

37. Most four-year-olds can recognise their name and many already make very good attempts at writing it. They enjoy looking at books and often choose to sit quietly in the attractive book areas browsing through some of the many interesting books. Children eagerly choose library books to take home and enjoy talking about their choice and the reasons for it. Boys and girls handle the books carefully and understand that print carries meaning. They talk about the pictures and understand that print is read from left to right. Children are already beginning to recognise many clearly displayed notices and captions in the classroom, suggesting what they might say.

#### **Mathematical Development**

38. At the time of the inspection, teachers were carrying out one of the mathematical baseline assessment tasks. It was carefully planned and interestingly presented as a treasure hunt in the sand. Children were well motivated by the task and keen to search for numbers and try to identify them. A wide range of practical, purposeful activities is making a good contribution to

mathematical understanding and development. Children playing in the sand and water are learning vocabulary such as full and empty. In their imaginative play around the birthday party, they are involved in a number of mathematical activities such as counting out cups, laying the table and putting candles on the birthday cake. Number songs and rhymes are a part of every day and songs such as Ten Green Bottles and Five Currant Buns help reinforce counting and introduce the concept of taking away. Daily routines such as milk time are well used to practise and reinforce counting activities.

### **Knowledge and Understanding of the World**

39. Boys and girls are gaining a good understanding of the world in which they live. The current theme of 'Myself' is presenting many good opportunities for exploring similarities and differences and talking about relationships within the immediate family. Displays of interesting shiny objects provide a focus for talking about reflections and colours. Blowing bubbles in the water play area provides lots of fun and pleasure and stimulates some good discussion on colours, shape and cause and effect. Most children know where they live and when playing with models and landscapes such as the zoo and a roadway are able to talk about some of the features. Boys and girls have many good opportunities to use a variety of construction kits to make their own models and develop their technological skills. Class computers are in regular use and children were often observed using them. On many occasions, adults were patiently supporting four-year-olds teaching specific computer skills, such as how to control the mouse and print out their work.

### **Creative Development**

40. Children have regular planned opportunities to use play dough, paint, draw and manipulate clay and they respond well to specific tasks such as painting a portrait of themselves. They enjoy experimenting with paint and when mixing paint with their hands and fingers enthusiastically explore the texture and colours. Children are given good opportunity to play imaginatively in the role-play area and with small figures and construction materials. Boys and girls enjoy the regular times when they can sing and respond to music. They know a number of rhymes and jingles and are beginning to develop a sense of time and rhythm through clapping and moving to music.

### **Physical Development.**

41. Four year olds have many opportunities to handle small tools such as pencils, crayons, paintbrushes, glue sticks and scissors. They frequently put together and take apart construction materials and work with jigsaws and other tabletop equipment. These activities are making a significant contribution to the development of their physical skills. Small groups of children regularly work with an adult to learn how to form the letters of their name. A well resourced and frequently used secure outdoor area gives children the opportunity to test themselves and practise running, jumping and climbing freely in a safe environment. Regular planned times in the hall provide a more structured time for movement and at this early stage in the school year, give a good opportunity for the teacher to assess physical skills such as skipping, hopping and balancing. Most children move confidently and make good use of the space around them.

### **ENGLISH**

42. The standards of the oldest pupils in English observed during the inspection are average. However, pupils are achieving well throughout the school in reading and writing. With continued good teaching and positive attitudes to learning there is every reason to believe that by the age of seven, these pupils will be achieving standards above national averages.

43. Since the last inspection, the national literacy strategy has been effectively and securely implemented by the last subject coordinator, who has only recently left the school. The teaching of the subject has been thoroughly monitored and consequently the quality of teaching is now good. Very good assessment procedures include reading tests and written assessment tasks with notes on the attainment levels achieved which are used to track the progress of individual pupils. The procedures and the use made of the information gained have improved greatly 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.

44. Pupils' attain expected standards in speaking and listening. 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, planning 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, word games and using puppets. For example, pupils in a year one lesson reading the 'Farmyard Cat' with the teacher, re-tell the story and a group role-play the story with puppets. In a year two lesson pupils explain how to make a cheese and tomato sandwich in preparation for the written task. Pupils in all literacy lessons are keen to discuss the characters in stories they read together, expressing their ideas logically and clearly using a suitably growing vocabulary. Teaching assistants are skilled in asking questions and encouraging pupils to articulate their thoughts.

45. Most achieve standards in reading similar to pupils in other schools. Teachers promote the value and enjoyment of books very effectively and pupils clearly gain pleasure from them. The well-resourced library area is an attractive feature of the school. Pupils read texts from a wide selection of books with a satisfactory level of accuracy and understanding. Shared reading as a class using common text from, for example, a Big Book, and guided reading in small ability groups teaches the necessary skills of reading. It also enhances pupils' enjoyment of reading and focuses on such terms as author, title, fiction and non-fiction. In year two, using writing from the previous lesson, pupils read aloud with emphasis on 'fluency' and 'intonation', terms that they understand. They are heard to read regularly in school and at home.

46. Evidence from work in pupils' books from the previous year indicates that they achieve well. Although the writing standards of the current year two pupils are no better than average, indications are that by the time they leave the school they will achieve higher than national averages. Pupils show an increasing fluency in the range and style of their writing as they progress through the school. They structure work well, use a balance of accurate and phonetically plausible spelling, punctuate sentences well and use increasingly complex sentences. Year one pupils show they are able to use capital letters at the start of sentences and full stops at the end in their factual writing which followed a visit from the community policeman. Year two pupils use descriptive words in designing a poster for a specific audience to advertise a fun fair. Writing structures are well developed and most pupils know how to use a high frequency word card, their own wordbooks and dictionaries. However, the presentation of their work is only satisfactory and few pupils write in joined handwriting.

47. Teaching is good overall. Lessons are well planned and begin with good, well-paced, introductions. Teachers are skilled in questioning and their knowledge of literacy has a positive impact on pupils' learning. They have high expectations of behaviour and attainment and pupil management is good. 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. Either the teacher or support assistants usually help lower attaining pupils to very good effect so that pupils of all abilities achieve equally well.

## **MATHEMATICS**

48. National test results for seven year olds in 1999, where 90% of pupils achieved Level 2 or above and 24% Level 3, indicate that attainment is slightly above average when compared to all schools and average with schools from a similar background. Although results this year (98% of pupils achieved Level 2 and 19% Level 3) were generally higher, inspection findings from both analysis of work and observation of lessons indicate that current attainment for the oldest pupils is about average. Since the last inspection attainment in mathematics, as measured by the national tests, has improved year on year. The factor that has contributed most to this has been the improvement in teaching since the last inspection, when there were 'too many occasions when there was little interaction between the teacher and the group engaged in a mathematical task' and 'in a significant number of lessons poor quality work was being produced.' More recently, the numeracy strategy has had an important impact on the quality of provision by providing structure and rigour in planning and ensuring more direct teaching.

49. All pupils are encouraged to work in a range of practical activities that promote the

development of mathematical concepts and skills. Typically pupils in year one recognise patterns in number, use their knowledge to identify two numbers that add up to ten and are developing a basic understanding of place value. Pupils recognise that the position of a digit in a number is significant; for example in the number 34, the number '3' means three tens. Their use of mathematical language is becoming increasingly refined so that they recognise the alternative words for operations, such as add, plus, more and addition and use specific mathematical terms such as 'estimate.'

50. Year two pupils work with larger numbers and can suggest appropriate coins to use for amounts up to and more than 20p. Analysis of the previous year's work shows that by the age of seven most pupils have a basic understanding of place value, can add and subtract numbers up to 10 or more from memory; add and subtract larger numbers and multiply using repeated addition. Pupils recognise shapes, such as circles, squares, triangles and rectangles, and some solid shapes. Those who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress, attain appropriate standards and have full access to the curriculum. In most lessons, work is modified to match the ability of the child, or an adult helper provides additional support so that the child can complete the task. The presentation of the work is satisfactory but not enough emphasis in teaching is placed upon the importance of neat work in helping minimise careless errors. The audit carried out by the subject leader as part of the numeracy strategy indicates that pupils find measuring, shape and space difficult and this is consistent with the national test results.

51. Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory. Most pupils establish good work habits and try hard. Their ability to use appropriate mathematical language is developed from reception onwards. They improve their understanding of mathematical operations and their ability to use different methods of working out a problem in their head. During lessons pupils are becoming increasingly self-reliant when faced with a problem, willing to ask for help when needed and are motivated to improve. They generally approach mathematics with enthusiasm and appear to enjoy the subject. In some lessons, where behaviour was not as good, pupils did not fully understand what they were meant to be doing or found the work too difficult.

52. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. In all lessons observed the teaching was at least satisfactory and in nearly a half good. Although the numeracy strategy is having a positive impact on the pupils' attainment, some minor weaknesses in implementation are limiting progress. The main activity is not always clearly explained or modelled by the teacher and pupils are not sure of the learning purpose and outcome. Consequently the work does not always match the ability or understanding of the child, and inevitably, the pace of learning slows. Pupils are also given insufficient opportunity to discuss the strategy they have used in arriving at their answer to help improve their understanding of number. Where teaching is good pupils work at a brisk pace, know and understand the task and are given the opportunity to explain their reasoning. In mental maths the use of number sticks, number boards and cards gives every child the opportunity to answer and so be fully involved. Homework is sent out fortnightly to support learning and the youngest children are encouraged to practise skills by choosing a mathematics game to take home. The subject leader has developed a very good Home and School Numeracy Book.

53. Procedures to monitor attainment and progress are generally satisfactory. An initial assessment is made on entry to the school to judge existing skills and knowledge and to establish a clear starting point to help the school check on progress. Two assessment and review days are held each term and pupils' progress judged against the key objectives outlined in the numeracy strategy. Suitable record sheets have been devised to note down and track individual and class progress. Further evidence of achievement through the school is monitored by use of the portfolio, where pieces of work are collected and matched to known standards. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and generally only consists of an indication of whether the work is right or wrong. Few examples of teachers making their marking more effective by giving helpful guidance to pupils about how to improve their work were observed. The subject leader monitors the subject by analysing planning and has started observing maths teaching throughout the school, with the support of the local authority numeracy consultant.

54. The curriculum in mathematics is now based on the programme outlined in the Numeracy Strategy and meets statutory requirements. The influence of the strategy is evident in the method and organisation of the subject throughout the school. Work is selected from the 'Steps' scheme

and a variety of other sources including resources produced by the teachers themselves. Sufficient good quality mathematical resources are stored centrally and in the classrooms. The information technology leader has identified a helpful list of CD Rom programs available for each year group to support and supplement the teaching of mathematics.

## **SCIENCE**

55. At the time of the last inspection standards were said to be average and the report criticised aspects of teaching which lacked scientific focus and the fact that areas of the curriculum, notably materials and physical processes were underrepresented. Teachers' assessments for the last two years have shown that almost all pupils have achieved the appropriate level for their age with many achieving higher standards. In addition, an analysis of pupils' work over the last twelve months shows that all the required elements are now being covered. Ongoing work in science observed during the inspection would suggest that these improvements will be sustained and with the improved scheme of work and assessment arrangements being introduced by the new subject leader, standards could well improve further.

56. Pupils in year one make and use a simple switched circuit with a bulb to see which of a range of materials keeps the bulb alight when added to the circuit. They show that they are familiar with making circuits and can explain that it all has to be 'joined up'. Working in pairs they soon establish that objects made of metal work and that plastic, wood etc does not. By the end of the session, they are able to group the materials into conductors and non-conductors and predict which ones will work. Teachers in both classes observed were very good at helping pupils to draw out the intended learning objectives and pupils thoroughly enjoyed being given the opportunity to find out for themselves.

57. Older pupils in one class completed an assessment task connected with work on light which they had been studying. They showed that they know that light needs a source, that without light it is dark and that it can reflect from shiny objects such as a spoon. In another class, the teacher had moved on to sound relating this to the fact that, as with light, we can have man-made and natural sounds. Pupils then worked in groups to come up with words to describe sounds being made, which they did very sensibly obviously being used to working in this way. The whole session was well managed and pupils enjoyed what they did but the scientific knowledge and skills element was limited.

58. All teaching is at least satisfactory with a half good. All the activities are well managed and controlled with pupils busy throughout the session. The main differences in learning come from the sharpness of the scientific focus of the lesson. With this in mind, it is significant that this is most evident when the teacher is working with the whole class on a scientific topic. The school is very well resourced in terms of books, equipment and the environment but there is scope for teachers to make more use the well-developed grounds as a stimulus for boys and girls to reflect on the wonder of the natural world.

## **ART AND DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

59. Standards in art and design technology are similar to that expected of pupils of a similar age. While standards in art have been sustained since the last inspection those in design technology, which were unsatisfactory, have improved. In addition to the few lessons seen, evidence was taken from long term planning and the analysis of pupils completed work.

60. In design technology year two pupils design a pattern for a T-shirt, while year one pupils design a vehicle to carry one of a collection of soft toys. In both these lessons pupils understand the need to design for a purpose and to modify their designs in the light of discussion. Most pupils in designing their vehicle take into account the shape of the soft toy and clearly identify the tool they will need. In art, year one pupils mix sand and yellow powder paint to create a textured beach that meets the sea. Year two pupils paint their version of Van Gogh's Sunflowers and are fascinated by the teacher's account of his lifestyle, especially the loss of his ear.

61. The teaching observed is satisfactory with some good lessons. Evidence from the school's long and medium term planning indicates good coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study, and individual lesson plans have a clear focus on the skills to be taught. Teachers have sound subject knowledge and manage the pupils well even when art or design



technology is only a group activity. However, pupils' learning is most successful when the subjects are taught separately to the whole class rather than as one of a wide range of activities. The art displays around the school are well presented but being very early in the school year, do not yet reflect the full range of work in the subject.

## **GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY**

62. Long term planning for these two subjects shows that they are planned within whole school themes. In the week of the inspection, only geography lessons were seen. From the geography lessons observed, teachers' planning, displays and pupils' previous work in both subjects, standards in history and geography are generally appropriate for the ages of pupils involved. Since the last inspection, policies have been usefully updated and a scheme of work successfully introduced for geography. This programme of work is helping to ensure a steady acquisition of geographical skills and knowledge. A similar programme is being developed for history.

63. Pupils in year one are learning about people who help us and are gaining a sound knowledge of their school and its immediate locality through identifying where local services are situated and where various people can be located in school. They make very good progress when they use photographs and a simple plan to identify local landmarks and use geographical vocabulary to describe places and positions. Older pupils are beginning to be able to interpret maps, follow instructions and locate places using symbols and co-ordinates. They make good progress when they design symbols to represent features of their classroom and incorporate these into their classroom plans. This developing geographical knowledge is applied successfully when they pretend to be pirates and make treasure maps and plot the position of their buried treasure. In history, pupils are gaining a satisfactory understanding of the lives and importance of famous people such as Florence Nightingale, Van Gogh and Alexander Graham Bell. When they look at ships through the ages and the development of the fire engine, they are successfully learning to make comparisons between then and now.

64. Pupils behave well in geography lessons. They are keen and eager to answer questions and they settle well to group tasks. Teaching in geography is good with some very good features. Lessons are carefully planned, pupils are well managed and teachers give clear explanations when they introduce a new idea. Resources, such as recently taken photographs of familiar places in the locality of the school, engage the interest of the children and stimulate lively discussion. Pirate stories and adventures capture pupils' imagination and attention and provide a real purpose for studying and making maps. A range of very good resources is well used but few links are made to multicultural education through studies that reflect the richness and cultural diversity of life and too few opportunities are given for boys and girls to reflect on significant things in other peoples lives and the world around them.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

65. Standards and provision for information and communications technology (ICT) have considerably improved since the last inspection at which time 'work produced was generally of an average standard at best, and activities frequently degenerated into play.' All the concerns raised in the last inspection have been addressed. New computer resources and improvements in planning have had a positive impact on the development of the subject. Standards have been further enhanced by the decision to provide a whole class taught sessions of ICT each week for each class to introduce new skills or programs. Because of these changes, standards are now at least average and sometimes better.

66. In the reception classes, pupils learn to use the mouse to select from the screen and are able name the parts of the equipment they are using, such as monitor, keyboard, hard drive and printer. They use 'Dazzle' to produce stimulating artwork and designs, such as the excellent patchwork quilt displayed in the school. As they get older, they further develop their handling,

modelling and control skills. They give instructions to a programmable toy to follow a set pathway and recognise that a computer model is not an exact replica of real life. The oldest pupils use the computers to present information they have collected in the form of a graph.

67. Pupils are enthusiastic, concentrate hard during ICT sessions, and are achieving well. They work well on their own and show initiative and resourcefulness in dealing with any difficulties that arise. Most can explain the purpose of their task and are happy to make suggestions or volunteer answers. Teaching during the two sessions observed was effective. The purpose of each lesson was clearly explained and good use was made of pupil's efforts to help reinforce and consolidate learning.

68. The coordinator has drawn up and implemented a very good scheme of work, based on Curriculum 2000 and the national scheme. It covers all the required strands and identifies a suitable progression of computer skills to be covered by each year group. This is already helping to raise standards. The scheme identifies what pupils need to learn, suggested activities, resources and vocabulary and includes formal teacher assessment sheets and children's tick lists. Computers and other forms of technology are well used to support other subjects. The ICT leader has identified a helpful list of CD ROM programs available for each year group to support and supplement the teaching of other subjects, such as mathematics.

69. Enough suitable computers are available for pupils to cover the ICT curriculum, with at least one viable computer in each classroom and plans for each class to be equipped with at least two. The range of software is sufficient and the school has a very good selection of CD ROMs available.

## **MUSIC**

70. Inspection evidence from the observation of a small sample of lessons, music used to support other subjects such as number rhymes, and music associated with assemblies, indicates that the standard of music is about average with pupils' singing a strength.

71. In the three music lessons observed the quality of teaching was at least satisfactory and in two lessons good, with clear learning goals and objectives. The teacher successfully stimulated pupils' interest and imagination, giving them opportunities to select appropriate percussion instruments to fit the settings in the story, such as a 'stormy mountain' and a 'coconut grove'. Pupils were introduced to musical vocabulary such as beat and pitch. Where teaching was less successful some pupils participated well, but were frustrated at not being able to experiment with the instruments quickly enough. Typically pupils are enthusiastic in music lessons and relish the opportunity to both compose and perform. They really enjoy singing and are very proud of their accomplishments. The music leader has developed a music programme to support pupils with special needs in reception as a way of helping to improve their confidence.

72. Since the last inspection the school has worked hard to maintain the quality of provision in music. The coordinator, working with colleagues, has drawn up a detailed scheme of work to support planning by identifying the learning activities and outcomes. This has proved valuable in ensuring both progression and adequate coverage of the National Curriculum. However a new scheme is to be introduced later this term to reflect the requirements of Curriculum 2000 and this should further enhance provision.

73. Music resources are stored in the spacious, well-appointed music room. Resources are very good and well used with an excellent range of musical instruments from a variety of cultures (eg agogo, ocean drum, kokoriko and didgeridoo). Good quality compact disc players are available in both the hall and music room. The selection of CDs available is adequate, but could be improved by including more music from different cultural traditions.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

74. With the introduction of a new scheme of work, new planning formats and the stimulus of the subject being a focus for the school, the school has continued to make good provision for physical education since the last inspection. Gymnastics, dance and games are taught in blocks through the year, which meant that during the inspection no work in dance was observed. Most

teaching is good, some very good, none unsatisfactory.

75. In a high quality gymnastics lesson, year one pupils warmed up vigorously using activities they had suggested. They then were very skilfully involved by the teacher in suggesting different ways of jumping and landing, trying them out and demonstrating good efforts to use as teaching points. Clear instructions and gentle insistence on getting on with it made it possible for these young children to develop and perform a sequence of jumps by the end of the lesson. Good work in gymnastics continued into year two with a well-structured and organised apparatus session where pupils were encouraged to demonstrate a variety of symmetrical shapes at various levels. Well established rules and practices such as no queuing and instant stopping when required meant that little time was lost and pupils concentrated on making and improving their shapes.

76. Other year two classes were observed throwing and catching on the large well set out playground. Again this was well managed and controlled and good attention was paid to warm ups and safety matters. However, levels of performance were lower and though pupils were active and busy practising, few teaching points were made and demonstrations were little used to point out what it was that made them worthy of looking at. In these and all physical education sessions, boys and girls were very sensible and enthusiastic. They reacted promptly to instructions and always tried their best.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

77. Religious education was an area much criticised in the last report as being under emphasised and lacking depth and sufficient coverage. New whole school planning regimes, timetabling arrangements and increased monitoring are ensuring that the subject has its rightful place in the curriculum. However, the lack of written or drawn responses to the various areas studied makes it difficult for inspectors, and the subject coordinator, to get a clear picture of just what pupils have covered, know and understand.

78. Lessons were observed in the three age groups ranging from preparing for and discussing the harvest festival in the foundation year, to looking at the importance of the Shema and Mezuzah to Jewish people in year one. Others in year two were learning about the importance of the Christian celebrations that mark important events in the life of Christ, such as Christmas. Each in their own way were dealt with sensitively and appropriately for the ages of the pupils concerned and had clear learning objectives related to the school's scheme of work. In the two older classes, pupils showed a good awareness of the background to the areas under discussion and were sufficiently interested and engaged to volunteer sensible and thoughtful answers to questions of opinion rather than fact.

79. A good example was set by the subject coordinator who, in her lesson on the Jewish faith, made good use of shared writing from the literacy strategy to encourage pupils to set down the first words of the traditional Shema. She then asked pupils to write down what is so important that they would want to be reminded about it. A quiet opportunity for pupils to think about this in silence and the encouragement to make their writing special made the whole experience relevant and meaningful.

80. The quality of resources to support the subject was another area criticised in the last report and this is now a strength. With the Jewish religion a current topic in year one, a very comprehensive and well mounted display of books and objects associated with the faith shows just how much the resources for religious education have improved.