

# INSPECTION REPORT

**ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Newcastle-under-Lyme

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124358

Headteacher: Mrs G M Regan

Reporting inspector: Mr Graham R Sims

28899

Dates of inspection: 16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> October 2000

Inspection number: 224262

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	St Mary's Catholic Primary School Stanier Street NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME Staffordshire
Postcode:	ST5 2SU
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Wood
Date of previous inspection:	5 <sup>th</sup> February 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr G R Sims Registered Inspector OIN: 28899	Information and communication technology Areas of learning for the youngest children (the Foundation Stage)	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well pupils are taught Leadership and management
Mr D Russell Lay Inspector OIN: 13746		How well the school cares for its pupils How well the school works in partnership with parents
Rev R Evans Team Inspector OIN: 20692	English	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development English as an additional language
Mrs E Walker Team Inspector OIN: 28686	Mathematics Physical education	
Mrs D Gale Team Inspector OIN: 21904	Science Music	Special educational needs
Mrs K Campbell Team Inspector OIN: 22856	Art and design Design and technology	
Mrs F Gaywood Team Inspector OIN: 22352	Geography History	The quality and range of curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils Equal opportunities

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school is situated in the town of Newcastle-under-Lyme, but its catchment area stretches well beyond its immediate locality. It is a voluntary-aided Catholic primary school. At present, there are 381 boys and girls on roll between the ages of four and eleven. It is much larger than most primary schools. The school is popular with parents who wish their children to receive a Catholic education, although some year groups are under-subscribed. The socio-economic background of the pupils is very mixed. Some children come from advantaged backgrounds, but a sizeable proportion come from areas where there is a significant degree of economic and social disadvantage. Very few pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds or from homes where English is not the main spoken language; at less than one per cent, this is below the national average. Just over 12 per cent of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is broadly average. Some 10 per cent of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, which is below average, although six pupils have statements of special educational need which is above average. There is wide variation in the attainment of children when they start school, but it is generally average. The school has been through a period of change and some uncertainty since its last inspection. From September 1999 until April 2000, the former headteacher was absent through ill-health prior to retirement and the school was led by an acting headteacher. A new headteacher assumed responsibility in May 2000, some six months before the inspection took place. Religious education and collective worship were not inspected because they are due to be reported on separately by Diocesan inspectors.

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

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is an effective school which offers its pupils a sound education. Pupils make satisfactory progress in most subjects and, by the age of eleven, they achieve appropriate standards in English and mathematics and above average standards in science. The overall quality of the teaching is satisfactory, although there is a significant proportion of very good teaching throughout the school. Much importance is attached to the school's Catholic ethos. The school is emerging from a period of change and is receiving sensitive leadership from the new headteacher who has a clear vision of how she wishes the school to develop. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

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

- Pupils achieve above average standards in science and good emphasis is given to investigative work.
- Standards in music are also above average. Music has improved greatly since the last inspection.
- The school caters well for its youngest children. The teachers in the Reception classes provide pupils with a stimulating range of activities and good quality teaching.
- Much attention is given to pupils with special educational needs. These pupils make good progress in English because of the additional support they receive.
- There is a significant proportion of very good teaching throughout the school.
- The headteacher has a realistic appraisal of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and has a clear vision of how she would like to see the school develop.

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

- The consistency of the teaching and particularly the way teachers plan to challenge the differing needs of pupils.
- Subject leadership and the way teaching and standards are monitored.
- Standards in information and communication technology.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to all parents and carers of pupils in the school.*

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There has been a satisfactory degree of improvement since the last inspection, which took place in February 1996. The school has addressed most of the key issues identified in the previous inspection, although further progress still needs to be made in some of them. The school has rectified weaknesses in the teaching of music very effectively through the appointment of a part-time specialist teacher. The teachers' skills in information and communication technology have improved significantly, although there is still room for further improvement. Teachers now have a clearer basis for planning their work, as new schemes of work have been implemented in nearly all subjects. The school has done much to improve its assessment procedures, although staff do not make best use of these assessments to improve their planning. Coordinators are gradually becoming more involved in leading their subjects, but are still not fully involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and pupils' work or evaluating how to bring about further improvement.

Although results have fluctuated over the last four years, the quality of the teaching and the standards achieved by the oldest pupils in English and mathematics have been maintained since the last inspection. Standards have risen in science. The results of pupils at the age of seven are not as good as they were previously in reading and mathematics. Because standards have risen nationally, the school's results at both key stages compare less favourably against other schools than they did at the time of the last inspection.

## 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	Key
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
English	A	D	C	C	Very high A* Well above average A Above average B Average C Below average D Well below average E Very low E*
Mathematics	B	D	C	C	
Science	B	B	B	B	

The school's most recent National Curriculum test results show that standards are just above the national average and in line with similar schools in reading and mathematics at Key Stage 1 and in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2. They are above average in writing at Key Stage 1 and science at Key Stage 2. At Key Stage 1, nearly all pupils achieve the nationally expected Level 2, but the more able pupils do not achieve as well as in other schools. Some pupils who achieve the expected level at Key Stage 1, do not consolidate their progress at Key Stage 2, although almost a third of the pupils exceed the nationally expected level in English and mathematics and almost a half in science.

Children enter the school with generally average levels of skill. They make good progress in the Reception classes and many children exceed the expected standards by the time they start Year 1. The work seen during the inspection confirms that the National Curriculum results give a fair reflection of pupils' attainments in English, mathematics and science. Most pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school. Standards achieved by the time pupils leave the school are above average in science, music and physical education, but they are below average in information and communication technology. Given the school's previous record and the standards achieved at Key Stage 1 in previous years, the school needs to set itself more challenging targets at Key Stage 2.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have a good attitude to their school. They are proud of it and regard their teachers as kind and encouraging. Their attitudes in lessons are frequently good, but where lessons fail to interest them, they are less positive.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The pupils' behaviour in lessons is mostly good. Where lessons do not challenge them fully, some pupils become disengaged in their learning and their behaviour falters. Outside the classroom, behaviour is satisfactory but there are areas which could be improved, for example in the dining hall.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships in the school are mostly good, with many examples of pupils working well together. No incidents of bullying or harassment were observed during the inspection. Pupils usually listen carefully to their teachers and each other. They value each other's work and views.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The level of attendance has improved gradually over the last three years and is now just above the national average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
The quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

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

The teaching was satisfactory or better in 89 per cent of the lessons seen during the inspection. It was very good or better in 19 per cent of lessons and was good in a further 41 per cent. The teaching was unsatisfactory in 11 per cent of lessons.

The quality of the teaching varies throughout the school. At times, all teachers deliver good lessons, and there is also a significant amount of very good teaching which motivates the pupils well. There is also, however, a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching, which generally results from inadequate planning which does not take into account the differing needs of pupils. Sometimes this is because teachers do not take enough account of previous assessments of what the pupils already know and the lesson lacks challenge, particularly for the more able. The quality of the teaching in English is predominantly good, and in mathematics it is satisfactory. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are generally promoted well through the teaching of other subjects, though not always consistently. The teaching of science and music is good. In some year groups, for example in the Foundation Stage<sup>1</sup> and in Year 3, the teaching is consistently good, and frequently very good. Much thought goes into the teaching of pupils with special educational needs.

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<sup>1</sup> The Foundation Stage applies to children from the age of three of age to the end of the reception year in primary school



## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is good for children in the Reception classes and satisfactory in the rest of the school. Some subjects are linked imaginatively. The provision for information and communication technology needs to be strengthened. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The provision for special educational needs is carefully coordinated and pupils have access to an appropriate curriculum. Teachers provide good support within the classroom. Extra support for literacy and numeracy for some year groups is generally well targeted. The current experimental arrangements do not always make the most efficient use of the coordinator's time.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall, the provision for pupils' personal development is sound. It is strongly underpinned by the school's Catholic ethos and teaching and is reinforced by daily prayers and assemblies. Pupils are fully aware of the difference between right and wrong behaviour. Social skills are promoted through collaborative working, extra-curricular activities and the many excursions organised by the school.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school provides a supportive and caring environment in which the pupils can learn. Staff are aware of the needs of pupils. There are good procedures for child protection and their general well-being. Priority is given to health and safety matters and accidents are carefully recorded.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Parents are well committed towards the school and a number of parents provide valuable help in lessons. The information the school sends to parents is satisfactory, but some parents do not always find it easy to contact teachers informally. Parents are encouraged to help their children with work sent home from school.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The new headteacher has a perceptive vision of how she wishes the school to develop. She provides strong, clear leadership and deals sensitively with both staff and pupils. The current senior management structure needs to be broadened. Although they are now more involved in the management of their subjects areas, the role of the subject coordinator needs to be strengthened further.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities satisfactorily and show strong commitment towards the school. The chair provides good support for the headteacher. The governors are aware of the school's priorities but rely upon the headteacher and senior staff to establish and monitor them. They now need to develop a clearer understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through their own monitoring and evaluating of all aspects of school life.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Systems for monitoring and evaluating teaching have only recently been introduced and have not yet had any significant impact on raising standards. The headteacher has accurately identified the need for the monitoring process to be more rigorous and focused and to involve subject coordinators more. Currently, coordinators do not have a clear overview of standards in their subjects.
The strategic use of resources	The school is aware of the need to obtain value for money, and has sound procedures for ensuring that the best financial value is obtained when purchasing products or services. The headteacher consults regularly with members of senior management and staff, so that priorities are carefully established. Apart from the use of some time allocated to supporting special needs, the school's resources are generally used efficiently.
Adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources	The school has an adequate number of appropriately trained and experienced teachers and support staff. The school's accommodation is good. Apart from the provision of computers within the classroom, the level of resources adequately meets the needs of the curriculum.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Their children are being well prepared socially and academically for the wider world.</li> <li>● Staff are fair and helpful and know their children well. They provide a good education.</li> <li>● The school is a warm and welcoming place which provides a safe and secure environment in which children can learn.</li> <li>● Their children are achieving high standards and making good progress.</li> <li>● Those attending the parents' meeting were pleased with:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the way they are welcomed in the school;</li> <li>▪ the quantity and appropriateness of the homework set for their children;</li> <li>▪ the information they are provided about their children's progress and the way the school communicates with parents.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Some parents feel there is lack of continuity in classes where teachers job share.</li> <li>● In contrast to those who attended the parents' meeting, a significant number of parents submitted correspondence to the inspection team expressing concern about communication between home and school:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ some feel they do not receive enough information on their children's progress;</li> <li>▪ the current security arrangements make it difficult to speak to individual teachers.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

The inspection findings concur largely with parents' positive views about the school, although they show that standards are not as high now as they used to be in comparison with other schools. The school provides an appropriate range of information for parents, but the concerns of some parents about the way the school communicates with them have been noted by the school. The current security arrangements are somewhat impersonal, but have addressed previous concerns expressed by parents about the security of the school. The team found no cause for concern in the way the school manages job-share arrangements; there is no evidence to suggest that these arrangements are having an adverse effect on pupils' progress.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. In the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 1<sup>2</sup> for the year 2000, the pupils' results were just above the national average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing. When compared to the results of similar schools<sup>3</sup>, they were average in reading and mathematics, but well above average in writing. Nearly every pupil achieved the national expectation of Level 2 in all three areas, which is much better than the picture nationally. However, the percentage of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 in reading and writing and the upper grades in mathematics is below the national average, suggesting that the more able pupils are not being sufficiently challenged. The school's results have fluctuated over the last four years. Although they are now slightly better in writing, they are lower in mathematics and significantly lower in reading than at the time of the last inspection.
2. At Key Stage 2, the National Curriculum test results in the year 2000 were marginally above the national average and the average for similar schools in English and mathematics and above average in science. The latest results are an improvement on the previous year where the results were below the national average and well below the average for similar schools in English and mathematics. This year, just over 80 per cent of the pupils achieved the national expectation of Level 4 in English, just over 70 per cent in mathematics and just over 90 per cent in science. Around 30 per cent achieved the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics and almost half of the pupils achieved this level in science. The results achieved in science are significantly better than in English and mathematics. Results in all three subjects have fluctuated over the last four years. Overall, they rose following the last inspection, then, in the following two years, they fell, before picking up again in 2000. Standards in mathematics and English are now very close to those achieved at the time of the last inspection, whilst standards in science have risen. However, as there has been a significant improvement in results nationally, the school does not compare as favourably against other schools as it did at the time of the last inspection.
3. The school has yet to start using its assessment data really effectively to analyse where there are strengths and weaknesses in pupils' attainment and to set appropriate targets for the future. Although the school achieved its targets for Key Stage 2 in 2000 in English, and narrowly missed them in mathematics, the targets do not reflect the fact that these pupils had achieved very good results at the end of Key Stage 1. Over the last four years, girls have produced better results than boys in all areas at Key Stage 1, but this difference has all but disappeared by the end of Key Stage 2, where the school's results do not reflect the national trend of girls performing better than boys in English.
4. The baseline assessments made when the children enter the Reception classes show that the general level of attainment on entry is similar to the national average, although in some year groups it is above average. The teachers in both classes are relatively new to teaching in Reception, but they provide children with a wide range of imaginative activities and consistently

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<sup>2</sup> The words 'Key Stage' refer to the different stages of learning in schools. Children start school in the Foundation Stage, which caters for children aged 3 to 5 and generally refers to children who are in the Nursery, Reception or Early Years classes. Key Stage 1 is the first stage of compulsory primary education. It caters for pupils aged 5 to 7 and refers to pupils who are in Years 1 and 2. Key Stage 1 is also frequently synonymous with the term Infants. Key Stage 2 is the second stage of primary education. It caters for pupils aged 7 to 11 and refers to pupils who are in Years 3 to 6. Key Stage 2 is also frequently synonymous with the term Juniors. At the age of 11, pupils start Key Stage 3, which marks the beginning of their secondary education.

<sup>3</sup> The school's results are compared both to the national average (ie the average of the results of all schools in England, where pupils took National Curriculum assessment tests at the end of Key Stage 1) and to the average for similar schools (ie the average of the results for all schools whose pupils come from similar socio-economic backgrounds, determined by the eligibility of pupils within the school to receive free school meals).

good quality teaching. As a result, the children learn quickly and make good progress. Most children are on course to reach or exceed the Early Learning Goals in each area of learning by the time they start Year 1. The children learn to cooperate well, wait their turn and work independently. They listen carefully to teachers and each other and use language well for negotiating and cooperating with each other. They enjoy listening to stories and rhymes and are gaining in confidence and maturity in reading and writing. Most know numbers to ten; some work confidently with much larger numbers and all display a real interest in mathematics. They make good progress in other areas, as they learn more about the world around them and are given opportunities to develop creative and physical skills.

5. In English, nearly all pupils achieve the minimum standards expected by the end of Key Stage 1, and a large proportion achieve appropriate standards by the end of Key Stage 2. Most pupils make sound progress, but some higher-attaining pupils do not achieve the standards of which they are capable. Standards of speaking and listening are usually high. Most pupils contribute well to discussion and respond eagerly to questioning. The teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their skills, both within English lessons and when discussing work in other subjects. Pupils' reading at Key Stage 1 is satisfactory and they make sound progress. At the end of the key stage, pupils of higher attainment read confidently and accurately. The gap between pupils of average and lower attainment is narrow which accounts for the high percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard in national testing. At the end of Key Stage 2, higher-attaining pupils read competently and expressively. Other pupils also read confidently and with reasonable fluency, although their phonic skills are insufficiently developed to cope with difficult new words. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' writing is developing satisfactorily. They produce good descriptive writing and know how to use punctuation and capital letters accurately. The weekly period in Key Stage 2 devoted to extended writing very effectively expands the work of the literacy hour and helps pupils to develop their confidence and skill in writing. They use their skills well in a variety of contexts. By the time they leave school, nearly all pupils have sufficiently well-developed literacy skills to cope with most situations.
6. Standards in mathematics are average at the end of both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have good number skills and understand the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes. They record information in a block graph, interpret the graph and draw conclusions about the information they have gathered. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils apply the four rules of number consistently and can compute four-figure numbers including decimal numbers. They recognise and measure shapes and interpret a range of data from different types of graphs. However, they have limited opportunities to use and apply their mathematical knowledge to real-life situations. Pupils use a wide range of strategies to work mentally with numbers and they make good progress. Numeracy skills are developed well in other curriculum areas, although insufficient use is made of information and communication technology to support learning in mathematics.
7. Standards in science at the end of both key stages are above average, and most pupils make good progress throughout the school. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have a good understanding of what is needed for an investigation. Their knowledge and understanding of life processes and living things is good. The quality and range of science work recorded in their books show the good extent of their knowledge and understanding. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils display a detailed knowledge of all the aspects of the National Curriculum for science. They have a clear appreciation of the nature of an investigation, and record their findings with clarity, understanding and independence.
8. In art and design, and design and technology, pupils achieve standards similar to those found in other schools at the end of both key stages. The amount of time devoted to teaching these subjects has been reduced since the introduction of the literacy and numeracy hours and teachers are unable to cover as wide a range of topics within the smaller time allocation. Standards have been maintained in art and design since the last inspection, although the range of pupils' work is narrower. The loss of time has affected work in design and technology, where standards are not as high as they were, as pupils' finished work often lacks refinement. Within the constraints of a narrower curriculum, pupils of all abilities make steady progress throughout the school. In both subjects, there is a clear indication of how pupils' skills are to be developed yet, at

the same time, many activities become an integral part of other wider topics which gives added meaning to what is being done.

9. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the learning of geographical and historical skills, and achieve standards which are appropriate for their age at the end of both key stages. They use and understand maps well at both key stages. At Key Stage 1, pupils demonstrate an increasing awareness of the impact of buildings and roads on our lives, and a growing understanding of how the weather affects us. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils demonstrate an increasing ability to use geographical language, to draw conclusions and to evaluate the places they have studied as well as their own work about them. Pupils enjoy history, particularly when the teachers provide a good range of resources for them to investigate. Good use of artefacts helps pupils to develop their skills of historical enquiry well. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have a sound understanding of how to investigate historical evidence to make sense of the past.
10. Standards in information and communication technology are below national expectations at the end of both key stages, and pupils are not achieving as highly as they should. This has been the result of a lack of opportunity since the last inspection. Provision has improved in recent months, and all pupils are now having regular lessons in the new information technology suite. However, there are many gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding, and it is difficult for pupils to consolidate their skills because there are no computers within the classroom for them to use during the course of the day. Information and communication technology is not used as an effective tool to help pupils learn in other subjects.
11. Standards in music at the end of both key stages are above average and have improved significantly since the last inspection. Pupils are achieving well throughout the school as a result of some good, challenging and interesting specialist teaching. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have acquired a good range of musical skills, knowledge and understanding. By the end of Key Stage 2, they have a good appreciation of a range of musical experiences which combine performing, composing and appraising.
12. Standards in physical education are satisfactory at the end of Key Stage 1 and slightly above those expected for eleven-year-olds at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils have a wide knowledge of games and can use skills appropriately. They have good gymnastic skills, some understanding of dance and nearly all pupils have learnt to swim by the end of Year 4.
13. The school does not have a large number of pupils with special educational needs, but the provision for them is good. Good collaboration between the coordinator for special educational needs, the teachers and learning support assistants ensures that pupils' needs are identified. When additional support is made available during a lesson, the pupils generally receive appropriately targeted work and make good progress. The same attention is not always given to the more able pupils.
14. At the time of the last inspection, the school compared very favourably to other schools, with results which were well above the national average. This is no longer the case, largely because national standards have improved significantly over the last four years. Overall, the school has maintained standards at the same level, but this is now average when compared to other schools. Although some of the more able pupils are not always challenged enough in their work, and their progress is consequently not always as good as it could be, most pupils make sound progress throughout the school and achieve appropriate standards by the time they leave the school.

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

15. In discussion, older pupils take a very positive attitude to their school. One appreciates the fact that the headteacher meets them and visits their classes. Another describes the school as 'a breath of fresh air'. Teachers are helpful, 'expect you to work hard, but want you to do well.' Pupils are proud of the school and would not want to go elsewhere. They appreciate that the school has prepared them well to move on to the next stage of their education. If there are any problems with behaviour at break or lunchtime, the teachers deal with them quickly and sympathetically.

16. Younger pupils also indicate that they like coming to school where it is easy to make friends. They regard their teachers as helpful and kind. Homework is not too much: 'mostly maths and literacy'. They appreciate the Children's Club before and after school because there are lots of toys and books and things to do. Parents, in the pre-inspection meeting and in response to the questionnaire also indicated that their children like coming to school, where they are well taught and supported.
17. Pupils' relationships with each other and their teachers are generally polite and respectful. In lessons, pupils are attentive and keen to learn and make progress. When asked to do so, they work satisfactorily together in pairs or groups. They concentrate and persevere well, particularly when the work is interesting and demands their full commitment. In a few lessons, where there is less challenge and variety of activities, some pupils become less involved and restless.
18. In discussion with individual pupils, they are courteous and eager to express their ideas and opinions. They appreciate the school's ethos and its commitment to their welfare. Their behaviour in class is generally good, especially when they are absorbed in their work, which frequently happens. This is a similar finding to the previous report. Around the school, behaviour is generally satisfactory, but there are areas for improvement. Some pupils move about the corridors with insufficient regard for others. Behaviour in the dining hall is noisy and too much is carelessly left on the floor after lunch. Pupils play together satisfactorily at break and lunchtimes. During the inspection no incidents of bullying or harassment were observed. Last year there were no exclusions from the school.
19. The level of attendance is in line with the national average. Over the last three years, there has been a small, but steady upward trend in attendance rates. Unauthorised absences are well below the national average. These attendance levels impact positively on pupils' attainment and progress. Staff can establish continuity in their lessons, and pupils gain from this in their learning by regular attendance.
20. Pupils enjoy coming to school. In general, they arrive promptly for lessons. In the event that pupils do arrive late, there is a minimum of disruption to lessons and the pupils get to their places with no fuss. Registration procedures are carried out efficiently and statutory requirements are being met.

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

21. The overall quality of the teaching in the school is satisfactory. During the inspection, 41 per cent of the lessons were good and 19 per cent were very good or better. Eleven per cent of the lessons were unsatisfactory and the remainder were satisfactory. There are significant variations in the quality of the teaching. At times, all teachers deliver good lessons and there is a significant proportion of very good teaching which motivates the pupils well. There is also, however, a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching, which generally results from inadequate planning which does not take into account the differing needs of pupils. The quality of the teaching in English is predominantly good, and in mathematics it is satisfactory. The teaching of science and music is good. In some year groups, for example in the Foundation Stage and in Year 3, the teaching is consistently good, and frequently very good. There has been little change in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Overall, the school has a group of teachers who are capable of teaching well, but are not always providing teaching of a consistently high quality.
22. The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is good. In a third of the lessons observed during the inspection, the teaching was very good or excellent. Both teaching and support staff provide children with high-quality learning experiences and their contribution has a very positive impact on the progress children make and the standards achieved. Although the Reception class teachers have only recent experience of working with this age group, they display an impressive awareness of individual children's needs. They make very effective use of support staff's expertise, and all staff manage the unpredictability of children adjusting to school life very well. Planning ensures balanced development in each of the six areas of learning. Teachers take account of children's ability in their planning so that work matches their needs. Activities are well structured, appropriate and interesting. Lessons include a rich variety of tasks; some develop

independence and others need adult support. Discussion during group-work is used very effectively to develop the literacy and numeracy skills of individual children.

23. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall and, as a result, the pupils make worthwhile gains in their learning. Pupils with special educational needs are accurately identified following entry to the school. The teachers and the coordinator for special educational needs note concerns after initial assessments have been undertaken, and they monitor the pupils' progress carefully. There is good liaison between the teachers and the special educational needs coordinator. The pupils are well supported by teachers within the classrooms, and teachers regularly plan tasks suited to their needs. Teachers are consistent in their caring support. Additional help from the coordinator for special educational needs is provided for literacy and numeracy in Key Stage 2, so that tasks are closely related to work being done by the rest of the class or to pupils' individual education plans. This ensures that pupils take a full part in class lessons. However, although this provides sound learning opportunities during group-work, the support provided when the whole class is being taught together is not consistently useful or an efficient use of the coordinator's time.
24. Overall, the teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subjects of the National Curriculum is good. In English, for example, teachers at Key Stage 2 successfully help pupils to develop their writing skills during lessons devoted to extended writing. Music is now taught by a specialist teacher, whose expertise and enthusiasm have had a significant impact on pupils' progress in this subject. In science, good subject knowledge contributes to carefully planned and well-organised lessons, which give appropriate pre-eminence to investigative work. In some subjects, staff teach their preferred subjects to both classes in the year group, thus making more effective use of their expertise. Although there is a need for further improvement, most teachers have significantly improved their own competence in information and communication technology. As a result, the teaching of this subject has improved since the last inspection.
25. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy within other subjects is good. In history, for example, pupils are given appropriate written tasks and encouraged to use interesting and varied vocabulary. The development of independent writing is a particularly good feature in science, as pupils produce written accounts of their investigative work. Numeracy skills are also developed effectively in science, for example as pupils translate the results of an investigation into tables and charts. There is little effective development of information technology skills through work undertaken in other subjects.
26. The teachers' written planning is generally satisfactory. Some lessons are very well planned, with clear objectives, well-chosen resources and interesting activities which motivate the pupils. At times, however, when planning work for pupils to do on their own or in groups, not enough attention is given to pupils' differing needs, with the result that more able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. Occasionally, for example, all pupils are given the same worksheet. Although lesson plans indicate learning objectives, these are sometimes far too general and do not provide a clear enough focus for the lesson. Careful thought is given to the way work in art, design and technology can support learning in subjects like history, but similar fruitful contexts are not always found for skills work in information and communication technology.
27. Low expectations and slow pace are common factors in most of the least successful lessons. In the occasional English lesson, for example, pupils are given tasks which are uninteresting. In consequence, pupils' efforts slacken, their learning slows and they become restless. In one of the science lessons observed, the follow-up work was not only uninspiring and unchallenging, but pupils showed no urgency in completing the task, and were not kept to the task by the teacher. Appropriate extension work is rarely provided for those pupils who understand what is being taught and finish their work quickly. Some pupils comment, therefore, that they find the work too easy. The unsatisfactory behaviour observed in a small number of lessons was generally directly linked to the lack of challenge in the work given to the pupils. In a few lessons, the teacher also appeared to be unaware of the high noise level and the amount of unnecessary chatter which was not directly related to pupils' work. In contrast, in the better lessons the teachers provide not only a good variety of interesting activities, but ensure that the pupils work hard and use their time productively. In music, for example, the teacher's high expectations, clear direction, pace and



vigour motivate and challenge the pupils and result in high standards of performance. The best science lessons are conducted at a brisk pace which ensures that pupils stay involved, interested and challenged. In other lessons, there is a purposeful buzz of activity, with pupils fully absorbed in what they are doing and with a very clear understanding of what they are expected to accomplish and how long they have in which to do it. In a design and technology lesson in Year 3, for example, the pupils responded particularly well to time targets, concentrating fully in order to keep up with the pace of the lesson.

28. Most lessons are structured effectively but, in some lessons, not enough thought is given to the opening or closing parts of the lesson. Some mathematics lessons, for example, paid little attention to mental warm-up activities, whilst others finished abruptly without drawing together what pupils had learnt from the lesson. The organisation of pupils into ability sets for English and mathematics is generally a successful strategy, but some teachers fail to recognise that within their set there is still a wide range of differing needs and that providing the same work for all pupils is not always appropriate. Good examples were observed during the inspection of how teachers help pupils to deepen their understanding of what they are doing. In an information and communication technology lesson, for example, the teacher got pupils to think about how the skills they were learning could be applied to real-life situations and then to evaluate how effective their finished products were. Investigative activities are used well in science to motivate the pupils, but also as a means of teaching important scientific principles. In the best lessons, the teachers give very careful thought to the resources they use. Teachers provide good sources of information and artefacts in history, which give pupils ample opportunities to find out and discover. In a mathematics lesson in Year 3, for example, pupils spent their lesson in the 'toyshop' and had to work hard at spending given amounts of money, working out what they could buy and how much change they would receive. Some of the worksheets used by teachers, however, are unimaginative, unchallenging and unhelpful. Support staff are an important resource in many lessons. When they are able to interact with pupils when they are doing individual or group-work, the pupils make good progress. However, their time is rarely used to good effect during whole-class sessions.
29. Some good examples were observed during the inspection of the way teachers altered their planning to deal with problems pupils had encountered earlier in the week. In a good mathematics lesson in Year 6, for example, the teacher helped pupils to make progress by dealing with problems which had surfaced when their work was marked. However, there are inconsistencies in the way pupils' work is marked. Many teachers mark pupils' work carefully, providing constructive comments and suggestions. Sometimes, however, marking lacks rigour; there are too many uncorrected errors and insufficient feedback is given to pupils to show them how they might improve their work or to set targets for future improvement.
30. A small amount of parental concern was expressed about the amount and consistency of homework set. Generally, however, parents are satisfied with the amount of work their children are expected to do at home. The use of homework throughout the school is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. The work set by teachers helps pupils to consolidate what is learnt in lessons.
31. The quality of learning throughout the school is directly linked to the quality of the teaching. In lessons which are well prepared and which provide pupils with interesting activities, the pupils respond positively and make good progress. Pupils in Year 2, for example, talked excitedly about their previous work on Matisse. In Year 4, pupils are curious about past lives and events as they consider different aspects of Tudor times and enjoy role-play activities in costume. Purposeful and effective strategies in music, combined with an element of fun, contributed positively to pupils' learning and lead to the good development of musical skills and knowledge. Most pupils enjoy numeracy lessons and show good levels of concentration. They are keen to learn and participate enthusiastically in class discussions. They settle quickly to independent or group work and cooperate and support each other when working on group problem-solving exercises. They show care when recording scientific investigations. In lessons which fail to interest them or in which the work is too easy, the quality of learning deteriorates and little progress is made. Overall, the quality of learning is satisfactory, although there are many occasions on which it is good.

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

32. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum of satisfactory quality in Key Stages 1 and 2. The range of learning opportunities is wide enough to support pupils' academic and personal development. The school has recently produced draft schemes for most foundation subjects, consulting the local and government advice available, taking into account the needs and interests of the pupils and existing resources. Appropriate time is allocated to ensure that all elements of the National Curriculum are covered. This has been achieved effectively by developing clear links between subjects such as history and geography, art and design and technology, as well as interlinking aspects of the topic work into the core curriculum and beyond. For example, pupils have good opportunities to develop extended writing skills in pieces about settling in Britain as a Viking invader, or developing speaking and listening skills effectively when discussing Tudor clothing.
33. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is well developed, broad and balanced and matched to the six areas of learning appropriate to this age group. They are provided with a rich variety of activities that sustain interest and promote learning, for example in developing their language and communication skills, children may be asked to describe an article of clothing, role-play different people at a fancy dress party or discuss waterproofing material. They also have appropriate opportunities to select, explore and investigate independently in a variety of settings. However, a shortage of large play equipment limits pupils' development in this area of their learning.
34. The school has developed effective strategies for teaching literacy. Pupils have appropriate opportunities to study different types of texts and to work on spelling, punctuation and grammar, as well as speaking and listening in a wide range of settings, including physical education. Most teachers use the structure recommended in the National Literacy Strategy well and offer pupils good additional opportunities for extended periods of writing, which are proving very effective. However, the picture is not so clear in numeracy, where a few teachers do not always use the national, recommended structure, omitting important sections like mental warm-ups or evaluative finishing sessions. There are also deficiencies in the curriculum for information and communication technology, where insufficient opportunities have been provided for some elements of learning and especially for pupils to use computers to control events and external equipment. The limited number of computers also hampers opportunities for pupils to learn through technology in the wider curriculum.
35. The governors have an effective equal opportunities policy, and the curriculum is fully inclusive. Each aspect of the school's life is accessible to everyone, including provision for extra-curricular activities. Since the last inspection, the governors have taken steps to improve their involvement in the curriculum of the school and now have regular reports from coordinators about the various subject areas. However, they are fully aware that they have not yet come to terms with monitoring the curriculum in any depth.
36. Provision for personal, social and health education is satisfactory. The governing body has approved an appropriate policy for sex education, which includes involvement by parents if they wish. Parents are happy with the school's arrangements and seldom need to consult the school. There are adequate opportunities in music, physical education and science lessons, for instance, for pupils to develop their awareness of healthy eating and developing a healthy body. Moral and social issues are suitably addressed during personal and social education sessions and circle time. These issues are also interwoven with their understanding of the Catholic faith. The pupils' personal development is also fostered through educational visits linked with the curriculum, such as visits to museums, and opportunities to develop an awareness of citizenship, for instance by visiting the Mayoral Parlour. Some older pupils also have the opportunity to be a prefect. This entails them helping younger pupils in Key Stage 1 in the dining hall and the playground. Those chosen as prefects take their responsibilities seriously and say they enjoy their contacts with the younger pupils.
37. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. These pupils have full access to the curriculum. The work provided for them is closely related to that provided for the rest of the

class. The pupils in Key Stage 2 who are judged to be in need of the greatest support are given this during literacy and numeracy lessons. This allows good access to the curriculum, and is particularly positive during group-work sessions when they also receive additional support. The school conforms fully to the Code of Practice, with appropriate procedures for the identification and assessment of special educational needs from the time children enter the Reception classes and throughout the school. Individual education plans identify specific targets and success criteria, and are regularly monitored and updated. Targets and support for pupils with statements of educational needs, particularly those with behavioural and physical difficulties, are effective.

38. There is a good range of quality extra-curricular activities for the pupils. The main activities are French Club, choir, chess, scrabble, recorders, and football for both boys and girls. These activities are not just restricted to the older pupils or purely sport related. For pupils in the upper part of the school, there is the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument. Clarinet, flute and violin lessons are taught by peripatetic teachers at lunch-time or after school. The school also provides a Children's Club for pupils of all ages. This is a facility that is much welcomed by parents since it allows them the flexibility of leaving their children at the school in the early morning and late evening. The events at the Children's Club are well organised and allow the pupils to develop their social interaction skills. During the inspection, for example, an older pupil was assisting a much younger pupil with poor eyesight when outside in the play area. There is a strong family atmosphere at the Club. Many pupils take advantage of this facility.
39. The good range of educational visits has a positive impact on pupils' learning. For example, pupils in Year 4 visited Ford Green Hall when they were learning about houses built in Tudor times. This enabled them to gain first-hand experience of the construction and type of materials used during this period. Having done this initial research and investigation, they were then able to apply this in their design and technology lesson in making a cardboard model to show specific features. Another example followed a visit to the Lord Mayor's Parlour. During a literacy lesson examining text about 'Sing a song of sixpence', pupils in Year 6 were able to understand more clearly the section when the 'King was in his parlour...' These, and many other educational visits, enrich the learning of the curriculum for all pupils. The Reception class go on short trips which allow them to have a new dimension on life. Numerous visitors come to the school and, during the inspection week, a blind person, accompanied by his guide dog, came to give a talk to the younger pupils.
40. There are strong links with the wider community. Students from Newcastle College assist with Sport's Day. The choir sings at the Roebuck Centre each year, and senior citizens are invited to the school for the Christmas Concert. Links with local businesses and industry are slowly developing. Some organisations provide the school with much-needed paper off-cuts and other such resources. The links with local high schools are good. For example, there is good liaison with St John Fisher High School on curricular matters. Pupils making the transfer benefit greatly from this overlap. During June, all pupils in Year 6 visit their selected high school and receive a full day's teaching to a pre-determined timetable. The school receives information on the performance of past pupils, and this allows them to make judgements on pupils' preparedness when transferring from St Mary's. Pupils from St Mary's tend to settle in very well at high school which is a reflection on how well prepared the pupils are for the outside world.
41. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is sound in each element. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is heavily underpinned by the school's Catholic ethos and teaching. Daily prayers and the regular assemblies provide pupils with opportunities to reflect on religious and spiritual issues. Often, class prayers focus on a particular person or theme for intercession. During the inspection, the whole-school assembly was conducted by the pastor of the local Pentecostal Church, a good example of ecumenism.
42. The promotion of pupils' spiritual awareness through the curriculum is less secure. Opportunities to develop pupils' response to the wonder of the world around them are taken in some lessons, but are insufficiently highlighted in teachers' planning. Pupils are given limited exposure to the work of great artists and musicians. Examples of the work of great artists do not feature in displays around the school or in the hall.

43. Pupils have a clear sense of the difference between right and wrong behaviour and relationships. This is strongly reinforced by prayers and assemblies. Pupils are aware of the school's high expectations of their behaviour. Teachers provide good role models in promoting harmonious relationships and a caring atmosphere within the school. Class rules are clearly understood, and pupils are challenged to consider the effect of unsatisfactory behaviour on others. Examples of good behaviour are recognised by house points, and there are appropriate sanctions, with parental involvement where necessary, for unacceptable behaviour. Wider moral issues such as poverty and injustice are addressed through the school's support of charities, such as Catholic Aid for Overseas Development, the Potteries Housing Association and Blue Peter appeals. Care for the local environment has involved pupils in tree-planting in the school neighbourhood.
44. The school's ethos ensures that it is a socially inclusive community. Pupils are encouraged to help each other. In lessons, they readily share books and materials and usually cooperate satisfactorily when working in groups. Older pupils act as table monitors in the dining room and help younger pupils in the playground. There is a good programme to develop awareness of citizenship for pupils in Year 6. This comprises a wide range of visits from the police, a magistrate, the Mayor and charity workers. Pupils' social skills and interaction are fostered through the school's provision of a good range of musical, sporting and other after-school clubs. For all classes, there are regular excursions and visits, most recently to the Civic Centre by pupils in Year 6. There is an annual outdoor activity residential course for these pupils.
45. The school raises pupils' awareness of their own cultural heritage through its close links with the Catholic Church and community. Visits to places of local cultural interest have included Chester, Brompton Museum and Ford Green Hall. Pupils' participation in local cultural events has included the art competition 'Britain in Bloom', the schools' recorder festival and the membership of some pupils in Newcastle Children's Choir. Multi-cultural education through the curriculum is under-developed. Pupils have insufficient experience of non-western art or literature, for example. However, pupils study other religious traditions such as Islam. A good programme of visitors to the school, from a variety of European, African and Asian countries, is planned for next term.

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

46. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained the high level of attention it pays to pupils' care and welfare. This is a caring school and it provides a safe and secure environment in which the pupils can learn.
47. Health and safety are given high priority in every aspect of life at school, both for pupils and for members of staff. The governing body is actively involved in ensuring that the requirements of health and safety are suitably addressed. This is reflected in a detailed and well-prepared health and safety policy. A good example of this is in the control of prescribed medication where the policy clearly defines the parental responsibility of pupils requiring medication. The exception to this, of course, is the use and handling of inhalers for asthma sufferers. Staff are very thorough in ensuring that asthma-suffering pupils, about to participate in physical education lessons, have their inhalers readily available. Staff are very sensitive towards the physical needs and well-being of their pupils.
48. Although risk assessments are not formally implemented in line with the local education authority's requirements, members of the premises committee, headteacher and caretaker have carried out some initial assessments. Identified risks have been dealt with and high priority given for their resolution. The caretaker keeps records of health and safety related work required around the school and actions them appropriately.
49. Fire drills are carried out sensibly, and all fire exits are very clearly marked. The school is well designed for full evacuation in the case of emergencies. The corridors are quite wide and it is very easy for people to move around. The fire exits are well placed to allow pupils to get into the grounds reasonably quickly. Although the junior hall can get quite congested at times when meals are served, three emergency exits are easily accessible.

50. Arrangements for dealing with accidents are adequate. Two qualified first-aiders are available at all times. Pupils are very well supervised at lunchtimes and playtimes. Accidents of a serious nature are suitably recorded. Other less serious incidents are not always recorded, but the first-aiders evaluate all incidents and make judgements as to whether to inform parents. The school practises the requirement of notifying parents whenever their children receive injuries to the head. There are good systems for reporting dangerous occurrences to outside agencies.
51. Child protection procedures are good and well implemented. The headteacher is the designated person for child protection issues and has received sufficient training on the subject. There is also good support from the special educational needs coordinator who attends case studies when needed. The staff are aware of the need to look for signs of physical abuse and listen to pupils who are experiencing some form of abuse.
52. The systems for monitoring and promoting good attendance are good. Over the last three years, there has been a slight upward trend in attendance levels as a result of good follow-up procedures taken by the school in investigating pupils' absences. Parents are sent a form informing them of their child's absence and are asked for a written explanation of the absence. Failure to provide such evidence results in an unauthorised absence being recorded. The school has reported no unauthorised absences, which indicates that follow-up procedures are having an impact on attendance levels. The marking of registers is particularly good. The registers are neatly presented and attendance statistics are completed regularly. The records allow trends to be readily identified. The educational welfare officer does not have to visit the school on a regular basis and pays the occasional visit to review any concerns that the school may have since the last visit.
53. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are satisfactory. No oppressive behaviour was seen during the inspection. Procedures for dealing with such matters are satisfactory. Discussions are held between the two parties involved to deal with the matter so that each pupil can reflect on their actions and the impact these are having on each other. The personal, social and health education programme is well established, and pupils use opportunities during 'circle time'<sup>4</sup> to discuss incidents occurring in the playground.
54. The systems in place to control and manage pupils' behaviour are implemented adequately, although at times inconsistently. House points are awarded for good behaviour, and sanctions applied against pupils who fail to follow the expected code of conduct. Class rules are displayed in some classrooms, but do not appear to have a direct impact on the behaviour of some pupils. Sometimes individual staff members utilise their own control measures, and these are not always effective. The systems for recording inappropriate behaviour are satisfactory, but the behavioural patterns of pupils with special educational needs are very closely monitored and recorded.
55. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are satisfactory. Each week, assemblies are held where individual pupils are awarded a certificate for the progress made in certain areas of their work. These awards are shared and acknowledged by the rest of the pupils.
56. The school does its utmost to provide pupils with special educational needs with the education they require. The special educational needs coordinator has well-organised procedures for record-keeping and assessment, and other professionals have good input into the assessment and reviews of pupils with special educational needs. Pupils' progress is monitored carefully and assessments are used to identify weaknesses. Parents are kept fully informed and are involved in reviews, which are also discussed with the pupils. Pupils are carefully supported within the classes, and the support and guidance given by the teachers is good. There is a positive, caring ethos. Support staff and the coordinator for special educational needs also provide extra support time within the classroom. However, this time is not used consistently to the best effect. During the times when the whole class is taught together during literacy and numeracy, there are too few

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<sup>4</sup> *Circle time is an activity where pupils are able to discuss certain matters as a class, following strict rules about listening to others and taking turns to speak*

opportunities to provide positive beneficial support to the advantage of the pupils, and this is a weakness. The use of the coordinator's time in this way is at present being trialled, so that its usefulness can be evaluated.

57. Overall, procedures for the assessment of pupils' academic performance are adequate. The school, as a whole, collects a great deal of information and knows how well its pupils have achieved in general terms. Since the time of the last inspection, the school has appointed an assessment coordinator. Recently, another member of staff, who has undergone some training, has taken up this role. Improvements to the systems have taken place since the previous report, and the process is now more continuous across both key stages. However, there are inconsistencies in the amount and range of what is collected and in the form in which it is passed through the school. This hinders an effective assessment of the needs of pupils in the long term. Assessment procedures for children in the Foundation Stage work effectively. The teachers know their children well, and they keep detailed records of attainment, which they use well to plan carefully for their teaching groups.
58. The use the school derives from its assessment procedures is unsatisfactory. Despite the amount of information collected, it is not analysed sufficiently. At present, there is no systematic tracking structure to help the school monitor pupils of different abilities or to highlight particular weaknesses in performance, in order to raise standards. This means that the school cannot set realistic targets for improvement, either of particular skills or for gender differences or for boosting the attainment levels of the more able pupils. Where pieces of work have been saved for assessment purposes, they have sometimes been given a level of attainment and annotated with ideas for future development, but this is not a systematic process and is not done as a corporate judgment by the whole staff, working together to arrive at a consensus of opinion. Subject and assessment coordinators do not yet cross-reference or analyse their work sufficiently.
59. Some teachers in both key stages make a judgment at the end of a sequence of lessons, rather than an on-going series of decisions, which would enable them to focus the work more effectively. Because so much information is gathered but not put to good use, it does not help teachers with planning for the next step in their teaching and learning. Instead of keeping tick-lists, for example, of what has been covered, the new coordinator has recently introduced the idea of recording the achievement of pupils who are doing well, or who are having problems with a particular concept, in order to address their needs immediately in the next lessons. This kind of close scrutiny of their work allows the more successful teachers to be more flexible and focused in their teaching and to match the pace of lessons more closely to the pace of learning. This has a very positive effect on behaviour in lessons, especially where problems have previously occurred because pupils are insufficiently challenged, no matter what their level of ability.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

60. Parents have positive views of the school. Parents like the fact that their children are being well prepared socially and academically for the wider world. They feel the staff are fair and helpful, and the school provides a good education. The school is a warm and welcoming place, which provides their children with a safe and secure environment in which to learn. Parents who attended the parents' meeting were also pleased with the way they are welcomed in the school and the information which the school provides about their children's progress. However, different views were expressed in writing by a significant number of parents who felt that the school does not always communicate well with them. They would like to be better informed about their children's progress and have more opportunities to talk informally to their children's teachers. The current security arrangements make it difficult for them to speak to individual teachers.
61. Overall, however, the school's partnership with parents is good. The school has been able to maintain the high level of involvement and support of parents since the last inspection. The home-school agreement appears to be working well. There is a genuine, fruitful partnership emerging. Parents are committed to providing much-needed funds raised through activities organised by the Parent Teacher Association and to provide help around the school when needed. There are clearly defined guidelines to assist parents willing to help in specific areas and teachers take the time to brief the helpers before lessons start. The contribution made by parent helpers is valuable

and the parental partnership is having a direct impact on standards and the quality of education provided.

62. The quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory. The school issues a monthly newsletter which provides parents with details of the topics being carried out each term and other news of interest. The school prospectus and the annual report from governors are well presented and provide a good insight into the school. The reports to parents about their children's progress, however, could be improved. More details could be given of where, or how, pupils could improve, by defining targets in which parents could assist, instead of reiterating what pupils have done during the academic year. Parents' notice-boards and the scheduling of some of the parents' meetings could be improved in order to convey more information to parents. The design and arrangement of the school's reception area, between the headteacher's office and the school office, is unwelcoming and makes it difficult for parents to have informal meetings with teachers. However, the arrangements do ensure better security for the school as a whole. The concerns of some parents about the way the school communicates with them have been noted by the school.
63. Information relating to pupils with special educational needs is always carefully reviewed with parents at strategic times, and the coordination between school and parents is normally good. Although there are pupils from a number of different cultural backgrounds, there do not appear to be any communication problems with parents whose children have English as an additional language.

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

64. The school has been through a period of change and some uncertainty since its last inspection. The previous headteacher, who had provided strong leadership for the school, recently resigned because of ill health, and from September 1999 until April 2000 the school was led by an acting headteacher. The present headteacher assumed her responsibilities in May of this year, since which time one of the school's deputy headteachers has been seconded to another school. The new headteacher has a perceptive vision of how she wishes the school to develop. She provides clear, strong leadership and deals sensitively with both staff and pupils. Her analysis of the school shows that she has a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The current senior management structure needs to be broadened in order to represent all areas of the school effectively and provide an effective means of support for the headteacher. Subject coordinators have become more active in managing their subject areas, and have tackled various aspects of their role successfully. However, they do not yet have a clear understanding of the standards pupils are achieving in their subject or what the quality of teaching is like, which makes it difficult for them to provide really effective leadership.
65. The school has a well-established governing body, which contains a number of long-serving members. The governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities and show a strong commitment towards the school. The chair devotes a considerable amount of time to the affairs of the school and provides good support for the headteacher. Communication between the headteacher and chair is effective. The governors are aware of the school's priorities through the school's development plan, but rely upon the headteacher and senior staff to establish and monitor them. The leadership provided by the governing body is satisfactory, but for it to be more effective the governors need to develop a clearer understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through their own monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of school life.
66. Effective systems for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, involving the headteacher, deputy head and literacy coordinator, have only recently been introduced and have not yet had a significant impact on eliminating unsatisfactory teaching. The headteacher recognises the need for the monitoring process to be more effective through rigorous and focused lesson observation and through greater involvement of subject coordinators. Currently, coordinators do not have a clear enough overview of the quality of teaching or the standards achieved in their subjects.
67. Procedures for data analysis, target setting and tracking pupils' progress are in their infancy. Recent analysis of pupils' attainment on entry is comprehensive and forms a secure foundation for predicting levels of attainment pupils should achieve at the end of Key Stage 1. Other data-

management initiatives are embryonic and require further refinement before their impact can be assessed.

68. Members of the governing body have undertaken training in preparation for the implementation of procedures to appraise the headteacher's performance, but they have not yet appointed a performance-management consultant. Several teachers have also attended threshold training, and a performance management day for staff has been organised in the near future. Although target-setting has yet to be implemented, the school is well placed to fulfil its staff performance management role effectively.
69. Staff training needs are linked to the priorities of the school development plan and individual needs. Arrangements for the induction of newly qualified teachers are satisfactory and follow the local authority's guidelines. Formal and informal discussions take place with an appointed mentor within the school, and time is allocated away from the class for preparation. Arrangements for other staff new to the school are less secure. Although temporary staff receive information about school routines and adhere to teachers' planning whenever possible, they do not always have sufficient guidance about the appropriateness of the work they have planned, what pupils have previously been taught or the capabilities of individual pupils.
70. Before the appointment of the new headteacher, the school had undergone a period of change. The current situation is more stable and has encouraged the return of a corporate commitment to improvement. Under its new leadership and the shared sense of purpose that is developing, the school has the capacity to make further improvements.
71. The headteacher and governors work closely together in order to ensure that the financial resources available to the school are used efficiently and effectively. The finance committee meets regularly and monitors the school's expenditure. They make recommendations to the governing body and confirm the priorities in the school development plan. The governors' priority is to maintain the number of teaching staff and classroom assistants to support pupils with special educational needs at levels which are above the national average. Resources are made available to support the national initiatives in literacy and numeracy and are satisfactory in all areas except for information and communication technology.
72. The governors are fully informed by the headteacher of what is being done in the school, and are aware of how standards compare with the national average and with those of similar schools. Governors are aware of the need to obtain value for money, and have sound procedures for ensuring that the best financial value is obtained when purchasing products or services. The headteacher consults regularly with members of senior management and staff, so that priorities are carefully established. Opportunities for consultation with parents are more limited. Overall, the school's procedures provide for careful consideration and a satisfactory awareness of the principles of best value.
73. The school has a sufficient number of qualified and suitably experienced teachers. Teachers are suitably deployed, enabling the curriculum to be taught effectively. There was felt to be no justification in the concerns of a number of parents about the job-sharing arrangements in some classes. The teachers liaise with each other well and have effective systems for sharing their plans. The teachers receive a good level of additional help from learning support assistants who fulfil their roles effectively and have a positive impact on pupils' progress. Administrative staff fulfil their roles efficiently and contribute to the smooth running of the school. The school caretaker and his staff ensure that the school is kept clean, thus contributing to an appropriate learning environment for the pupils.
74. The school's accommodation is good and well maintained. Wide corridors give an air of spaciousness and also provide additional space for teaching small groups of pupils. The two halls provide good facilities for physical education, as do the surfaced playground areas. The school's chapel is valued as an area in which the religious aims of the school can be fostered. An upstairs room has been refurbished as an information technology suite. Whilst this provides a much-needed additional resource, the room is far from ideal for teaching a class of 30 pupils, and the cramped conditions and poor ventilation affect the pupils' ability to concentrate. Accommodation



for the youngest children is adequate. There is a small, secure play area but no large play equipment for these children.

75. The school is adequately resourced for all areas of the curriculum except information and communication technology. With the establishment of the information technology suite, most of the computers have been moved from classrooms. This means that pupils do not have computers immediately available for them to consolidate their skills or for regular use as a tool for learning. Additional funding is shortly to be made available to the school, which should rectify this lack of resources. Further investment, however, is necessary in order to teach some aspects of the information and communication technology curriculum, such as control technology and effective use of the Internet. In some subjects, such as history, a good range of artefacts prove to be an effective stimulus to learning. The school has an adequately stocked library which is well housed in its own room.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

76. In order to improve the quality of education provided and the standards pupils achieve, the governors, headteacher and staff should work together to:

- ❑ Improve the consistency of the teaching throughout the school in order to eradicate unsatisfactory lessons. Particular attention should be given to:
  - The quality and appropriateness of teachers' planning (*paragraphs 21, 26, 109*)
  - The challenge provided for more able pupils (*paragraphs 1, 5, 14, 17, 26, 27, 91, 92, 93, 101, 116, 118, 119, 122*)
  - The way teachers use assessments to inform their planning (*paragraphs 28, 100, 109, 118, 120, 147*)
  - The pace at which some lessons are conducted (*paragraphs 27, 109, 111, 118, 122, 141, 147*)
  - The quality and usefulness of teachers' marking (*paragraphs 29, 102, 112, 119, 135, 141*)
  
- ❑ Improve various aspects of leadership. Particular attention should be given to:
  - The leadership provided by subjects coordinators (*paragraphs 64, 66, 120, 135, 148*)
  - Regular monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in each subject (*paragraphs 35, 66, 113, 120, 125, 135, 141*)
  - Governors' understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses (*paragraph 65*)
  - The way assessments are used to track pupils' progress (*paragraphs 58, 59, 67, 101, 131, 135*)
  
- ❑ Improve standards of attainment in information and communication technology. Particular attention should be given to:
  - Improving teachers' personal knowledge and understanding of the subject
  - Ensuring that the school is properly equipped to teach the subject
  - The way the subject is planned to meet the differing needs of pupils
  - The use of information and communication technology as a tool for learning across the curriculum  
*(paragraphs 6, 10, 24, 25, 34, 71, 75, 111, 119, 123, 138, 142, 148)*

*In addition, the following areas for improvement should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:*

- using the time of support staff more efficiently; (*paragraphs 23, 28, 56*)
- improving the range of multi-cultural experiences offered to pupils; (*paragraph 45*)
- providing better external play facilities and equipment for children in the Foundation Stage; (*paragraphs 33, 74*)
- improving behaviour in the dining hall; (*paragraphs 18, 130*)
- meeting parents' requests for better communication, (*paragraph 62*).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed

88

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

54

[In addition to this figure, there were many informal discussions with staff, other adults and pupils]

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection <sup>5</sup>

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	18	41	28	11	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

YR – Y6

Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)

381

Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals

49

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

Special educational needs

YR – Y6

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs

6

Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register

39

English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language

3

Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission

14

Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving

10

### Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.9
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

<sup>5</sup> Because of rounding, percentages may not add up to 100.

### 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	28	27	55

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	28	27	28
	Girls	26	27	27
	Total	54	54	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	98 (96)	98 (96)	100 (96)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	28	27	28
	Girls	26	26	27
	Total	54	53	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	98 (96)	96 (98)	100 (98)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	23	40	63

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	17	17	22
	Girls	34	29	36
	Total	51	46	58
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81 (68)	73 (66)	92 (94)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	17	22
	Girls	32	30	36
	Total	48	47	58
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	76 (72)	75 (58)	92 (77)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	374
Any other minority ethnic group	1

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### ***Teachers and classes***

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.1
Average class size	27.2

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	133

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

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

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

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	632,064
Total expenditure	636,724
Expenditure per pupil	1,608
Balance brought forward from previous year	55,370
Balance carried forward to next year	50,710

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	440
Number of questionnaires returned	249
Percentage of questionnaires returned	57

Percentage of responses in each category<sup>6</sup>

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school	61	35	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school	48	43	2	1	6
Behaviour in the school is good	51	41	1	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home	38	42	12	2	6
The teaching is good	56	36	0	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on	34	40	19	4	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem	56	33	8	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best	68	28	1	0	3
The school works closely with parents	35	43	17	2	2
The school is well led and managed	42	38	5	0	14
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible	51	41	5	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons	30	40	13	4	13

### Other issues raised by parents

Around 20 parents wrote in with comments about shortcomings in the way the school communicates with parents. Some feel the school is not open enough in its approach to parents, others that homework books are not used effectively. Some feel they are not given enough information on their children's progress and how they can support them at home. Although most teachers are approachable, a few do not encourage pupils enough when they are experiencing difficulties and sometimes dismiss their suggestions and ideas. The current security arrangements make it difficult for parents to speak to individual teachers.

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<sup>6</sup> Because of rounding, percentages may not add up to 100.

## **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**

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

77. The personal, social and emotional development of children in the Reception classes is good. Most children are on course to reach or exceed the Early Learning Goals by the time they move into Year 1. Some enter the school with well-developed skills. They are confident in whole-class discussions and enjoy working on their own or in a group. Others are less secure. They do not like new situations and need constant reassurance when trying activities for the first time. Nearly all pupils are very well behaved, lively and enthusiastic. Most choose to work in a group, enjoy the humour of each other's responses and display very high levels of concentration, particularly when tasks are exciting and interesting. A few still prefer to work on isolated activities. Children make good progress because they cooperate well, wait their turn and demonstrate a good level of independence as they move between various activities and use the computer.
78. The quality of teaching in this area of learning is good. In both classes, teachers and support staff provide very good role models. Relationships are strong, and most children are totally at ease with both adults and other children. They make good progress in the vast majority of lessons, mainly through good quality teaching, but partly because they want to do their best and they feel secure. Routines are already well established. In a very good physical education lesson, all staff were totally involved and children tried hard to dress and undress themselves, many with impressive speed. Children are encouraged to try new activities, they giggle excitedly as they move around the hall, they respond immediately to instructions, and they show genuine appreciation of each other's work. There is a feeling of mutual respect, and children are already aware that they belong to a caring school community.

#### *Communication, language and literacy*

79. Children enter the Reception classes with average levels of linguistic development. They make good progress and develop skills effectively. Most children achieve or exceed the standards outlined in the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage. They enjoy listening to stories, songs and poems and join in very well. They listen carefully to each other and ask sensible questions as they discuss. For example, when talking about the clothes different people wear and how they work, one child asked another, 'did you see what the fireman did next?' They also use language well for thinking, organising their thoughts and adding ideas to those of others.
80. In early reading situations, they demonstrate a growing awareness of letters and sounds; for example they name the letter 'p', say its sound, and give words that start with it. One child said, 'You could be Postman Pat', when the teacher mimed the occupation. Most children speak quite clearly and in sentences, although some have poor articulation. In an activity which involved 'working in a post office', some children demonstrated they could hold a pencil effectively, making recognisable letters, many of which were correctly formed. One child decided to write a letter to the inspector and used the name badge to copy-write very legibly. The letter was stamped and 'posted' and the children enjoyed their activity, which also added to their confidence and self-esteem.
81. Through very well structured activities, teachers encourage children to be independent and to consider for themselves. They use language well for practical purposes, such as negotiating and taking turns, for example, when they wanted to use the iron or the washing machine in the laundry area. This is also the case when they cooperate when dressing up. They allowed each other to choose, even when someone chose what they wanted. They talked excitedly and made another choice. Such mature attitudes are developed at an early stage through very carefully constructed activities. There is a strong emphasis on the development of free expression and interaction through role-play to allow the children to develop their communication skills. Children also develop appropriate scientific language when they consider waterproofing materials, for example. They

predicted what would let water through and they got very excited when the water was poured onto material placed over their heads, gasping when it did not go through just as they had predicted. A very good discussion followed which proved they had understood their investigation well.

### *Mathematical development*

82. Most children enter the Reception year with average levels of mathematical understanding. They make good progress and most achieve the Early Learning Goals by the time they start Year 1. At the beginning of the Reception year, although many children are familiar with shapes, such as circles and squares, some do not understand mathematical language well. In discussion, one child talks about the green snake being 'more longer' than the blue. About half the children understand long and short, but most have more difficulty with understanding tall and short. One child tells his teacher she is 'longer than him'. Children working on the computer are confident with 'nine nurses knitting', but they are certain that one less would be ten. Most know numbers to ten; some work confidently with much larger numbers and all display a real interest in mathematics.
83. The quality of teaching is consistently good. A rich variety of interesting activities, very appropriate to individual needs, ensures good mathematical development. Both teaching and support staff know the children well and pay careful attention to promoting good speaking and listening skills in class and group work. In all lessons, teachers use mathematical language well and give clear, concise instructions. In response, children listen carefully, know exactly what they have to do and go straight to their activities. The warm-up sessions at the beginning of lessons are particularly effective, and teachers make very good use of a wide variety of resources to stimulate and motivate children. They establish a secure grounding in basic numeracy skills. In one lesson, the classroom was a hive of activity. Clothes were to be sorted by size and colour, socks were sorted into pairs in preparation for using the washing machine, and objects had been hidden in the sand for children to match. Every activity provided a good quality learning experience. Children at various stages of development enjoy the variety and challenge, make good progress and remain totally engrossed in their work throughout the whole lesson.

### *Knowledge and understanding of the world*

84. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world are developing well. They talk with understanding about a variety of situations, for example the jobs people do and why they wear particular clothes. They also have very good opportunities to discuss themselves and their families. Opportunities are also provided for pupils to explore textures, shapes and sounds. In one class, a child independently investigated the musical instruments and classified them into the noises they made, choosing a favourite to play again at the end. The water tray was filled with soapsuds and children delighted in using their sense of touch, squeezing the foam through fingers, discussing what it felt like. There are very good opportunities to use a variety of tools and building techniques, and the children join, stick and cut with skill. One activity was well designed to help a pupil with special educational needs to feel the texture of dough and roll out a thin, flat shape in order to cut out a pair of pants from a pattern, linking with their topic on clothes. All the children took a delight in this one too. All the staff involved, support the children well in investigating and exploring with enough encouragement, but not too much direction, so that the children find out how to do things for themselves.
85. Appealing to the children's curiosity develops scientific ideas very well, as they investigate waterproof and non-waterproof materials. They predict and then investigate to try out their hypothesis, using language appropriately. They are excited and pleased when their predictions turn out to be correct. They have good opportunities to develop skills in technology when they use the tape recorder and headphones independently, and when they use computers successfully to play games and move around the screens with good mouse control.

### *Creative development*

86. Children are confident in this area of learning when they enter the Reception classes. They make good progress, particularly in the development of musical skills, and achieve or exceed the Early Learning Goals for creative development by the end of their Reception year. The children use their



imagination well. For example, they became heavily involved in the class laundry activity as they hurried to get the washing and ironing done. They discussed the colours of the clothes, felt the textures and tried a selection of clothes in preparation for the 'fancy dress party'. In music, most children remember a variety of songs, some with several verses, difficult words and accompanying actions. Not all are yet able to miss out words in the song with any great accuracy, when they attempt more challenging singing activities, but many already have a good understanding of the contrasts in music as they try to sing quietly and loudly.

87. The quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory. It is frequently good, particularly when the teacher has secure subject knowledge, the lesson is well balanced, and activities are very appropriate to the age group. For example, in a good music lesson, the teacher started the lesson very effectively with a vocal warm-up before moving on swiftly to a stimulating combination of songs. Some were unaccompanied to encourage good singing tone; others were accompanied by the guitar for extra interest. Not a minute was wasted and children were provided with a good quality learning experience that was fun. Children sing with great enthusiasm and one girl said 'I can't wait!' as she went into the hall for her lesson.

### *Physical development*

88. The children make good progress in their physical development. Many are in line to exceed the Early Learning Goals for physical development by the time they start Year 1. The quality of teaching in this area of learning is good. The children respond very well to their physical education lessons. They show initiative and work well together in pairs and small groups. They listen attentively to their teachers and use the apparatus correctly and sensitively. In one of the lessons observed, the children were eager to demonstrate a sequence of movements; they had remembered how to begin and end their performance and used space well. Many children already display good balancing skills.
89. The teachers help the children to become independent by encouraging them to get changed on their own. The children do so quickly and with minimal help. They understand the safety routines required when using the hall. Children have access to outdoor facilities for physical activities, but there is no specialised area and little indoor or outdoor equipment designed specifically for children of this age to develop their skills. This is a weakness in the school's provision for children's physical development.
90. Activities within the classroom are well planned to provide a good variety of activities which help the children to develop their manipulative skills. The children's ability to use a range of tools, objects, construction and malleable materials is improving steadily. They are learning how to use a mouse to control objects on a computer screen, and some do so very skilfully. Most children display increasing pencil control as they learn to form letters and words accurately.

## **ENGLISH**

91. In the National Curriculum tests in 2000, pupils' results at the end of Key Stage 1 were similar to the national average in reading and above average in writing. The percentage of pupils achieving the expected Level 2 in both reading and writing was above the national average. The number of those achieving the higher Level 3 was below average. Results have fluctuated considerably over the last four years, but are much lower in reading than they were at the time of the last inspection. Standards have been maintained in writing. The finding of the inspection is that pupils are achieving average standards in English at Key Stage 1 and that those pupils capable of attaining higher levels are not being stretched sufficiently to attain them.
92. In the National Curriculum tests in 2000 pupils' results at the end of Key Stage 2 were just above the national average. Four out of five pupils reached the expected Level 4. Almost a third achieved the higher Level 5. Although results in 1999 were below the national average, the school has generally maintained the standards seen at the time of the last inspection. However, because results have improved nationally, the school does not compare as well against other schools as it did. The findings of the inspection reflect these results. Most pupils achieve the expected

standards by the time they leave school, although some higher-attaining pupils do not achieve the standards of which they are capable.

93. Although pupils are currently making good progress in the Foundation Stage, pupils generally enter Key Stage 1 with average levels of literacy skills. They make sound progress overall at Key Stage 1. Their progress is satisfactory at Key Stage 2, although many pupils make good progress in writing. The well-taught weekly lessons devoted to extended writing have a significant impact on pupils' learning. Pupils of average and below-average attainment achieve well, but the school does not identify and challenge with sufficient rigour a significant number of pupils capable of higher attainment. The number of boys in lower-attaining groups and sets in Key Stage 2 is markedly higher than girls, but past results have not reflected this difference or the national trend of girls performing better than boys.
94. In Key Stage 1, pupils' standards of speaking and listening are usually high. For example, in a good lesson seen, pupils discussed, with interest, the structure of various poems. They noticed that verses in one poem begin in the same way and thoughtfully suggested alternative rhyming words. One pupil perceptively asked, 'Does a poem have to rhyme?' The level of discussion was good and promoted pupils' understanding and appreciation of poetry. Younger pupils quickly compiled lists of rhyming words stimulated by words from their 'Big Book' text. All pupils contributed quick-fire suggestions including 'nonsense' words. In a good development of their understanding of the text, they used its illustrations to produce a list of descriptive words such as 'gruff', 'scruffy', 'staring eyes'. Most pupils contribute well to discussion and respond eagerly to questioning. Interesting and attractive 'Big Books' stimulate pupils' imagination, hold their attention and motivate them to speak and listen well.
95. Pupils' good work in Key Stage 1 develops well through Key Stage 2. Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to extend their speaking and listening skills across the curriculum. For example, in one English lesson the pupils participated in a very good description of the characters in a play. One character 'used the Queen's English'; another behaved 'like a strict teacher'. One pupil of lower attainment gave a good account of the novel from which the play is derived. He knowledgeably described differences between the book and the play. In another lesson, pupils answered questions on events in their story text in good extended speech. They constructed arguments well, predicting how characters might behave in the future. In history, younger pupils held a good discussion about their recent visit to a Tudor Exhibition. Two pupils dressed in garments of the period. This stimulated animated and productive discussion on changes in clothing fastenings, and the difference in fabrics worn by wealthy and poor people.
96. Pupils' reading at Key Stage 1 is satisfactory and they make sound progress. At the end of the key stage, pupils of higher attainment read confidently and accurately. They observe punctuation well and read dialogue expressively. They use phonic skills well when reading unfamiliar words such as 'unaccustomed' and 'possessed'. The gap between pupils of average and lower attainment is narrow. This accounts for the high percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard in national testing. Their reading is accurate, if sometimes slow. Observance of punctuation and reading of dialogue is less secure, but pupils have a good range of word recognition. All pupils in the key stage, heard to read during the inspection, showed their enjoyment of reading. They read with understanding, demonstrated by good recall of detail and description of characters. They have a good knowledge of book features such as index, chapter, author and title. Pupils read regularly at home, though the reading diaries of some contain very little comment by themselves, teachers or parents.
97. At the end of Key Stage 2, higher-attaining pupils read competently and expressively although they are prone to careless mistakes through their anxiety to press on. They have a wide range of vocabulary, and show good understanding in recalling details of storylines and what has gone before. Other pupils also read confidently and with reasonable fluency and accuracy. However, some find difficulty with terms such as 'ghetto-blasters' and unfamiliar foreign names. Their phonic skills are insufficiently developed to cope with these. Discussion with pupils indicates that a good number belong to local libraries and regularly borrow books. They name their favourite authors, giving good reasons for their choice. Many have some knowledge of library classification and compare it with the school library. Some pupils regularly read non-fiction books for pleasure and

successfully describe their interests. Some also knowledgeably describe how they obtain information from the Internet.

98. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' writing is developing satisfactorily. Scrutiny of their work shows a range of writing. It includes re-telling of stories, good descriptive writing with researched information on foods from different cultures and sequencing of instructions. Most pupils know how to use punctuation and capital letters accurately. Presentation of pupils' work is generally neat, but their progress towards a joined-up style of handwriting is inconsistent. For example, some pupils begin to join up their writing but revert to a smaller and more evenly printed style.
99. The weekly period in Key Stage 2 devoted to extended writing expands the work of the literacy hour very effectively. It has a good impact on pupils' confidence and skills in writing. Scrutiny of their work shows good progress in the use of language in a wide range of writing styles. Pupils' writing includes stories, reports, poems, plays, descriptions and instructions. Their skill in writing also contributes to their learning in other subjects. They describe experiments in science using correct vocabulary and format. Pupils' writing in religious education includes their own ideas on moral and spiritual questions, as well as original prayers. Pupils in Year 6 show good investigative skills as they research information for well produced and extended biographies of famous people. Their writing is personal, well constructed and in an appropriate style. In a good lesson, pupils studying a play predicted possible developments of the plot. They wrote effective dialogue appropriate to each character. At the end of the lesson, some pupils dramatically read extracts of the dialogue to the class, who listened appreciatively.
100. The teaching of English is predominantly good. Of the lessons observed during the inspection, half were good and a quarter were very good. One lesson was unsatisfactory. Most lessons are lively, well paced and interesting. Teachers successfully communicate their own enthusiasm for English. Teachers mostly use the literacy hour well to develop pupils' skills in reading and writing. Their weekly planning contains satisfactory detail of lesson objectives and activities to achieve them. Many of these are imaginative, such as the play reading and writing, and stimulate pupils' interest and motivation well. However, the planning for pupils' group activities does not clearly identify how those of higher attainment will be fully challenged through extension work, or how work is specifically matched to pupils with special educational needs. Teachers' planning insufficiently provides for evaluation of lessons and units of work.
101. There are good procedures for assessment of pupils' attainment. In addition to national testing, pupils' reading, writing and spelling are regularly tested by the school and the results carefully analysed. Teachers make insufficient use of this data to track individual pupils' progress or to influence how they plan work for pupils of different attainment. Teachers manage the great majority of their lessons well. Their questioning is most often brisk and probing, challenging pupils to think and express their answers clearly. Occasionally, pupils are given tasks which are insufficiently interesting or demanding. In consequence, the efforts of some slacken, their learning slows, and they become restless and, in a few cases, disruptive. In an unsatisfactory lesson, there was insufficient emphasis on developing younger pupils' phonic skills, and group activities were not well managed.
102. Teachers' marking of pupils' work shows some inconsistency. Many teachers mark pupils' work carefully, providing constructive comments and suggestions. Sometimes, however, marking lacks rigour with insufficient feedback to pupils and too many uncorrected errors. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support in many lessons and make good progress.
103. The subject is ably led by an enthusiastic coordinator supported by a part-time teacher. Appointed relatively recently, she has begun the process of monitoring teaching and learning, and scrutinising planning and pupils' work. She has a clear view of the development of her role in raising the standards of work of all pupils.

## **MATHEMATICS**

104. In the National Curriculum tests, in 2000, pupils' results at the end of Key Stage 1 were just above the national average. All pupils achieved the expected Level 2, which was much better than in

most schools. However, the percentage of pupils achieving the higher levels was below average. Following the last inspection, results declined steadily, but improved last year. The most recent results are lower than those pertaining at the time of the last inspection.

105. In the National Curriculum tests, in 2000, pupils' results at the end of Key Stage 2 matched the national average. Around 70 per cent of the pupils achieved the expected Level 4, and 30 per cent achieved the higher Level 5. Results have fluctuated over the last four years but, overall, have been maintained at a level close to that pertaining at the time of the last inspection. Because standards have risen nationally, the comparison with other schools is not as favourable as it was. There is no significant difference between the results of girls and boys.
106. The findings of the inspection show that pupils are achieving average standards by the end of both key stages. Most pupils are making satisfactory progress, although some higher-attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, particularly where adult support is utilised with small groups of pupils.
107. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils can add and subtract two-digit numbers. They understand the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes. They collect data which they record in a block graph. In Year 2, for example, pupils were recording information about their lunch boxes. They posed appropriate questions and drew conclusions about the information for use as part of a health education project. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils apply the four rules of number, convert decimal numbers to fractions and work with percentages. They recognise and measure shapes and use data from a range of different types of graphs.
108. The quality of the teaching is satisfactory overall. During the inspection, over half of the lessons were good or very good, but two lessons were unsatisfactory. Most teachers have secure subject knowledge and are confident in delivering their lessons. In the best lessons, the teachers make tasks interesting and challenging, by using skilful questions and giving pupils the opportunity to explain how they arrive at their answers. These lessons are lively and pupils are expected to complete their tasks within a specified time limit. The teachers help pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge to challenges which are related to real situations. This does not always happen in other lessons.
109. In many lessons, the pupils are presented with tasks that are sufficiently varied to meet all their abilities. The teachers identify clear targets which help the pupils to understand what they are going to learn and what they are expected to achieve. In the unsatisfactory lessons, however, the planning does not meet the needs of the pupils. In one lesson in Key Stage 1, for example, all pupils were given the same task which challenged few pupils, and were allowed far too long in which to complete it, which resulted in an unproductive use of the lesson. In a few other lessons, tasks are not differentiated enough to challenge the more able.
110. The National Numeracy Strategy has generally been successfully implemented throughout the school and is having a positive impact on standards. Pupils are acquiring mental strategies which help them to provide quick, sharp answers to questions. In a lesson in Year 5, for example, pupils computed complex number problems, using the four rules of number, and then explained how they had arrived at the answer. In a few mathematics lessons, however, little attention is paid to mental warm-up activities, whilst others finish abruptly without drawing together what pupils have learnt from the lesson. Teachers' relationships with pupils are good and they give pupils clear expectations about how should behave and organise themselves in numeracy lessons. Pupils in Key Stage 2 are set into ability groups for mathematics. These arrangements assist all pupils.
111. In some lessons, resources are used imaginatively and help pupils to make good progress. In a lesson in Year 3, for example, pupils spent their lesson in the 'toyshop' and had to work hard at spending given amounts of money, working out what they could buy, and how much change they would receive. The lesson was conducted at a fast pace and pupils continually had to make calculations and give reasons for their answer. In some mental number activities, the teachers do not make resources, such as number cards, available to the pupils to enable them to give their answers quickly. Pupils find this frustrating, but it also slows the pace of the activity and does not enable the teacher to gain a clear assessment of what pupils understand. Other resources are

generally appropriate, but there is an over-reliance on worksheets and texts higher up the school. When these support teaching, they are effective, but when they are used inappropriately, and are not related specifically to the lesson, they confuse pupils. Pupils' numeracy skills are developed satisfactorily in other curriculum areas, although insufficient use is made of information and communication technology to support learning in mathematics.

112. Most pupils enjoy numeracy lessons and show good levels of concentration. They are keen to learn and participate in class discussions enthusiastically. They settle quickly to independent or group work and cooperate, and support each other, when working on group problem-solving exercises. They are secure in the routine of the lesson, know where to get the equipment they need, and how to use it. The teachers are not always consistent in the way they expect pupils to present their work. The marking of pupils' work does not always help pupils to improve. Teachers miss opportunities to provide comments on how pupils could improve their work or make suggestions on how the content could be focused more appropriately.
113. The subject is led satisfactorily. The implementation of the numeracy strategy has been managed effectively, but monitoring is a weakness. The school has plans for the coordinator to monitor how pupils are taught and what they are learning in mathematics throughout the school. At present, the coordinator oversees planning and discusses individual aspects of the subject with teachers.

## **SCIENCE**

114. In the teachers' assessments in 2000, carried out at the end of Key Stage 1, all pupils achieved the expected Level 2, which was well above the national average. Since the last inspection, the results show an improvement in the number of pupils reaching Level 2, but a decline in the number of pupils reaching the higher Level 3. Inspection findings are that the overall level of attainment, by the end of Key Stage 1, is above average.
115. In the National Curriculum tests, in 2000, pupils' results at the end of Key Stage 2 were above the national average, and also above the average when compared with similar schools. Over 90 per cent of the pupils achieved the expected Level 4, and almost a half achieved the higher Level 5. Inspection findings show that standards overall, by the end of Key Stage 2, are above average. The trend in the school's results at the end of Key Stage 2, over the last three years, is one of improvement. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls.
116. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have acquired a broad and very secure base of knowledge and understanding. The pupils show in their work and discussions that they are carefully developing the techniques for scientific enquiry. For example, when talking about the need for a balanced diet, they explain concisely which foods are good for a healthy lifestyle, and why they are good. They understand the need to make a fair test, and respond decisively to questions of 'why' and 'how'. They are explicit when talking about the effects of exercise on the human body. They make good progress overall, although higher-attaining pupils are not consistently challenged by tasks which are tailored to meet their needs.
117. By the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils have a detailed knowledge of all the aspects of the National Curriculum for science. They show a good understanding of the nature of change through their topic on materials. They predict and hypothesise before investigating reversible and irreversible changes. They explain their findings sensibly, making constructive conclusions based on their previous knowledge and observations. They have good recall of previous work and talk competently about work on evaporating, dissolving and filtering. Within the context of an investigation, the pupils choose the appropriate apparatus confidently, apply the criteria of a fair test, and record their observations systematically. They handle equipment sensibly and are able to use the correct scientific vocabulary. They are very confident with their learning, and can qualify their knowledge with examples. Throughout the key stage, most pupils build on their earlier learning successfully. Lower-attaining pupils show a sound understanding of science, and, although their recorded work is less detailed, it successfully conveys what they have learned. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a result of the good support they consistently receive. This enables them to have positive access to the science curriculum.

118. The overall quality of the teaching in science is good. The lessons observed ranged from good to unsatisfactory in Key Stage 1, and from very good to unsatisfactory in Key Stage 2. The very good teaching in Key Stage 2 is characterised by the very good subject knowledge of the teacher, which leads to carefully planned and well-organised lessons. The interaction between pupils and teacher, the pace of the lesson and the teacher's expectations, ensure that the pupils stay involved, interested and challenged. Similar challenges and knowledge of the subject are found in the good lessons, with the recognition of the need to plan for all abilities. Effective strategies are used to ensure there are positive and worthwhile gains in pupils' learning. The teachers use probing questions and enter into worthwhile discussions with the pupils. This results in sustained and interested effort from the pupils, with the consequent result that their knowledge and understanding are consistently extended. The small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching in Key Stage 1 is exemplified by a lack of direction and challenge for the higher-attaining pupils. In Key Stage 2, unsatisfactory teaching does not provide clear direction, purposeful tasks and careful organisation to allow the pupils to challenge and extend the knowledge they have gained. This results in pupils who show no urgency in their tasks and who waste time.
119. The teachers' expectations of what pupils should record in their books are good overall. However, teachers make few evaluative comments when marking pupils' work, and there were examples, within Year 4, of work from the last academic year being unmarked. The pupils show pride in their work and take care over the way it is presented. Pupils use their literacy skills well, and this is reflected in the standard of their independent writing. This is a good feature and encourages pupils' own true evaluation of what they have done and learned. This begins well in Year 1, where they use pictures and charts to guide their findings, and progress to using simple independent sentences. The pupils in Year 2 record their findings through independent writing and carefully labelled diagrams. Their work reflects the good progress they make. The recording of an investigation by most classes in Key Stage 2 is careful and readable, showing clearly what pupils are aiming to discover. However, in a few lessons, all pupils record their work in the same way, and results in unchallenging exercises for both science and literacy. All pupils use their numeracy skills satisfactorily to translate the results of an investigation into tables and charts. There is insufficient use of information and communication technology in all aspects of the subject.
120. The science curriculum provided by the school is broad and balanced. It ensures that there is consistent and thorough attention to the investigative side of science, and this successfully permeates the structure for teaching all other programmes of study. The scheme of work for Key Stage 1 provides useful guidance for teachers, and the coordinator is currently developing the new scheme of work for Key Stage 2. There are satisfactory procedures for assessing the knowledge and understanding that the pupils have gained, but their use as a tool for planning future work and the next step in pupils' learning has not been identified, and this is a weakness. A new coordinator has just been appointed but, in the past, there has been insufficient analysis of test results to identify weaknesses within the curriculum and in pupils' learning. The coordinator has good subject knowledge but, as yet, has had no opportunity to monitor and evaluate strengths and weaknesses in teaching or to undertake a thorough analysis of pupils' work. However, opportunities have been planned for this to take place in the future.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

121. Pupils achieve standards expected for their age at the end of both key stages. Although the amount of time devoted to teaching art has been reduced since the introduction of the literacy and numeracy hours, and teachers are unable to cover as wide a range of art topics within the smaller time allocation, standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils of all abilities make steady progress throughout the school.
122. Standards are highest when teachers encourage pupils to show attention to detail and when pupils are supported well in the development of skills, through an interesting range of activities and media. For example, pupils in Year 2 displayed real flair as they created their own designs in the style of Clarice Cliff. Some produced aesthetically pleasing painted plates; others demonstrated careful observation in their wax crayon designs, and some, but not all, had mastered the skill of using charcoal successfully. Clarice Cliff plates form an attractive part of the classroom display of history work on the theme of modern and old kitchens. Information is

available for further research, and pupils develop a sound understanding of the artist's contribution to the local area. Pupils are very aware of the designs they like best and are genuinely appreciative of each other's work. A comparison with more intricate designs of a similar style, produced in Year 6 shows that pupils make steady progress throughout the intervening years. Occasionally, however, standards are not high enough and progress is unacceptably slow where work is undemanding and pupils spend the lesson colouring, with little attention to the development of new skills.

123. A carefully structured programme of work for each year group ensures an adequately balanced range of activities, including a small amount of three-dimensional work. Work is allocated to each year group to promote the systematic development of skills, and activities are linked effectively to topics in subjects such as history, design and technology and science. Pupils in Year 1 produce attractive self-portraits as part of their topic on body parts, and pupils in Year 4 design and make Tudor house models. They consider fabrics and textiles used during that period in history. Pupils in Year 6 present good quality drawings in the style of Lowry, using pencil and charcoal. However, pupils throughout the school have little experience of clay, collage, sculpture or textile work and, although work on artists such as Cézanne is of good quality, pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to study the work of artists, craftsmen and designers from the locality or from non-western cultures. Sketchbooks are not used with any consistency in the development of skills. Some teachers use them well to develop pupils' ideas and refine work, others do not use them at all. In addition, pupils throughout the school have little knowledge of using information technology to develop their graphic skills.
124. Although only a small amount of teaching was observed in Key Stage 1, the quality is good. Too few lessons were seen in Key Stage 2 to make an overall judgement about teaching. In Key Stage 1 lessons, teachers have high expectations and encourage pupils to choose and experiment with various media and materials. Activities, very appropriate to the age range, stimulate much interest. For example, in a successful Year 1 lesson, the teacher structured the lesson very effectively to ensure pupils paid adequate attention to colour and form as they produced shape pictures. The resulting work was of good quality and pupils clapped spontaneously in appreciation of particularly good individual contributions. Support staff make a very positive contribution to pupils' learning and ensure all succeed. In discussion, pupils express genuine enjoyment of the subject. Pupils in Year 2 talked excitedly as they gave a step-by-step account of previous work on Matisse. For many pupils in Key Stage 2, art is their favourite subject. However, when activities are uninspiring, some older pupils display inattentiveness. In this key stage, not all teachers have sufficient knowledge to guide pupils in the improvement of their work, or to know the standards pupils can achieve. In addition, although work is attractively displayed in many areas of the school, the quality of display is inconsistent. Some is carefully mounted and attractively presented, whilst, in contrast, other work is pinned to walls with insufficient attention to detail or standard.
125. Resources are accessible and newly amended guidelines, incorporating approved schemes of work, have been used well to improve links with other subjects. However, although clear priorities for future development have been accurately identified, the recently appointed coordinator has no time allocation for monitoring teaching or the quality of pupils' work. In consequence, although the school has started to keep samples of pupils' previous work in order to assess progress throughout the school, no one has a clear enough overview of standards achieved.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

126. At the time of the last inspection, standards were judged to be above average at the end of both key stages. Currently, since the introduction of the literacy and numeracy hours, teachers devote a smaller proportion of their teaching time to design and technology and, consequently, pupils' finished work often lacks refinement. Although standards are not as high as they were, pupils still reach expected levels at the end of both key stages. Recommendations from the last inspection, relating to the development of an agreed outline of work for each year group, have been implemented well, and more secure links with other subjects have been established. Further opportunities for pupils to design, select materials and evaluate their work have been introduced to ensure an adequate balance of activities and the systematic development of skills. Overall, the

school has made satisfactory progress in its provision for design and technology since the last inspection.

127. Satisfactory standards have been maintained, despite the reduction in teaching time, because design and technology has become an integral part of many topics. Skills are successfully incorporated into a variety of activities and work is carefully planned to ensure a steady increase in knowledge and understanding.
128. In science work, younger pupils decide which materials are waterproof and incorporate their umbrella designs well into pictures of a rainy day. Pupils enter Key Stage 1 at various levels of skills' development. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, some pupils have difficulty using scissors accurately, whilst others confidently draw, cut and stick their own shape pictures. Other Year 1 pupils draw and design moving body parts at a noticeably lower level of skill than pupils in Year 3, who are covering the same topic, but at a standard appropriate to their age. In Year 2, pupils retain knowledge about previous work well as they recount, in great detail, the processes involved in making butter and peppermint creams. In Year 4, pupils research the Tudor house topic carefully before embarking on their own designs. Steady progress throughout the school ensures that, by the end of Key Stage 2, pupils demonstrate adequate planning, designing, making and evaluating skills. Older pupils demonstrate secure understanding, when testing their water wheels for the first time. They know why some models are better than others and evaluate accurately how they could improve their own design. However, although most design and construction is imaginative, the quality of finished products frequently lacks refinement. There are too few opportunities for pupils to measure accurately or for work to be improved, and pupils do not use a wide enough range of tools. In discussion, pupils in Year 6 have little knowledge of techniques employed in strengthening structures and are unfamiliar with information technology control programs.
129. Too few lessons were observed in Key Stage 1 to make a judgement on the quality of teaching. Overall, standards of teaching in Key Stage 2 are satisfactory. In some lessons, the teaching is very good, activities are very well organised and pupils are highly motivated when they are set challenging tasks. For example, in a very good lesson in Year 4, both teacher and support staff were fully involved, the classroom was a hive of activity and pupils of all abilities strove to transfer their best Tudor house designs to construction. In an equally good lesson in Year 3, pupils responded particularly well to time targets. They had to concentrate fully to keep up with the pace of the lesson, and the teacher evaluated pupils' progress effectively throughout the lesson. Most pupils achieved the target of drawing and cutting out 15 moving body parts with impressive speed and good attention to scale. In a Year 5 lesson, the teacher encouraged swift mental calculations as pupils added up the evaluation scores for each other's work.
130. A small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was also observed. In these lessons, weak class control was the main problem, particularly when there were inadequate strategies for dealing with potentially difficult pupils, and the poor behaviour of a small, but significant, minority adversely affected the progress of the majority.
131. Resources are well-organised, effectively stored and easily accessible to staff. The enthusiastic coordinator has successfully incorporated new curricular initiatives into current practice, and links between art and design and technology are particularly effective. Although individual evaluations form an important part of many topics, there are no formal assessment procedures for design and technology. Teachers are not always aware of the standards pupils can achieve and they do not have sufficient evidence of pupils' previous knowledge and understanding.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

132. Pupils attain standards that are expected for their age groups by the end of both key stages. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. There has been a satisfactory level of improvement since the previous inspection. Only one lesson, repeated in two classes, was available for observation during the inspection. Judgements are also based upon discussions with pupils, the work available and the teachers' planning.



133. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils use geographical language well to describe routes from and to various places. Map-reading skills are developing appropriately as they draw maps and plans of the school, learn coordinates, and place their town on a map of the British Isles. Pupils successfully consider world maps and features such as crops, recording the location of countries that export their favourites fruits. They have identified reasons, such as the weather, for these crops to grow where they do. They round off a thorough study by considering people who use maps in their jobs and hobbies, and decide that architects, builders, sailors and travel agents need maps for information as well as hikers and motorists. They demonstrate an increasing awareness of the impact of buildings and roads on their lives, and a growing understanding of different locations and how the weather affects us.
134. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' geographical skills are developing in a systematic way, as they study a mountainous region and research it for a holiday destination. Through this topic, they have developed an appropriate level of mapping skills as they consider maps and plans in detail, using more advanced coordinates, identifying places and environments and the changes that have taken place over time. A good example of this is the systematic study of the effects of glaciers and water on the landscape. Pupils also demonstrate an increasing ability to use technical, geographical language, to draw conclusions and to evaluate places studied. Younger pupils are currently studying water. They ask intelligent, geographical questions about the sources of information. In the lesson seen, the pupils made effective links between their own experiences and those of the people in the pictures. They showed a good understanding of the impact of water, or its lack, on people and places, making connections with water for food, cleaning, fun, worship and energy. Others have studied settlement, linked judiciously with their topic in history. They have thought imaginatively, in geographical terms, about people's needs for a good place to settle and considered examples of place names and how these give us clues to the past.
135. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Planning ensures that work is appropriately covered, but marking does not always help pupils with ideas for improvement in their work. No scheme of work was available during the inspection and the timetable does not reflect a systematic approach, in that lessons are often a long time apart. However, pupils' knowledge and understanding are satisfactory at present, and the coordinator is currently planning to change the frequency and timing of lessons in order to make the process of teaching and learning geography more continuous. The role of the coordinator is insufficiently developed at present. Whilst some monitoring has taken place to ensure consistency in teaching and learning, assessment is patchy and does not allow for monitoring pupils' differing abilities or evaluating the effectiveness of lessons as the series progresses.

## HISTORY

136. By the end of both key stages, pupils achieve standards that are similar to those expected for seven and eleven-year-olds. All pupils make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment. The school has maintained satisfactory standards since the last inspection. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have a suitable awareness of the difference between past and present. For instance, they know that children were sent up chimneys in the past. They are sad about this sort of treatment, because they correctly compare the differences in their own lives with those of children in the past. They also know that electricity has changed people's lives and decide that having flush toilets makes life better for us now. Through their study of famous people from the past, such as Florence Nightingale and Thomas Edison, pupils distinguish competently between 'then' and 'now' for example, they realise how long a journey would have taken then. Younger pupils study toys from the past and compare them to their own. They make good use of a Venn diagram to sort and classify them into 'push', 'pull' or 'both' movements, thus linking their work in history effectively with work in mathematics and science.
137. Pupils make appropriate progress in learning historical skills of enquiry. In Year 2, for example, pupils had the opportunity to examine a variety of artefacts used for food and to discover similarities and differences in kitchen tools. A very good discussion took place on one table about the leather and ceramic jugs. The pupils noticed the leather one was, 'smelly because it has had stuff in it lots of times and it could go off because it soaked in'. The group then considered how the ceramic one could be washed thoroughly and not leave any odours. They are developing a

good sense of chronology through the use of timelines. They talk confidently about dates, knowing the differences in the decades, for instance, 'we are in 2000 and our picture is from 1999'. They formulate interesting questions about the artefacts and know that books, pictures and videos provide sources of evidence for us to find out about the past.

138. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have a sound understanding of how to investigate historical evidence to make sense of the past. They have very good opportunities to use different lines of historical enquiry. For example, when investigating the changes in technology, transport, fashion and other aspects of daily life, they draw their conclusions from studying artefacts, visits to museums and their research from books. The use of information and communication technology does not, however, feature as a source of enquiry. In a good lesson in Year 6, pupils were working animatedly, using a good range of resources, to complete a matrix in order to discover what might be inferred from the evidence. The results were then transferred successfully to a timeline for discussion. By the end of the session, pupils were developing an understanding of primary and secondary sources of information and a growing awareness of bias, first-hand knowledge, and reporting.
139. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, enjoy history and are curious about past lives and events. Younger pupils consider different aspects of Tudor times and enjoy the role-play in costume. They asked intelligent questions about the clothing on display and commented on fastenings and textiles in use. They made good comparisons between rich and poor people's garments and used information sources well to make their own sketches as a record. They also considered intelligently how people would be affected by the clothes they wore in their work and daily lives, and how comfortable and practicable they were. Older pupils, in their study of Britain since 1930, enjoy finding interesting facts and recording events on a timeline such as the election of a new Pope, the first moon landings, the emergence of the Beatles and England winning the football World Cup.
140. The quality of the teaching is good overall. At Key Stage 1, the teaching is satisfactory, although one unsatisfactory lesson was seen. The reason for the problems in this lesson was that the pupils were not learning historical skills but were being told facts. There were few opportunities for pupils to focus on the past with sufficient depth of knowledge and understanding to be able to record it accurately. More successful lessons involved pupils more and took account of their differing ability to respond. For example, in the lesson with kitchen tools, different groups of pupils recorded their ideas in ways appropriate to their ability, and the more able pupils had opportunities to extend their skills by looking at further information sources. At Key Stage 2, the quality of teaching is good. Teachers provide good sources of information and give pupils ample opportunities to find out and discover, to consider artefacts, and to research and record their findings. By the end of the key stage, pupils use evidence to write sensitive accounts of the Blitz or the evacuation of children from the cities. They develop their literacy skills successfully, taking account of the audience by judicious use of interesting vocabulary as well as building on their historical skills, when they consider the attitudes and behaviour of people at the time.
141. The teachers' planning is satisfactory, but there is insufficient evaluation of the success of lessons, on a weekly basis, to ensure that pupils, regardless of their ability, achieve well consistently. The teaching of history is not monitored, and inconsistencies, such as the way in which pupils' work is marked or the pace of lessons, are not identified. In other respects, the new coordinator leads the subject well and supports the scheme of work with a good variety of artefacts, visits and visitors at all stages. There has been a good start in adjusting planning to meet the revised requirements of the National Curriculum.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

142. The provision for information and communication technology was poor at the time of the last inspection, and standards of attainment were well below those achieved in other subjects. Little improvement was made until earlier this year when a decision was taken to establish an information technology suite. Each class now has regular sessions in the new suite, and there are definite signs that standards are now rising. Although the provision has improved significantly, it is still unsatisfactory as most of the computers have been moved to the new suite, and pupils

do not have the opportunity to consolidate their skills within the classroom or have regular access to computers to support their learning in other subjects. Because pupils have not received regular teaching in the past, they have not acquired the level of skills necessary on which to build in order to acquire the level of expertise expected. This is particularly noticeable towards the end of Key Stage 2. Standards are, therefore, still below the expected level at the end of both key stages and pupils are not achieving as highly as they should, even though progress in individual lessons is now satisfactory.

143. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils recognise that everyday devices, such as a television and video recorder, respond to remote control signals. They produce short pieces of writing using a word processor and know how to alter some aspects of the way the text appears, but they do not yet have sufficient familiarity with the keyboard to locate letters quickly. They are starting to learn how to edit text, but cannot yet use the word processor as a tool to produce draft writing which they then correct and amend. Most pupils know the correct procedures for logging on and opening a program. They know how to use the mouse or the keyboard to select different options. When using a graphics program, for example, they know how to select different tools and alter the colour. The pupils have yet to develop a real confidence in using computers and are still very dependent on adult help, even for simple operations, although some of the more able pupils are willing to experiment to see if they can achieve the required result.
144. By the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils know how to use a word processor to enter text and alter some aspects of the layout, such as the font or the size of the text. They can edit their text, but do not yet fully appreciate how helpful this can be to help them refine work which they have already drafted on the computer. They use a wider range of tools than younger pupils when using a graphics program and show greater control of the mouse. They are starting to develop an understanding of the great variety of ways in which a computer can be used. They can produce an elementary spreadsheet using simple functions to calculate costs. However, they have been given very limited opportunities to acquire new skills in recent years. They do not have a good understanding of how to handle data using a database, or how to use page layout programs or spreadsheets at the level expected for 11-year-olds. They have had very little experience of using control technology. There are indications, however, that the deficit in pupils' knowledge is being rectified as pupils are learning more complex skills at an earlier age. In Year 4, for example, pupils were learning to use text and picture frames in order to set out a menu in an attractive way.
145. Each class now has a regular weekly lesson in the information technology suite. The quality of the teaching during these sessions is satisfactory. Nearly all teachers now have sufficient knowledge to deal with the appropriate part of the syllabus, but many still lack a deeper understanding which would help them to deal more effectively with problems and questions as they arise. Support staff are provided for these lessons whenever possible, and the additional adult support is an important factor in helping pupils to make progress, as many pupils have yet to develop a real confidence in using the computer and still need to ask many questions. In one lesson in Year 3, for example, three adults were kept constantly on the move as pupils plied them with a whole range of questions, but the support provided enabled all pupils to make progress. The new scheme of work now provides teachers with a satisfactory basis for their weekly lesson planning. However, the teachers are not always imaginative in the ways they link each unit of work into what pupils are learning in other subjects, which would add greater meaning to the tasks the pupils are given. Nevertheless, it is evident that pupils are now learning new skills in a more systematic way. In most lessons at present, however, all pupils are taught the same skills. This is inappropriate for some pupils, mainly those who have the use of a computer at home, who already possess the skills which are being introduced. The pace of learning is, at times, rather slow, and because two or three pupils are allocated to each computer, some of the pupils' time is not used productively. The teachers have not yet explored the possibility of dividing the class which could help to solve these problems, by providing more closely targeted input for different groups of pupils, and avoiding wasted time as pupils await their turn.
146. Most teachers structure their lessons well. Explanations at the start of the lesson are generally clear, although the cramped conditions of the room and the lack of a facility to project onto a larger screen make it difficult for teachers to demonstrate clearly to the pupils. In some classes,

the teachers are helping the pupils to appreciate the advantages and disadvantages of using computers. In a lesson in Year 5, for example, the teacher helped the pupils to think about the advantages and disadvantages of using a computer to produce graphic designs. Pupils grasped the fact that it is much easier to correct mistakes and that replicated patterns can be produced more quickly when using a computer. In a lesson in Year 2, the pupils were able to compare a graph produced on the computer and one produced by hand; they concluded very quickly that the computer-generated graph was clearer and more accurate. In the better lessons, the teachers also help pupils to look at their work critically. In a lesson in Year 4, the class considered different finished versions of the menus they had been producing, and offered suggestions as to which were the more appealing menus and why. Generally, however, not enough attention is given to the evaluation of what pupils produce and ways in which their work could be improved.

147. The pupils' enthusiastic attitudes to using computers contribute positively to the quality of learning, although occasional squabbles and some imbalance in the way pupils divide the time each of them spends on the computer detract somewhat from the overall effectiveness of the current arrangements. The time allocated to some sessions is too long for the pupils to maintain their concentration throughout. Some teachers are not rigorous enough in setting clear targets for the pupils and letting them know exactly what they expect them to accomplish by the end of the lesson. As a result, the pupils sometimes spend too much time experimenting and lose sight of the objective of the lesson. The school has yet to develop useful assessment procedures which could help teachers to determine how best to plan their lessons to suit the needs of all pupils.
148. Lack of both software and hardware resources affects the progress pupils are able to make. The machines which have been grouped together in the information technology suite do not all have the same software, so that pupils often have to contend with screens which look different from what the teacher has demonstrated. Some of the printers do not work reliably. The absence of computers within most classrooms is a serious hindrance to using information and communication technology as a tool to help pupils' learning in other subjects. The school is aware of the need to develop its provision for information and communication technology further. The first steps have been taken through the creation of the information technology suite, and the shortage of hardware resources is likely to be rectified in the near future. Greater thought, however, will need to be given to teachers' planning so that computers become properly integrated tools for learning. The subject is not coordinated effectively at present. One member of staff is looking after various aspects of the subject in a temporary capacity, and has provided valuable support to other members of staff. The situation should be rectified shortly as a new coordinator has been appointed and will assume responsibility for the subject in the near future.

## MUSIC

149. Pupils in both key stages reach standards which are above expectations. Standards are higher than in the previous inspection, and reflect the success of the school's initiative to provide specialist teaching for the pupils. Four lessons were observed, and further evidence was gained through discussion with pupils, demonstration, and extra-curricular activities. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress.
150. By the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils have a good understanding and good skills, which enable them, for example, to clap a repeating pattern, and to distinguish between high and low notes. They have a well-developed sense of rhythm, and use their voices well to indicate changes in structure. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, pupils capably and tunefully joined in songs which subtly contributed to their skills of rhythm and pitch. They are highly motivated, and keen and eager to demonstrate their good skills. They have a good repertoire of songs, which they enjoy singing.
151. By the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils discuss their experiences in composing with good knowledge and understanding. For example, they listen to noises in the school corridor and translate what they hear into their own compositions. They understand standard notation and use musical terms correctly when talking about their work. Their aural memory is good, and they discuss competently, and appreciate, a range of music, including music from other countries. All

pupils participate enthusiastically in lessons, and this enthusiasm is particularly good when the lesson has pace, challenge and clear objectives.

152. The pupils in Key Stage 2 reach good standards with their recorder playing, and others reach similar standards with other instruments under the tuition of the peripatetic teacher. They read standard scores competently. The pupils sing in tune, and with appropriate intonation. Pupils in the school choir use their voices well to convey gentleness or vibrancy, and maintain a good pitch when unaccompanied. Formal performances are controlled and confident. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, and teachers consistently ensure that these pupils have good access to the music curriculum.
153. The overall quality of the teaching in music is good. The school's music lessons are taught by a specialist teacher and a class teacher with the necessary expertise in the subject. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when there were variable levels of expertise in the subject. Some very good teaching was observed in both key stages. In these lessons, the teacher's high expectations, clear direction, pace and vigour motivated and challenged all pupils effectively. Purposeful and effective strategies, combined with an element of fun, contributed positively to pupils' learning and led to the good development of musical skills and knowledge, an appreciation of music, and a real joy in learning. The pupils have positive attitudes and behave well. Where the teaching is satisfactory, too many objectives are covered within the lesson. Although the pupils acquire new learning, and enjoy the experiences of listening, composing and singing, there is insufficient opportunity for the positive consolidation and extension of this knowledge. This results in the initial interest of pupils being lost as the next aspect is introduced.
154. There is no specific coordinator for the subject, but the two teachers liaise well together as a team to ensure that pupils enjoy and learn from a wide range of activities, based securely on the scheme of work. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Whenever possible, music links with the school's topics, but is mainly given its rightful priority. Teachers use realistic assessment procedures, and these are used satisfactorily to plan for pupils' development.
155. The music curriculum makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development through the opportunities it provides for reflection, cooperation, and the appreciation of a wide range of music. There are regular opportunities for the pupils to perform both within the school and in the wider community. Occasionally, visitors have contributed to the music curriculum. Overall, the accommodation is used effectively, although the use of classrooms for older pupils in Key Stage 2 at times limits the range of activities and opportunities for the pupils to develop their singing skills. Resources are satisfactory, but lack a range of pitched instruments, particularly for the older pupils.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

156. The school has maintained the standards noted at the time of the last inspection. Pupils achieve the expected standards by the end of Key Stage 1 and slightly above those expected by the end of Key Stage 2. The pupils, including those with special educational needs, are achieving appropriately at Key Stage 1 and make good progress at Key Stage 2.
157. By the time pupils are seven, they play simple team games with an appropriate degree of skill, using a variety of ways to throw and catch a ball. They have good gymnastic skills and know how to begin and end a routine.
158. In Year 6, pupils show satisfactory standards in dance, as they interpret a piece of music using simple routines. Swimming lessons are provided for pupils in Years 3 and 4. Although these were not observed during the inspection, most pupils have learnt to swim by the end of Year 4 and, therefore, achieve the nationally expected standards by the end of the key stage. All pupils know and understand why it is important to warm up before beginning the intensive part of the lesson. They listen carefully to what they are expected to do. In most classes, they enjoy their physical education lessons. They are very eager to watch others' performances and make good suggestions as to how gymnastic sequences can be improved. In a very good lesson in Year 5, for example, pupils worked in pairs to refine their sequence and make improvements in their own

performance. They then watched quietly as others performed and discussed the sequences, whilst giving good attention to detail and offering suggestions as to how to improve, giving their reasons by using appropriate gymnastic terms. The very good use of support staff enabled all pupils, including those who are physically limited, to take a full and active part in the lesson. These pupils made very good progress and contributed much to the lesson.

159. The overall quality of the teaching is satisfactory, although one very good and two good lessons were observed during the inspection as well as an unsatisfactory lesson. The teachers manage the pupils well and make good use of praise to reinforce pupils' learning. In the good lessons, the pupils understand what they are expected to achieve and make good progress as, for example, in a Year 5 gymnastics lesson in which pupils developed sophisticated gymnastics sequences using the floor and large apparatus. When pupils are asked to work in large groups without clear direction, they become enthusiastic but make little progress. Many lessons are conducted at a good pace and maintain pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Routines for beginning and ending lessons are well established; pupils move quickly and quietly to their lesson and use the allocated time to good effect.
160. The school has developed good links with neighbouring colleges and use their facilities and training to good effect. The school provides various out-of-school opportunities for pupils to take part in games. The girls' football team was successful in a local competition last season. The school's parent-teacher association is very supportive, and is providing an opportunity for younger pupils to visit a soft-play area in order to develop their physical and coordination skills. The resources and accommodation to teach physical education are good. There is sufficient apparatus to provide for all activities. The resources are well organised and are in good condition.
161. The coordinator is enthusiastic and knowledgeable about her subject and provides good leadership. She develops her knowledge through specialist courses and contacts at the local college. There is a comprehensive policy and good guidelines for the subject which enable teachers to plan lessons which have clear objectives so pupils understand what they are expected to achieve.