

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST THOMAS MORE R.C.
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Middleton

LEA area: Rochdale

Unique reference number: 105820

Headteacher: Mr D. McCorriston

Reporting inspector: Mr G.J. Yates
[2465]

Dates of inspection: November 13th-17th, 2000

Inspection number: 224316

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 4-11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Evesham Road,
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Middleton,
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Very Rev. Canon McBride

Date of previous inspection: January 13th, 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr G.J. Yates	Registered inspector	Science; Physical education; English as an additional language.	How high are standards? - The school's results and achievements.
Mrs S. Scull	Lay inspector		How high are standards? - Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mr A.V. Calderbank	Team inspector	English; Information and communication technology; Special educational needs.	How well is the school led and managed?
Miss L. Spooner	Team inspector	Mathematics; Art and design; Design and technology.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Mrs J. Watkins	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage; Geography; History; Music; Equal opportunities .	How well are pupils taught?

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The Registrar,
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Alexandra House,
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Thomas More R.C. School is an above average size primary school for boys and girls aged four to eleven. The school is on the outskirts of the town of Middleton. There are ten classes and the average class size is 29. Currently 295 pupils attend the school and 35 are under the age of five. Pupils start school with broadly average skills. There are 48 pupils on the special educational needs register, two of whom have statements of special educational need. This is below the national average. No pupils speak English as a second language. The number of pupils who are entitled to a free school meal is below the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a school that provides its pupils with a highly effective education in the context of a very caring Christian ethos. Good and sometimes very good teaching promotes well above average standards in English and mathematics. Standards in information and communication technology have improved significantly since the time of the last inspection and are now broadly average. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- ◆ Standards are well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science at the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- ◆ Teaching is good, particularly in the basic skills of English and mathematics.
- ◆ The school benefits from the strong leadership of its very good headteacher and all members of staff work well together as a team and share a strong commitment to improve standards.
- ◆ The governors form a very effective team and have an excellent understanding of the school's needs.
- ◆ Children get a good start in the Reception class.
- ◆ The school's Christian ethos permeates its life. Relationships are very good and pupils are cared for well.
- ◆ Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of a very good quality overall.
- ◆ Pupils behave very well, have very good attitudes towards learning, work hard and enjoy school.

What could be improved

- ◆ The opportunities provided for pupils to use their very good writing skills in other subjects.
- ◆ The provision for pupils to apply their very good number and good scientific knowledge in practical situations.
- ◆ The written comments made by some teachers when they mark pupils' work.
- ◆ The involvement of curriculum co-ordinators in monitoring of classroom practice in their subject areas. [The school has already highlighted this aspect as an area for development.]
- ◆ The condition of the Infant playground.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in January 1997. Very good progress has been made in addressing most of the issues raised in the last inspection report. Standards of attainment in English and mathematics have improved at the end of both key stages. The quality of teaching has improved significantly. Lessons are now challenging, have a good pace and time is used well. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of science and design and technology is now good. All subjects have schemes of work and planning is of a very good quality. Under the leadership of the headteacher and the senior management team members of staff work very hard to ensure that the needs of all children are met, including those who have the potential to attain high standards. The role of subject co-ordinators has been developed successfully and now includes the monitoring of pupils' books as well as reporting annually to the Governing Body. However, it does not yet include the monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice. The school has put in place a good system for recording the progress children make. Provision for information and communication technology has improved greatly. All pupils now have regular access to a modern computer suite and follow a coherent programme of activities. Statutory requirements are now met with regard to the teaching of information and communication technology. The school is well placed to make further improvements.

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
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	A	C	A*	A*
Mathematics	B	A	A	A
Science	B	C	C	C

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

The standards achieved in English in the 1999 National Curriculum tests for eleven-year-olds were very high both in relation to all schools and those found in similar schools. Standards in mathematics were well above average and in science standards were broadly average. Taking the four years 1996-1999 together the performance of pupils in English and mathematics was well above the national average. Pupils' performance in science was close to the national average.

The 2000 results show 90% of pupils in English attaining Level 4 and above and 50% achieving Level 5. In mathematics 78% of pupils attained Level 4 and 25% Level 5. In science 88% attained Level 4 and 40% Level 5. The school exceeded its appropriate target of 85% of pupils achieving Level 4 in English but did not reach the 85% target in mathematics.

The school is in a good position to meet its agreed targets in 2001. Inspection evidence shows that standards of work are well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. Pupils have very good writing skills but do not always use them effectively in other subjects of the curriculum. Standards in information and communication technology by the end of Key Stage 2 are broadly average. Religious education is the subject of a separate diocesan inspection. Standards in history, geography and the dance aspect of physical education are above average. It was not possible to make an overall judgement in physical education because during the inspection not all aspects of the subject could be inspected. Pupils' achievements in all other subjects are in line with those found in most schools by the age of eleven.

By the end of Key Stage 1 standards in English and mathematics are well above average. Standards in science and in physical education are above average. Standards in information and communication technology and all other subjects inspected are similar to those found in most schools.

Children under the age of five in the Foundation Stage are on course to achieve all the early learning goals set for the end of the Reception class and to exceed what is expected in communication, language and literacy and in mathematical development.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy school and work hard. They are very polite and greet visitors cheerfully.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils move sensibly and quietly around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils get on well together. Very good relationships are fostered in the school's strong Christian ethos.
Attendance	Good overall. The level of unauthorised absence is above the national average because some parents are not providing written notification of their child's absence.

During the week of the inspection there was no evidence of any oppressive behaviour.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	Aged 5-7 years	Aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

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

During the week of the inspection teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons seen and good or better in just over 75%. Teaching was very good in almost 20% of the lessons. This is a significant improvement from that found at the time of the previous inspection when teaching was found to be unsatisfactory in 16% of lessons. In all classes pupils are well managed. Teachers have a clear grasp of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Pupils with special educational needs are provided with good learning opportunities.

The quality of learning is good overall. During the literacy and numeracy sessions pupils are taught the necessary skills to become numerate and literate but do not always use their writing skills in other subjects. Pupils take a pride in the presentation of their work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. Pupils are provided with a very good range of learning opportunities. Homework provision is satisfactory. Opportunities for pupils to develop basic skills in English and mathematics and to improve their scientific knowledge are very apparent.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall. Pupils with special educational needs are identified early and supported well by teachers and support staff. However, targets identified on individual education plans are not specific enough.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	N/A
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Pupils are given opportunities to help with the smooth running of the school. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development is of a very good quality. Cultural development is good. Staff work hard in encouraging pupils to consider the result of their actions on others.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good provision. Appropriate procedures are in place to ensure the welfare, health and safety of all pupils. Procedures for assessing pupils' work are good. The school's use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning is good in English, mathematics and science.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher is highly committed to the school. He has worked very hard since his appointment and has successfully raised standards and improved the quality of the learning environment. He is well supported by the senior management team.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Very well. The governors are very conscientious and involved effectively in the strategic management of the school. They are very knowledgeable, well led by their chairman and have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Test results are analysed and the information is used effectively to set targets for future improvement. Systems for monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and learning are in place, but as yet co-ordinators are not fully involved in this process.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Most resources are used well, except the library.

The school is appropriately staffed. The internal accommodation is very clean and cared for well. Recent improvements to the accommodation have enhanced the quality of learning for younger pupils. The Infant playground is in need of repair. Value for money is obtained on purchases.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The school is well managed and led. ◆ Children enjoy coming to school. ◆ Children make good progress. ◆ Teaching is good. ◆ Pupils behave well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The range of activities on offer outside lessons. ◆ The amount of homework pupils are asked to do.

The inspection team agrees that pupils do enjoy coming to school and that leadership is of a high quality. Teaching is good. Pupils behave very well. There is a satisfactory range of activities outside lessons. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to take part in inter-school competitive sport. Homework provision is satisfactory. Inspectors agree that pupils make good progress.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Inspection evidence shows that in all subjects most pupils make at least satisfactory progress and they make good progress in English, mathematics, science and physical education in both key stages and in geography and history in Key Stage 2. By the end of both key stages standards in English and mathematics are well above average. Standards in science and in dance are above average at the end of both key stages and pupils sing well. By the end of Key Stage 2 standards in geography and history are above average. Pupils have a good scientific knowledge. Higher attaining pupils do well in English and mathematics. The weaknesses found in the previous inspection with regard to design and technology and to information and communication technology have been addressed and standards in both these subjects are now in line with those found in most schools. Standards in both English and mathematics have risen since the last inspection. The school has improved the quality of curriculum planning and the use made of assessment. These two factors, along with the effective introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, have successfully improved standards.
2. Children start school with average skills. Progress for the under-fives in the Foundation Stage is good and very good for a substantial number. Most children are currently on line to exceed the expectations in communication, language and literacy and in mathematical development and are well on their way to achieve the Early Learning Goals for the age group in all other areas of learning.
3. In the year 2000 Key Stage 1 National Curriculum tests for seven year olds the percentage of pupils reaching level 2 and above in reading and writing was above the national average. The percentage of pupils reaching level 3 and above in writing was above the national average and in reading broadly in line with the national average. Speaking and listening skills were well above average.
4. Inspection evidence shows that by the end of Key Stage 1 overall attainment in English is well above average. Pupils enjoy writing and produce interesting stories. More could be done to enable them to use their skills in other subjects. Pupils read aloud with confidence and show an appropriate understanding of what they are reading. Standards in speaking are good. Pupils are confident and articulate for their age.
5. In the 2000 English tests for eleven-year-olds the percentage of pupils reaching Level 4 or above was high in relation to national standards and above those found in similar schools. These results show that the school has maintained its very high standards from the previous year with 90% achieving Level 4 and above and 50% Level 5. Key factors in these results are effective teachers' planning and the positive effect of the successful introduction of the National Literacy Strategy.
6. Overall, taking full account of work seen during the inspection and the survey of previous work standards in English are well above average at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils speak and listen well. They are able to express their views clearly. Reading and writing standards are high. However, not many opportunities are provided for them to use the library for research purposes. Improvements have been made in writing since the last inspection. Pupils now write for different purposes and use a wide range of styles. Writing is well organised. However, pupils are given insufficient opportunities to use their very good writing skills in other subjects of the curriculum.

7. In the 2000 tests for seven-year-olds every pupil achieved at least the expected level in mathematics. This placed the school in the top five percent for all schools and for similar schools in attainment at Level 2. The percentage reaching the higher Level 3 was broadly in line with the average for schools nationally but below that for similar schools. In the years 1996 to 1999, performance overall has been above the national average. Inspection evidence shows that the percentage of pupils expected to attain the national expectation is well above that normally found. Pupils have a very good knowledge of basic number and number operations. Pupils are already developing good mental strategies for finding answers to problems. However, there is only limited evidence of pupils using their high levels of knowledge to carry out practical activities in the subject.

8. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests in mathematics for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 the percentages of pupils reaching Level 4 and Level 5 were in line with the national average but below the average in similar schools. This was a fall from the well above average results in 1999. However, 78% still achieved Level 4 and above and 25% achieved Level 5.

9. Inspection evidence shows that standards in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 are well above average. Most pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 are on course to reach the expected level in mathematics and a significant minority look set to achieve an even higher level. Pupils currently in Year 6 have a very good knowledge and understanding of number and number operations. When provided with the opportunity, pupils make good use of their number skills and knowledge of mathematics to solve problems. However, this aspect of their work is not as well developed as other aspects.

10. In the 2000 teacher assessments in science for pupils aged seven, the proportion at Level 2 or above was very high. Inspection evidence shows that standards are above average. The school has refined its assessment arrangements and as a result a broadly average number of pupils are working at Level 3. Pupils can carry out simple investigations and record their findings.

11. In the 2000 end of Key Stage 2 science tests a broadly average number of pupils reached the expected level and the percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 was above the national average. This was an improvement on the previous year's results. Inspection evidence shows that by the time pupils leave the school standards are above those normally found. Most pupils are on their way to achieving the expected standard in the end of Key Stage 2 tests. However, whilst pupils' scientific knowledge is good they are not given enough opportunities to use this knowledge in planning and carrying out their own experiments.

12. Standards in information and communication technology have improved considerably since the last inspection and are now broadly in line with those found in most schools at the end of both key stages. Pupils make satisfactory progress. However, because of lack of available finance there are no computers in classrooms for pupils to use and extend their skills during lessons away from the computer suite.

13. Attainment levels in geography and history are above average by the age of eleven as a result of good progress during Key Stage 2. Standards in dance are above average at the end of both key stages. Standards in all other subjects inspected at the end of both key stages are in line with those found in most schools. Pupils sing well in both key stages. The Catholic diocese will inspect religious education.

14. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, and are suitably challenged. The school is very aware of pupils' strengths and weaknesses through its assessment and testing procedures. However, targets for improvement are not sufficiently detailed on individual pupils' education plans. Teachers plan appropriate work for pupils with special needs, especially in English and mathematics, and make sure that they receive the necessary support to complete the activities successfully. As a result the pupils achieve standards in line with their capabilities.

15. The school is well on course to meet its agreed targets for English and mathematics in 2001.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. Pupils have very good attitudes to school and to their work and this has a positive impact on standards and the quality of learning. Parents confirm that the school expects their children to work hard and behave well and they are pleased with the standards that their children achieve. Pupils settle quickly at the beginning of lessons and they apply themselves diligently to their work. They listen attentively to their teachers and they concentrate well. Stickers and certificates are awarded for hard work, which encourages pupils to do their best.

17. Children who are under five work with enthusiasm and they are eager to please. They try hard in lessons and they are keen to talk about their work. Children are becoming familiar with school routines and they are given opportunities to choose some activities for themselves. They are beginning to develop increasing levels of independence and they try hard to change their clothing on their own before physical education lessons. Children enjoy listening to stories and they like to investigate by using magnets and magnifying glasses.

18. Pupils in both key stages have very positive attitudes to their work and they respond well to teachers' high expectations. In literacy and numeracy lessons pupils listen attentively and they concentrate well. They settle quickly into group activities and work hard to complete their tasks. Pupils are very interested in their work and they enjoy learning. They frequently bring books and items from home relevant to their studies, which they share with their classmates. In an information and communication technology lesson, pupils were eager to acquire new skills and they were very interested when a child demonstrated the use of the multi-media projector to them. During a physical education lesson pupils were keen to produce high quality dance movements and they worked very effectively with their partners. Pupils take a pride in the presentation of their work. For example, in an art lesson pupils worked neatly and carefully practising shading techniques. Pupils with special educational needs try hard with their work and they respond well to additional help and support.

19. Standards of behaviour are very good. Pupils are polite and they move about the buildings in an orderly manner. They hold doors open for one another and they greet visitors cheerfully. In lessons pupils behave well in most instances and they co-operate well in group activities. Occasionally, a small number of pupils behave immaturely, but staff handle these situations very effectively. Behaviour at break and lunchtimes is very good and the shared mealtime is a friendly occasion. Children play together well and there are very few instances of inappropriate behaviour or bullying. The school works closely with parents to resolve any concerns and there have been no exclusions in the past school year.

20. Pupils' personal development is very good. When given the opportunity they are keen to take on helpers' roles, such as collecting registers and tidying away equipment, and they carry out these duties very sensibly. Older pupils act as library monitors and they help teachers with specific jobs in classrooms. Pupils use their initiative and tidy away books and equipment without being asked. Pupils are developing good levels of personal responsibility through the completion of homework tasks. Younger children are keen to take home books to share with their parents and older pupils work conscientiously to finish tasks set by their teachers.

21. The quality of relationships between all members of the school community is very good. Members of staff and pupils show their mutual respect and this contributes very positively to the strong, caring ethos within the school. Pupils are keen to show their support for one another and they are quick to help if someone feels upset or anxious. In lessons, pupils listen well to each other and they respect different values and beliefs. They show sensitivity and they discuss their ideas sensibly.

22. Attendance rates are good and pupils enjoy coming to school. The rate of unauthorised absence is above the national average because some parents are not providing written notification of their children's absence. Pupils arrive promptly at school, ready to begin their lessons. This regular and punctual attendance has a positive effect upon pupils' learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

23. The quality of teaching is good overall. During the inspection teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons, and good or better in just over three quarters of these lessons. Teaching was very good in almost one in five of the lessons observed; the vast majority of these lessons were in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2. This is a significant improvement on the previous inspection when teaching was found to be unsatisfactory in 16% of lessons and only 6% of lessons were very good. The school has successfully addressed the issues, relating to the quality of teaching, raised in the previous inspection report. Higher attaining pupils do well and make good progress.

24. The overall quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is good, and nine out of ten lessons observed were judged to be good. The high proportion, over a quarter of lessons seen, of very good teaching was in communication, language and literacy. An example of excellent teaching was also observed. It demonstrated the teacher's skill in applying her very high levels of understanding of the way in which young children learn. Information from baseline assessments is used effectively. Direct teaching, in small teacher-focused groups, contribute greatly to the quality of learning. Other strengths of the teaching include the very high quality of planning for each of the areas of experience. There are clear targets for children's learning in all the activities provided. Teachers evaluate systematically the effectiveness of their teaching and make adjustments accordingly. They have high expectations of what children can achieve, and enjoy good relationships with them. They ensure children are fully and actively involved in a range of interesting activities.

25. In Key Stage 1 the overall quality of teaching is good. Almost seven out of ten lessons observed were judged to be good. A small number were very good. A particularly successful lesson in history involved the effective use of artefacts to develop knowledge of the Victorians and promote a good understanding of chronology. Common features of the good lessons include careful planning, clear learning objectives, which are usually shared with the children, high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement, good use of additional adults, when such support is available, and good classroom organisation.

26. In Key Stage 2 the overall quality of teaching is good. Almost eight out of ten lessons were judged to be good or better and almost a quarter were very good. These include the teaching of English to the oldest pupils and mathematics in the lower and upper ends of the key stage. Common strengths in these subjects include the high quality of planning, very good subject knowledge, clear explanations and a very high expectation of what pupils can achieve in relation to effort and presentation. Challenging lessons, which use time very well are conducted at a brisk pace. Other examples of very good teaching of various age groups in a range of subjects included an information and communication technology lesson where the teacher demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the subject in her confident delivery of a well planned lesson, which made effective use of multi-media equipment. A very good art lesson taught pupils to observe and evaluate their own and others' work. In physical education, enthusiastic teacher demonstration, sufficient time allocated to perfect a dance movement and subsequent evaluation by pupils themselves combined to provide a learning experience of very high quality.

27. Overall the quality of teaching in English and mathematics throughout the school is good and the particular strengths of both subjects are in the teaching of basic skills. Teachers have a clear grasp of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Reading is promoted very effectively but opportunities for pupils to use their very good writing skills in other subject areas could be increased. More use could be made of the library to develop pupils' information retrieval skills. In numeracy lessons regular use of mental work results in pupils being able to recall mental facts and calculate very speedily and accurately. However, more practical work would allow pupils to use their skills to the full.

28. The quality of teaching in science and information technology is good overall. Teachers' knowledge is imparted through methods that ensure that pupils acquire good subject information in science. More opportunities need to be created for them to apply this knowledge in practical situations. In information and communication technology teachers have confident subject knowledge and use the new suite effectively.

29. In all other subjects the quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers have good knowledge of the National Curriculum requirements. Common features include the effective teaching of technical and evaluative skills in art and design. Since the previous inspection teachers' knowledge and understanding of design and technology have improved throughout the school. Pictorial and video resources are used effectively in geography in both key stages but there is scope to develop field-work. Teachers successfully encourage pupils' skills of historical enquiry. In physical education the activities provided develop pupils' dance skills successfully and they are appropriately challenging. There are a some good examples of teachers' written comments on pupils' work, which help them to improve. However, this good practice is not consistent throughout the school. Some pupils are not given points for improvement.

30. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall. All teachers have an appropriate understanding of the curriculum needs for pupils who have individual difficulties, especially with English and mathematics. They take care to plan activities which take account of the pupils' capabilities. This has a significant impact on pupils' learning because it means that they are able to make good progress. The specialist support teacher offers effective advice and support to pupils on the special needs register. She also provides assessment advice and resources where needed. Individual education plans are in place but the targets are too general. Support for the two statemented pupils is well organised and effective. They work together in class on specially designed activities under the direction of a learning support assistant who is well briefed.

31. The quality of relationships between teachers and pupils is very good. Teachers manage pupils well, and act as good role models. High expectations of behaviour and effort have a very positive impact on the quality of learning. Resources are used effectively. Homework is set regularly. Throughout the school a combination of whole class, group and individual methods are used effectively and there are good opportunities for pupils to collaborate on shared tasks. The quality of learning is enhanced by pupils taking responsibility for their own learning in all classes.

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

32. The quality and range of the curriculum is very good overall. It promotes pupils' intellectual, physical, social and personal development and prepares them very well for the next stage in their education. Statutory requirements are fully met.

33. The previous inspection identified as key issues the need to complete schemes of work for all subjects taking into account the needs of pupils in mixed-age classes. This has been fully addressed. Schemes of work are in place for all subjects and take full account of the needs of all pupils including those in mixed-age classes. Legal requirements with regard to the teaching of information and communication technology are now met.

34. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage of Learning is very good. It addresses the six areas of learning recommended nationally and makes very good provision for children to achieve the Early Learning Goals. It ensures children are very well prepared for entry into Key Stage 1 at the end of the Reception year. A high level of emphasis is placed upon the children's personal and social development and on literacy and numeracy. Very good opportunities are planned for the promotion of language development. Learning through play is valued and there is a very good balance between adult-directed activities and opportunities for children to make their own choices. Elements of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are being successfully introduced. The two classes are organised principally between two learning areas. The quality of planning is very good and this ensures a high level of consistency and makes very good provision for all children, including those with special educational needs, to make good progress.

35. The curriculum at Key Stages 1 and 2 is relevant, broad and balanced and complies fully with the requirements of the National Curriculum. Sex education and drugs awareness are delivered principally through the science curriculum and other subjects as appropriate. Religious education has been inspected separately. All subjects have a policy and scheme of work and these provide good guidelines for medium- and short-term planning. Good account is taken of the National Curriculum programmes of study and the school integrates the most recent national guidelines into planning.

36. The effectiveness of teachers' strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy skills is very good across the school. This is having a positive impact on standards in both English and mathematics. However, the school needs to extend further the pupils' very good writing skills into other subjects of the curriculum. This would provide more opportunities for pupils to write in a variety of styles and for a wider range of purposes. In mathematics, further provision should be made for pupils to apply their very high number skills to more practical situations. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their scientific knowledge but the provision for pupils to plan and carry out their own experiments using this knowledge is less well consistently developed.

37. Planning is detailed and well matched to the needs of pupils. However, individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs do not contain enough detail. Long-, medium- and short-term planning are clearly linked and consistent throughout the school. All planning is regularly reviewed and evaluated by the headteacher and curriculum co-ordinators.

38. Provision for special educational needs is good. Pupils are identified as early as possible and appropriate steps are taken to assess their needs, write individual education plans and provide support. Individual education plans are reviewed regularly but the targets pupils are asked to achieve are too general. The school promotes educational and social inclusion, and is committed to raising the achievement of all pupils including targeted groups of pupils. All pupils receive support that is of a good quality from their learning support assistants. Pupils have full access to the curriculum and to educational visits.

39. The school offers a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities for pupils in Key Stage 2. Provision is principally in sport and music and includes football, netball cross-country running, choir and recorders. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to take part in inter-school competitive sport. Educational visits are closely linked to the topics being taught in, for example, history, geography and science. Pupils in Year 6 have the opportunity each year to take part in a residential visit, the most recent being to London. In addition, pupils in Years 5 and 6 are given the opportunity to take part in a retreat.

40. The school makes good provision for all pupils to make progress across the curriculum. Good use is made of assessment information to monitor the progress of boys and girls and different ability groups.

41. Good links with the community are in place, principally through the school's strong relationship with the church. Relationships with the high school and primary schools in the area are well established through competitive sport, visits and curriculum links.

42. The school has maintained its very good quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development identified at the time of the last inspection. The provision for cultural development is good, particularly the pupils' own culture. Provision for pupils to learn about the beliefs, values and practices of people from other cultures was identified as limited in the last inspection report. Improvements have been made and this aspect is now satisfactory.

43. The provision made for spiritual development is very good. The school's ethos is deeply embedded in its Christian beliefs and is a fundamental part of its daily life. Assemblies give pupils valuable insights into the spiritual aspects of life and provide very good opportunities to reflect on their own place in the world. Spiritual development is also a part of the wider curriculum. For example, during the inspection, in a geography lesson on coastal erosion, pupils were in awe of the power of the sea, and in a science lesson, the effects of vibration on different objects fascinated them. Opportunities for older pupils in Years 5 and 6 to take part in a retreat provide good opportunities for spiritual development and reflection.

44. Very good provision is made for the moral and social development of the pupils. These have remained strong elements of what the school provides since the previous inspection. The school's aims and values are familiar to teachers and pupils and are supported and appreciated by parents. There is a clear sense of unified purpose and belief in what the school stands for and it works hard to reflect in its everyday work and relationships. In this it is very successful. Pupils recognise, accept and contribute to a strong moral framework provided by the school. Adults in the school provide very good role models, treating pupils with respect and fairness whilst reinforcing their knowledge of the difference between right and wrong. The school takes many opportunities to enhance moral development through encouraging pupils to support a range of charities, for example, the organisation of St Joseph's Penny by the pupils.

45. The importance of social development is a firmly established aspect of the school. The relationships between pupils and adults are very good and underpin much that is provided for within the social and personal education of the pupils. From the Foundation Stage and throughout the school, staff take every opportunity to encourage positive and responsible social attitudes. An annual residential visit for pupils in Year 6 offers them opportunities to share activities in a different environment. The school's policy for behaviour management provides a good framework for developing coherent practice. The school holds regular special assemblies to celebrate pupils' individual and group successes.

46. The provision for cultural development is good overall. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to learn about their Catholic heritage and traditions. Lessons, particularly in art and design, geography, history and music, give pupils a good sense of their own heritage as well as that from other cultures around the world. In geography, for example, pupils learn about other lands and are able to compare people's lives with their own. Art and design provides good opportunities for pupils to enjoy the work of famous artists such as Van Gogh and Cezanne. However, the school has only a limited collection of books about other faiths and cultures.

47. Multi-cultural awareness is fostered through the inclusion of work about other world religions and cultures in the curriculum and in the school's charitable support of people in other countries of the world. A recent visit has taken place to the school by a priest from Ghana. This provided pupils with information about their own faith in another country.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

48. The school provides a caring and supportive environment and staff place a high priority on pupils' welfare. This very good quality of care has been maintained since the previous inspection. Pupils are confident to approach any member of staff with their concerns and they receive sensitive and effective guidance. Each child is valued and treated with respect. This has a beneficial effect on pupils' attitudes to their work and helps to develop their self-esteem and to support their progress.

49. There are appropriate child protection procedures and members of staff are suitably aware and report any concerns. There is effective liaison with specialist agencies to provide additional support for pupils and their families.

50. Overall arrangements to promote pupils' health and safety are very good. However, the surface of the Infant playground is in poor condition. Teachers emphasise the importance of following safety requirements, particularly in practical activities such as physical education lessons. The clear procedures for visits out of school stress that pupils' safety is of paramount importance. First aid arrangements are very good and parents are notified promptly if their child becomes unwell during the school day. Pupils with specific medical problems are cared for well and children are appropriately supervised at break and lunch times. Members of staff work hard to ensure that pupils feel secure and comfortable, so that they can make the most of their time in school and achieve successfully.

51. There are very effective systems in place to promote discipline and good behaviour. Pupils are fully aware of the high expectations that members of staff have of them and great emphasis is placed upon rewarding positive behaviour. Older pupils discuss and agree a set of guidelines for good behaviour and certificates are awarded to acknowledge improved effort or behaviour. In Key Stage 1 pupils' achievements are celebrated at a weekly 'Good News Assembly'. There is a clear system of sanctions and the school works closely with parents in cases of inappropriate behaviour. Bullying is uncommon but any isolated incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils' absences are well monitored and attendance registers are checked regularly by the headteacher. The school works effectively with parents to promote regular and punctual attendance and they are contacted promptly about any unexplained absences.

52. Procedures for the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress are good overall. At the time of the previous inspection the arrangements for recording attainment and progress were identified as a key issue for improvement. The school now has a clear and comprehensive policy and well established practices in place.

53. The assessment of children's attainment begins with an initial baseline assessment a few weeks after admission to the Reception class. Statutory end of key stage assessments in English, mathematics and science are fully in place. The school uses standardised testing materials to assess pupils' attainment from Year 2 to Year 6. Regular assessments are also used to monitor pupils' attainment and progress when units of work or topics have been completed. The school keeps individual portfolios of samples of pupils' work and ongoing records of reading and writing progress. These are passed onto the next teacher as pupils move through the school. An efficient system is in place to record individual pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science measured against National Curriculum levels. Teachers keep their own records of attainment and progress in other subjects of the curriculum. However, there is no agreed whole-school system in place. At the time of the last inspection, the quality of marking was identified as part of a key issue for improvement. Although a clear marking policy is in place and fully addresses this issue, some teachers do not follow it. As a result, pupils are not consistently provided with sufficient information on how they might improve their work.

54. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well. They are assessed at an early stage. However, pupils' individual education plans contain targets that are too general and do not identify in sufficient detail the steps pupils need to take in order to improve further.

55. Good use is made of assessment to inform planning. Teachers evaluate all lessons, identifying success and areas for further development. During most lessons good questioning skills are used to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding. Information from statutory and non-statutory tests is used effectively to track the progress being made by year groups, to set performance targets, define levels of attainment for booster classes for Year 6 pupils, and to identify strengths and weaknesses in curriculum provision.

56. The personal development of pupils is monitored regularly by class teachers through informal discussions and by observations in lessons or at break times. Pupils' individual records provide detailed information about a child's development during their time at the school. There are appropriate arrangements for children starting the school and members of staff visit the local playgroup and nursery, which some children attend before starting school. Parents and children have several opportunities to visit the school before formal entry. Class teachers liaise closely as pupils progress through the school and there is a good exchange of information. Pupils are well prepared for their move to secondary school and appropriate records are transferred. Members of staff know their pupils well, relationships are very good and these have a positive impact on pupils' learning.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

57. As at the time of the last inspection the school continues to work effectively with parents, most of whom are committed and supportive. Parents report that they would find it easy to approach staff with any problems and they feel that the school works closely with them. There is a very active and hard working Parents' and Teachers' Association and significant amounts of money are raised, with the help of parishioners, to benefit the school. Although several parents help with visits away from school, very few are involved on a regular basis giving assistance in classrooms. There was a high return rate of questionnaires and parents are pleased with the standards being achieved.

58. Attendance at termly parents' evenings to discuss children's progress is high. The headteacher confirms that parents of children with special educational needs are invited to regular reviews of progress. Although there is good parental support for homework, a number of parents are concerned about the quantity and range of tasks set. Homework is satisfactory and is set regularly. Meetings for parents to explain the preparation for statutory tests for pupils in Years 2 and 6 have been well attended. All parents have returned the Home School Agreement and this good and effective level of parental involvement has a beneficial effect upon children's learning.

59. Information for parents is good overall. The prospectus and annual governors' report are well presented and regular letters and newsletters keep parents well informed about school activities and events. Useful information about curriculum areas to be studied is sent out twice termly and parents receive clear details about work to be covered and target setting in mathematics. Children's annual written progress reports contain detailed comments and targets for improvement in most subject areas. However, the quality of comments varies and they do not always state clearly enough the strengths and weaknesses in children's performances.

60. The high level of parental support for children's learning, the effective parental involvement in the life of the school and the good levels of information provided by staff make a significant contribution to children's attainment and progress.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

61. The quality of leadership and management of the school shown by the headteacher and the senior management team is very good. The headteacher is highly committed to the school. He has worked very hard since his appointment and has successfully raised standards and improved the quality of the learning environment. There is a very positive ethos throughout the school and relationships are very good. The school successfully meets its aims.

62. Very good progress has been made in addressing most of the key issues raised in the last inspection report. Standards of attainment in English and mathematics have improved. The quality of teaching has improved significantly. Lessons are now challenging, have a good pace and time is used well. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of science and design and technology is good. All subjects now have schemes of work and planning is of a very high quality. Under the leadership of the headteacher members of staff work very hard to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met, including those who have the potential to attain high standards. The role of subject co-ordinators has been developed successfully and now includes the monitoring of pupils' books as well as reporting annually to the Governing Body. However it does not yet include the monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice. The school has already recognised this as an area for development.

63. Since the time of the last inspection the school has put in place a good system for recording the progress children make. Provision for information and communication technology has improved significantly. The subject now meets statutory requirements and standards are broadly in line with national expectations. All pupils have regular access to a modern computer suite and follow a coherent programme of activities.

64. The governors have an excellent understanding of the strength and weaknesses of the school. It enables them to work with staff in order to set appropriate priorities for development. Subject co-ordinators report back directly to the Governing Body every year. Governors are very conscientious and involved effectively in the strategic management of the school. They monitor performance very effectively. All legal requirements are met. The governors have in place all the requisite committees. The literacy governor, the special needs governor and the numeracy governor have a good understanding of their roles. The School Improvement Plan is of good quality and contains appropriate targets.

65. The procedures for monitoring the implementation of curriculum policies and the quality of provision are good. Regular planned monitoring has included classroom observations by the headteacher to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching of, for example, literacy and numeracy. Test results are analysed and the information is used effectively to set targets for future improvement.

66. Financial planning and management are very good. The school manages its finances very well. Effective budgeting procedures take due account of priorities identified in the School Improvement Plan. The Finance Committee meets on a regular basis and carefully monitors spending. Governors evaluate the results of spending decisions fully. The headteacher and school secretary follow conscientiously clear financial procedures. The most recent audit found financial management satisfactory and the recommendations made in that report have since been addressed. Through prudent financial planning the school has been able to reduce considerably the substantial deficit that it was carrying at the time of the previous inspection. The school receives good support from the Local Education Authority's financial officer.

67. The money allocated to the school to support pupils with special educational needs is used well. The pupils make good progress not only in academic work but also in personal and social development. Overall the special needs co-ordinator manages and organises the provision effectively but individual education plans are too general. The specialist support teacher provides very good assistance to the school.

68. The school has a sufficient number of teaching and support staff who are suitably qualified and experienced to meet the demands of the curriculum. There is a wide range of experience amongst the staff including provision for children who are under five and for pupils with special educational needs. The staff has sufficient knowledge and expertise to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Teachers work well together as a team despite the difficulties associated with Key Stage 1 classes being housed in a separate building. Classroom support staff are appropriately deployed and very well briefed. They make a valuable contribution to the progress made by pupils.

69. All members of staff have job descriptions. The support given to newly qualified teachers is good. It ensures that they are fully informed on all procedures. Since the last inspection an appraisal system has been successfully introduced and is currently being reviewed in the light of the introduction of Performance Management regulations. Staff members have attended appropriate training courses. The headteacher's commitment to investing in the development of staff skills is reflected in the improved subject knowledge and in the proficiency of support staff in carrying out their roles.

70. The governors manage the accommodation very well. It is well maintained and parts of it have recently been refurbished. It is kept very clean by the temporary caretaker and provides a pleasant working environment. However, the school grounds are less attractive and the infant playground is in need of repair. There are also problems with the drainage of the football field.

71. Resources for learning have improved since the last inspection when they were found to be barely adequate in mathematics, science, physical education and music. They were unsatisfactory in information and communication technology and library provision. Although the school has placed the emphasis on maintaining staffing levels and lowering the budget deficit, they have been able through prudent purchasing to remedy most of the gaps in equipment and materials. Information and communication technology provision has been modernised with the addition of a fully equipped computer suite. However, there are no computers in classrooms. The non-fiction library is not well organised or stocked. Resources in most other subjects are now at least adequate but more historical resources are needed.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

72. In order to improve the good quality of education even further the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- ◆ **improve the opportunities for pupils to use their very good writing skills in other subjects;**

[See paragraphs 4, 6 27 36, 100, 140 and 145 in main report.]

- ◆ **improve the consistency in teachers' marking by:**

ensuring more wide-spread use of written comments when books are marked that provide pupils with pointers on how they might improve their work;

[See paragraphs 29, 53, 103, 113, 124 and 142 in the main report.]

- ◆ **provide more opportunities for pupils to apply their very good number and good scientific knowledge in practical situations by:**

giving pupils more opportunities to develop skills in planning and carrying out experiments in science and in using their numerical skills to support practical activities;

[See paragraphs 7, 9, 11, 27, 28, 36, 109, 113, 119, 120 and 124 in the main report.]

- ◆ **involve curriculum co-ordinators further in the monitoring of standards in their subjects by:**

providing them with appropriate training to give them confidence and expertise in undertaking classroom monitoring;

giving them enough time to monitor classroom practice, including time to prepare for and provide feedback to the headteacher and to colleagues;

(The school has already recognised that this is an issue that needs to be addressed.)

[See paragraphs 62, 105, 115, 117 and 149 in the main report.]

- ◆ **ensure that the uneven surface on the Infant playground is rectified.**

[See paragraphs 50, 70 and 172 in the main report.]

Other weaknesses that should be considered by the school.

- ◆ The written targets on special educational needs pupils' individual education plans are not specific enough. [Paragraphs 30, 38, 54 and 104.]
- ◆ The school library is not well stocked or organised. [Paragraphs 46, 71 and 105.]
- ◆ Pupils' lack of access to computers in their own classrooms. [Paragraphs 71, 100 and 157.]

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	72
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1.4%	16.7%	59.7%	22.2%	0%	0%	0%

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	295
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	25

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	48

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	4.4
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.8
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	22 [14]	20 [25]	42 [39]

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20 [14]	20 [14]	22 [14]
	Girls	19 [25]	19 [25]	20 [25]
	Total	39 [39]	39 [39]	42 [39]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93% [100%]	93% [100%]	100% [97%]
	National	83% [82%]	84% [83%]	90% [87%]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19 [14]	22 [14]	22 [14]
	Girls	19 [25]	20 [25]	20 [25]
	Total	38 [39]	42 [39]	42 [39]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90% [100%]	100% [100%]	100% [100%]
	National	84% [82%]	88% [86%]	88% [87%]

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	25 [19]	15 [15]	40 [34]

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	21 [19]	18 [17]	20 [17]
	Girls	15 [14]	13 [13]	15 [14]
	Total	36 [33]	31 [30]	35 [31]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	90% (97%)	78% (88%)	88% (91%)
	National	75% (70%)	72% (69%)	85% (78%)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	19 [10]	19 [14]	21 [11]
	Girls	14 [11]	13 [13]	15 [13]
	Total	33 [21]	32 [27]	36 [24]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83% (62%)	80% (79%)	90% (71%)
	National	70% (68%)	72% (69%)	79% (75%)

Notes: 1. Figures in brackets refer to the previous year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	292
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.5
Average class size	26.7

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	80

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
	£
Total income	443,917
Total expenditure	443,507
Expenditure per pupil	1,590
Balance brought forward from previous year	-565
Balance carried forward to next year	-155

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	295
Number of questionnaires returned	213

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	61%	37%	1%	1%	0%
My child is making good progress in school.	49%	41%	6%	1%	2%
Behaviour in the school is good.	48%	48%	2%	0%	1%
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33%	47%	15%	2%	2%
The teaching is good.	53%	39%	2%	1%	5%
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46%	42%	6%	3%	2%
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62%	29%	6%	1%	2%
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61%	35%	2%	1%	1%
The school works closely with parents.	41%	48%	4%	3%	3%
The school is well led and managed.	56%	36%	3%	1%	3%
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52%	43%	2%	0%	2%
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31%	39%	14%	5%	10%

Because of rounding not all rows may 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

73. Children enter the Reception class with attainment levels that are within the average range. They have widely differing experiences gained in a variety of pre-school settings. Two teachers, a nursery nurse and a classroom assistant work very successfully as a team to provide learning experiences of very high quality, which centre on the six areas of learning for the age group.

74. By the end of the Reception year most children are achieving the expected goals in each area of learning and often exceed these expectations in communication, language and literacy and in mathematical development. This represents good progress for all pupils and very good progress for a substantial number. The range of activities on offer are of a very good quality.

Personal, social and emotional development.

75. Most children settle quickly into the routines of the school, helped by the clear expectations of the adults who care for them in the classroom and the additional support provided at times when they may feel vulnerable, for example at lunch time. The organisation of the school day is very successful in promoting personal development. Teaching in this area is of good quality. It fosters independence in the selection of activities, encourages the sharing of equipment and toys, and promotes good levels of concentration within the teacher-focused groups. Most children soon develop an understanding of what is right and wrong. The celebration of happy occasions, such as birthdays and religious festivals of the Christian year, is an integral part of the Reception year.

Communication, language and literacy.

76. Language and literacy are very well promoted and the overall quality of teaching and learning are very good. An appropriately generous amount of time is devoted to the direct teaching of this area of learning and the small group method is very effective in providing for the needs of individual children. Work is carefully planned with very clear targets in mind and evaluation of how far these have been met forms a basis for future learning. This, together with the high expectations of the teacher, ensured that a very good lesson was delivered to high attaining children during the inspection. Very good understanding of how young children learn was evident in an observed example of excellent teaching. The teacher appropriately adapted her strategies to enthuse a group of children who were finding the learning difficult, ensuring that they too made maximum progress.

77. Most children speak confidently to adults in the classroom and they are learning to listen more carefully to the instructions given to the whole class. In play situations such as 'the clinic' they communicate imaginatively with each other. Children look at books whilst waiting on the 'ambulance' and pretend to take telephone calls booking 'appointments' for patients.

78. By the end of the Reception year almost all have begun to read, with some higher attaining children acquiring a degree of fluency. Most can attempt to write a sentence independently.

Mathematical development.

79. The quality of teaching and learning in mathematical development is good. The advantages of small group teaching apply similarly to this area of learning. Careful planning, the active involvement of children in interesting activities, an emphasis on understanding mathematical concepts and good relationships between teacher and children are all features of the good teaching.

80. By the end of the Reception year most children exceed the targets for the age group. They can count reliably, recognise and write numbers to 10, know and understand terms of comparative measurement such as long, longer, longest. They are able to name common plane shapes and some solid shapes, such as 'sphere', and have an understanding of capacity.

Knowledge and understanding of the world.

81. This area is well promoted and the quality of teaching is good. Good use is made of the locality. For example, children observe the changes taking place in the course of their 'Autumn walk'. They talk about, and record, developments that have taken place in their own lives. There are good opportunities for them to use a range of equipment, such as magnifying glasses and magnets to conduct their own investigations. They play with sand and appreciate that it is different in texture and building quality when it is wet. A variety of materials, tools, implements and construction apparatus are regularly used to make a range of pictures and models. Sometimes children plan their design on paper before setting out on the making process. Technological equipment is available within the classroom and children use the school's computers in the information and communication technology suite effectively, for example, to develop mouse control of events on the screen. Samples of children's work show that by the end of the Reception year attainment is that expected for the year group.

Physical development.

82. Teaching in this area is good and the development of physical skills is in line with the expectations of children for this age. They enjoy physical education sessions in the hall, such as moving to music or playing games involving control of a ball with hands or feet. The timetable of the Reception day ensures that there are periods of activity in the course of play. However there is scope to extend these by providing equipment that promotes more vigorous challenges, for example in travelling, balancing and climbing.

83. Children are taught to recognise the importance of keeping healthy and during inspection week the children enjoyed the contribution made by the health visitor to this part of their learning.

Creative development.

84. Teaching and learning in this area is good. During the course of the year children take part in a range of imaginative play activities and use a varied selection of materials to make pictures and decorate objects. They learn songs and rhymes, experiment with percussion instruments and sometimes act in performances before an adult audience.

85. Since the previous inspection the members of the Reception staff have worked extremely hard to improve their planning of the curriculum and it is now of a very high quality. It provides for all the areas of learning and centres on the Early Learning Goals for the age group. The Reception teachers and the nursery nurse plan their lessons together, identify clear learning outcomes for all activities and provide a good balance between adult-directed and child-initiated activities. They make very good use of the newly refurbished classroom, which provides a very attractive and stimulating working environment. Baseline assessment is used effectively when children enter the Reception class and observation and assessment of children's achievements have a high priority throughout their time in the class.

86. Provision is made for children to visit school prior to entry and to prepare parents for their children starting school. However, there is scope to develop the existing good practice still further in order to help parents to become more familiar with the complexities of the extensive requirements of the Foundation Stage.

ENGLISH

87. Since the previous inspection attainment has improved considerably in English throughout the school. At the time of the last inspection standards were judged to be in line with those expected nationally but pupils were not making consistent progress. Now standards are well above average by the time pupils reach the end of Key Stage 2. A significant number of pupils in Year 6 are on course to exceed the national standard. The 2000 national test results showed the performance of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 to be well above the national average and above the average for similar schools. These results, with 90% of pupils achieving the expected Level 4 and 50% Level 5, show that the school has maintained its very high standards from the previous year. This represents very good progress over time because this particular class has a higher percentage of pupils with special educational needs than usual. These pupils benefited considerably from additional work done in booster classes. However, only 13% of pupils achieved the higher Level 5 in writing compared with 68% in reading. Taking the four years 1996 to 1999 together the performance of the pupils in English was well above the national average.

88. In the 2000 Key Stage 1 National Curriculum tests for seven-year-olds the percentage of pupils reaching Level 2 and above in reading and writing was above the national average. The percentage of pupils reaching Level 3 and above in writing was above the national average and in reading broadly in line with the national average. Speaking and listening skills were well above average. Taking the four years 1996 to 1999 together the performance of pupils in reading and writing was well above the national average. Inspection evidence indicates that the great majority of pupils in Year 2 are on course to reach the expected Level 2 with a significant number on course to reach Level 3. This represents good progress.

89. Literacy is given a high priority throughout the curriculum and in relation to their prior attainment pupils make good and often very good progress in developing the skills of literacy. In this they are building on the very effective foundation for learning provided for them in the Reception class.

90. Most areas of weakness highlighted at the last inspection have been addressed successfully. For example, pupils in Key Stage 1 are now given sufficient opportunities to pose their own questions and to review their writing in order to extend and improve it. Younger pupils in Key Stage 2 are provided with appropriate opportunities to write in a variety of contexts and for a wide range of purposes. They are making good progress.

91. The school has successfully implemented the National Literacy Strategy and this is having a very positive effect on raising standards. Teachers and pupils are aware of the skills they are teaching and learning and lessons have an atmosphere of hard work and commitment to high standards. The school has also adopted the Additional Literacy Strategy and booster classes to provide extra help for those pupils who need it to reach the required standards. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

92. Standards in speaking and listening are well above average by the end of both key stages. The school places considerable emphasis on developing speaking and listening skills and as a result most pupils make very good progress. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are confident and articulate speakers. Role play situations, such as the 'Victorian Kitchen', improve the quality of learning in this aspect and have a positive effect on standards. They are eager to answer questions and to talk about their work. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are able to discuss texts using subject-specific vocabulary. They express ideas clearly and use interesting and grammatically accurate language. New vocabulary introduced during the literacy hour is used well in class discussions. For example, during the inspection teaching and learning in Year 4 focused on using secondary sources in history. In class discussions pupils were able to use a wide range of vocabulary as they confidently discussed how archaeologists used their findings to discover what life was like in a Viking village.

93. By the end of Key Stage 1 attainment is well above the national average in reading. In the 2000 reading tests for seven-year-olds the percentage of children reaching Level 2 was above the national average but the percentage at Level 3 was broadly in line with the national average. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are aware of authors and illustrators and are able to identify the main characters and events in their favourite books. Younger pupils read simple books with increasing accuracy and understanding. Higher attaining pupils in Year 2 use a variety of strategies to help them recognise unfamiliar words, such as letter patterns and sounds, context and pictures. They read aloud with confidence and appropriate expression and understanding. Pupils take books home regularly and family members hear their children read. This has a very positive effect on pupils' standards and progress.

94. In Key Stage 2 pupils continue to make good progress. Standards in reading are high by the end of the Key Stage. Most pupils can read a range of texts fluently and accurately. Books are very well matched to pupils' attainment and interest levels and pupils are very enthusiastic readers of a wide range of texts. Older pupils express a preference for particular authors and they choose books because of particular interests, such as adventure stories. Higher attaining and average attaining pupils understand plot, setting and characterisation. They are able to make deductions and inferences from their reading. Pupils are developing good independent research skills as they use dictionaries and the Internet. However, the library is not well used for research activities. This was also identified as a weakness at the time of the last inspection.

95. By the end of Key Stage 1 standards in writing are well above the national average. Improvements since the last inspection are significant. In the 2000 writing tests for seven-year-olds the percentages reaching Level 2 and Level 3 were above the national average. Compared with similar schools the results were average.

96. By the end of Key Stage 1 the majority of pupils spell common words correctly and make a good attempt to spell more complex words. Personal wordbooks are used well to support their writing. Most pupils are able to write interesting stories and accounts in sequence. There are some good examples of poetry writing on display. For example, one child writing about autumn composed the following verse:

'Leaves fall off trees like snow,
Hedgehogs hibernate,
Furry squirrels gather nuts for winter.'

97. Higher attainers observe the rules of punctuation by using full stops and capital letters appropriately. Handwriting is usually neat and well formed.

98. In Key Stage 2 pupils progressively develop their ability to write for different purposes using a wide range of styles. Pupils' writing is well formed and most write in a neat joined style. Standards are well above the national average. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Work shows an awareness of the need for a very good use of well-chosen vocabulary to capture the imagination of the reader. They write poems, book reviews, biographies and letters. Writing is very well organised. Higher attaining pupils use paragraphs, correct punctuation, complex grammatical structures and rich appropriate vocabulary to enliven their writing. For example, Year 6 learnt about personification through a study of the poem 'Hiawatha'. One pupil wrote a poem called 'The Whirlpool' that included the lines:

'I can travel far and wide,
I can form an angry tide.
Around the rocks and pebbles I curve
Roaring with anger and breaking a nerve.'

99. Some of the writing is very emotional. For example, one of the oldest pupils compiling a fact file about his grandfather wrote, 'When he was close he made me feel warm. He was a great man.'

100. Information and communication technology is used effectively to support knowledge and understanding. However, because classrooms do not have their own computers pupils can not use them as much as they would like. In the Year 5/6 class pupils used the official Sydney 2000 Olympic web site to find information about the games. However, in both key stages there are insufficient opportunities provided for pupils to use their very good writing skills in other subjects of the curriculum such as science, history and geography.

101. Behaviour is very good. Pupils show very positive attitudes to learning and enjoy very positive relationships with their teachers. This makes a considerable contribution to their rate of progress and the high standards of attainment achieved. Most pupils are very eager to learn, stay on task and show very good levels of independence and concentration. They show pride in producing work of a high standard. Pupils enjoy their English lessons and respond very well to the structure of the Literacy Hour.

102. Teaching in both key stages has improved since the last inspection. In both key stages it is good overall. All teachers are confidently implementing the National Literacy Strategy. Teaching is now carefully structured and well planned to meet the needs of pupils of all attainment levels. Teachers share the learning objectives with the pupils and ensure that pupils are very clear about what it is they are expected to learn. Throughout the school spelling, punctuation and grammar are given a particularly high priority and pupils' knowledge and understanding of basic skills are apparent in their writing. Teachers use questioning effectively to check understanding and extend thinking. When teaching is very good, expectations are particularly high and the teacher's enthusiasm, explanations and knowledge have a very positive effect on attainment and progress. In all lessons the plenary sessions are used well to check pupils have understood the learning objectives. Relationships are usually very good and teachers have high expectations of their pupils' behaviour and attainment resulting in very good discipline and high standards.

103. Pupils throughout the school receive good oral feedback about their work. Teachers mark work regularly but in some classes the comments are mainly supportive rather than giving targets to help pupils to improve.

104. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers conscientiously plan appropriate work for pupils who have difficulties with their English work. Members of the support staff are used effectively to give additional help to individuals and groups of pupils. Their contribution greatly enhances the learning opportunities for the pupils. However, individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are too general and do not give parents sufficient detail on how to help their children make the necessary progress towards achieving the set targets.

105. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Both boys and girls are given equal access to the curriculum. The subject is conscientiously co-ordinated. A system for monitoring curriculum provision is in place, but this has not yet been extended to involving the co-ordinator in classroom lesson observations. Resources are good overall and well used apart from library provision that is inadequate. Assessment and record keeping are now good. National Curriculum tests are used effectively to raise standards and to identify areas for school improvement. Homework is set appropriately to extend work done in lessons and to check that pupils have fully understood new learning.

MATHEMATICS

106. In the 2000 tests for seven-year-olds every pupil achieved at least the expected level in mathematics. This placed the school in the top five percent for all schools and for similar schools in attainment at Level 2. The percentage reaching the higher Level 3 was broadly in line with the average for schools nationally but below that for similar schools. In the years 1996 to 1999, performance overall has been above the national average.

107. In the 1999 tests at the end of Key Stage 2, results indicate that the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 [88%] was well above the national average and the percentage reaching Level 5 [44%] was also well above the national average. Pupil performance was well above the average when compared with similar schools. Taking the four years 1996 to 1999 together, performance in mathematics has consistently been well above the national average. The 2000 results showed a decline in standards with 78% of pupils attaining Level 4 and above and 25% reaching Level 5. The school did not reach its target of 85% of pupils attaining Level 4. However, the class contained a large number of special educational needs pupils. Whilst the school was able to provide additional lessons for pupils to improve their work in English, this was not so in mathematics. However, standards were broadly in line with the national average at both Level 4 and Level 5. In the current year the school has made good use of assessment information to organise additional lessons in mathematics for those who need it.

108. Inspection evidence indicates that the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standards in mathematics by the end of both key stages is well above national expectations. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection when standards were reported as in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. There are no significant differences between boys' and girls' performance in either key stage. Pupils with special educational needs are generally provided with good levels of support in lessons, because work is planned well to meet their needs. This results in good progress.

109. By the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of number and number operations. Already in the early part of the school year pupils demonstrate a very good grasp of number relationships to 20. They understand and work easily with numbers 'more than' or 'less than'. Pupils are already developing good mental strategies for finding answers to problems and are very confident when asked to explain their methods and reasoning. They have a secure grasp of the need for standard units when measuring and can explain why non-standard units are unreliable. Previously completed work shows that most pupils have a very good grasp of counting on, odd and even numbers, and right angles in shapes work. However, a scrutiny of work completed previously and lesson observations indicates limited evidence of these high levels of knowledge and understanding being used to support practical activities.

110. Pupils currently in Year 6 are achieving very high levels of numerical knowledge and understanding. A large majority is already working confidently with number at the expected Level 4. In the lesson observed, pupils were able to round up and down five-digit numbers to the nearest 10, 100 and 1000. In a problem-solving activity, many were able to add mentally a three-digit number to a five-digit number and a smaller number of pupils demonstrated good skills in mental calculation using more than one number operation. Pupils know why estimating skills are important and are able to use them effectively to work out how much money they might need, for example, when making a multiple transaction. Lower attaining pupils in the year group demonstrate secure knowledge and understanding of place value to four digits. Work completed previously indicates that the large majority of pupils have a secure understanding of rotational symmetry, congruent shapes, and different types of triangles and angles. When provided with the opportunity, pupils make satisfactory use of their number skills and knowledge of mathematics to solve problems. However, this aspect of their work is not as well developed as other aspects.

111. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall at Key Stage 1 and very good at Key Stage 2. Most work is neatly set out. In lessons pupils are attentive, they concentrate well, are prepared to persevere with their work and are interested and confident. The majority are keen to take part in class discussion and are happy to explain their strategies for working out. They behave well and co-operate with their teachers and with each other. They respect others' answers whether correct or not and are prepared to learn from their mistakes. This positive approach contributes to the good and often very good progress made in both key stages.

112. The quality of teaching is good overall at Key Stage 1. At Key Stage 2 teaching is good. During the week of the inspection teaching was very good in half of all lessons seen in Key Stage 2. Teachers demonstrate a very secure level of subject knowledge and understanding. This is particularly well developed at Key Stage 2. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy is very effective and this is reflected in the good quality of lesson planning. Lesson objectives are clear, tasks and activities are well thought out and provide a good match and level of challenge for all pupils. Teachers in both key stages teach mathematical skills very effectively. This is evident in the high level of knowledge and understanding of number operations acquired by the large majority of the pupils. The quality of the pupils' learning is good as a result of the good teaching they receive. Teachers expect pupils to make the maximum effort in lessons. Pupils respond well and this has a positive impact on the quality of their work.

113. In both key stages, teachers demonstrate effective teaching methods. Where teaching is very good teachers use a variety of activities, questioning is clear and incisive and the attention of all pupils is fully engaged. The use of time and the pace of lessons are very good in the large majority of lessons. As a result, pupils work productively and lesson objectives are almost always achieved. Teachers use their questioning skills well to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding. Although work is marked, some teachers do not always provide pupils with sufficient information on what they need to do to improve their work. There is a very clear and focused emphasis on the development of mental, oral and written number skills. This results in high levels of attainment. However, in both key stages, pupils are not provided with sufficient practical situations and activities in which they have opportunities to use these skills. There are some examples of mathematics being used in other subjects but this is not a strong feature of the mathematics provision.

114. A clear mathematics policy is in place. The school follows the National Numeracy Strategy in its planning and incorporates the Local Education Authority's guidelines for teaching mixed-age classes. The co-ordinator for the subject and the headteacher monitor and evaluate all levels of mathematics planning. Assessment procedures and the use of assessment to inform planning are of a good quality. Assessment information is used well to track the progress of year groups and to identify levels of attainment when planning booster classes for Year 6 pupils. It is also used effectively to inform parents in the annual reports.

115. The co-ordinator for the subject provides a good level of leadership. A particular strength has been her input into staff training for the introduction of the Numeracy Strategy. She has kept governors fully informed about the subject. Although some opportunities have been provided for the co-ordinator to monitor the quality of teaching, to date this has been limited. The school has recognised that this aspect of the co-ordinators role is in need of development.

116. At the time of the last inspection, the provision of resources to support the teaching of the full programme of study was identified as a weakness. The school has fully addressed this and the level of resources is now good. The school is well placed to meet its agreed targets for 2001.

SCIENCE

117. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection. Resources are now satisfactory and teaching is good overall in both key stages. Pupils in both key stages make good progress, especially in the acquisition of scientific knowledge. Higher attaining pupils are suitably challenged in both key stages in developing their scientific knowledge. The school makes good use of assessment information. However, the co-ordinator's role is still limited. The subject action plan recognises the need for the co-ordinator to become more involved in monitoring the subject.

118. In the Year 2000 National Curriculum tests in science at the end of Key Stage 2 the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 and above was broadly in line with the national average. Higher attaining pupils did well with an above average 40% achieving Level 5. This was a significant improvement on the previous year when 24% achieved Level 5. The school places a strong emphasis on the direct teaching of scientific information and higher attaining pupils in particular have benefited from this approach. In the National Curriculum tests in science at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1999 the percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 and above was higher than the national average but in line with that found in similar schools. Taking the previous four years 1996 to 1999 together, the performance of pupils was close to the national average. Over the same period of time there has been no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys in science.

119. At the end of Key Stage 2 standards are above average. Inspection evidence shows that pupils have good scientific knowledge and most pupils are well on their way to reaching the expected standard in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 with a significant number set to achieve a higher level. However, pupils are not given enough opportunities to use their good scientific knowledge in planning and carrying out experiments.

120. During Key Stage 2 pupils make good progress in developing their scientific knowledge. By the age of eleven, pupils have a good recall and understanding of scientific topics. For example, they can explain photo-synthesis and know that evaporation is a process. Younger pupils can explain why a person's pulse rate increases when s/he exercises. Pupils can accurately name the major organs of the human body. In Year 4 they carry out tests to find the hardest rock. However, throughout the key stage there is little evidence that pupils have been provided with sufficient opportunities to set up and carry out an investigation for themselves, even though they know how to do so. For example, when pupils are asked to devise a method for separating a mixture of sand and stone all the apparatus is already on the tables so they do not have to work out for themselves what they will need. Work is well presented but in some classes pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to write using their own words. There are some good examples of pupils using their writing skills but this is not generally the case. A good example was found in one class where, as part of a study of the harmful effects of drugs, pupils take on the role as newspaper reporters. One child wrote 'Drug dealers! Make sure you avoid them!' During the week of the inspection pupils in a Year 5 class were given a good opportunity to write up in their own words an experiment about the effects of evaporation. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make satisfactory progress.

121. The 1999 end of Key Stage 1 teacher assessments in science showed that the percentage attaining Level 2 and above was very high in comparison with the national average. No pupils were assessed as achieving Level 3. The school was concerned about the assessments. As a result, assessment procedures were revised during the following year, the science curriculum was improved and in-service training was provided. In the 2000 assessment 19% of pupils achieved Level 3 and all pupils achieved Level 2 or above. Inspection evidence indicates that most pupils are on course to achieve well above average standards.

122. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils carry out simple investigations and classify accurately items of food. Pupils undertake a survey of their classmates' favourite fruit and draw a graph to show the results. Younger pupils can correctly match the correct word to features of the face. Pupils learn about the effect of vibration and are fascinated by seeing small pieces of coconut 'jump' as a result of being placed on a surface near to where they are making a banging noise. They accurately record different sounds and what they are both heard in the classroom and in the playground.

123. Pupils' attitudes to science are very good. In all the lessons seen, pupils worked together well. They listen carefully and are willing to contribute their own ideas to class discussions. In both key stages, when asked to do so, pupils apply themselves well to tasks and make sensible observations.

124. The quality of teaching is good overall in both key stages. Teachers teach subject knowledge well. As a result the quality of learning is good because pupils are given clear explanations. For example, in Year 6 a very good introduction to a lesson ensured that pupils knew what causes evaporation. In a good lesson in Year 4 the teacher used a cross-section of an apple as a visual aid to help pupils gain an understanding of what the Earth's core and crust is like. This captured the pupils' imagination on a wet dismal afternoon and led to some interesting questions from the children. All answers, whether right or wrong, were explored. This not only took learning on further but also had a positive effect on pupils' self-esteem because pupils were not put off from offering their opinions. In a Year 1 lesson the teacher gave pupils the opportunity to experiment with a range of instruments to help them decide how they might be played she was not over-directive and allowed the pupils to work things out for themselves. This had a positive effect upon the quality of learning. In all classes pupils need more opportunities to carry out their own experiments. At times teachers are over directive and pupils are asked to sit too long before undertaking investigative work. Though some teachers encourage pupils to write up their observations using their own words this is not the case in all classes. Teachers' written comments, made when marking books, are usually supportive but rarely do they inform pupils what to do next in order to improve their work.

125. The leadership and management of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator reviews medium-term planning but does not monitor the quality of teaching. The school has successfully introduced the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority guidelines to supplement its existing scheme. Assessment procedures are good and use is made of the information to set targets. Resources are satisfactory. The subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.

ART AND DESIGN

126. At the time of the previous inspection standards were reported as in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. Evidence from lesson observations, an analysis of work on display and in pupils' sketchbooks and discussions with pupils indicates that standards have been maintained. Pupils in both key stages make satisfactory progress. However, during the inspection, attainment in some lessons was good. Pupils with special education needs take a full part in art and make satisfactory progress.

127. Pupils in Years 1 and 2, when drawing self-portraits, develop good skills in observational work and are learning how to evaluate the finished product. They can mix and blend colours and use pencils, pastels and paint with a good level of control.

128. Younger pupils in Key Stage 2, working on developing line and tone, make good use of pastels and crayons. They demonstrate good control and are able to talk about their work and how they might improve it. They know how to change tonal qualities and are developing appropriate use of technical vocabulary. Pupils in Years 5 are able to combine line drawing and blending to produce work in the style of Marlene London. They are developing a satisfactory understanding of how to build up colour to represent light and dark. The majority of pupils are developing satisfactory observational skills. However, a number of pupils tend to draw what they think is in front of them and do not understand the need for frequent visual reference to the object being drawn or painted. By the end of the key stage pupils make satisfactory use of a pencil to depict tone and perspective. They make satisfactory attempts to shade using cross-hatching.

129. The pupils' attitudes to the subject are good. They are interested in art and design and enjoy their lessons. They work well together and share resources generously. When evaluating their work, they are respectful and supportive of each other. The ability to make choices about the tools and materials they will use is well developed. They are well behaved at all times.

130. The quality of teaching is good overall in both key stages. Lessons are planned with care. Teachers ensure that resources are carefully prepared and organised in good time for the lesson to begin. Good levels of skills teaching were observed during the inspection. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to make choices. This improves levels of independent learning. In one very good Key Stage 2 lesson during the week of the inspection the teacher provided very opportunities for pupils to use their evaluative skills.

131. The last inspection report identified that there was no policy or scheme of work in place. This has been successfully addressed. Planning provides a detailed framework for teaching and learning and addresses the full programme of study for the subject. Planning is regularly monitored and evaluated by the art co-ordinator and headteacher. The last inspection identified resource provision as a weakness. This has been rectified and resources are now at a good level, are well organised and are of a good quality.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

132. At the time of the last inspection, standards in design and technology were reported as broadly in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1 and below national expectations at the end of Key Stage 2. During the present inspection three lessons were observed and of these only one was in Key Stage 2. These observations, combined with the scrutiny of pupils' design technology books, discussions with pupils in lessons and evidence of previously completed work provide enough evidence to indicate that standards are now in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school.

133. Pupils in Year 1 are able to choose different shaped boxes to construct models. They make satisfactory use of tools and materials and use scissors carefully. They are learning how to describe processes and explain some of the reasons for their choice of boxes. Pupils in Year 2 are developing satisfactory early skills in planning, design and construction. When making vehicles with wheels, including tipper trucks, they are able to choose appropriate box sizes, and measure and saw wood to make a chassis on which to fit the chosen box. Finished products bear a good resemblance to the original design and pupils evaluate their work. A small number of pupils label their designs and are able to write a simple list of materials required.

134. In Key Stage 2 pupils reached a good level of attainment in the Year 3 lesson observed. Pupils were successful in making a cylindrical container as a form of packaging. They are developing good skills in appraising the finished product and are able to describe the planning and making stages in sequence. Evidence from previously completed work indicates that pupils are making satisfactory links between designing and making strategies. Pupils in Year 5 have designed and made biscuits as part of their work on food technology. In Year 6 previous work indicates satisfactory skills in designing a house to be constructed using corner and apex joints.

135. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good and in one lesson were very good. They are enthusiastic about design and technology and are willing to talk about their work. They are proud of what they have designed and made and this is evident in the quality of their work.

136. Although only a small amount of teaching was observed it was of a good quality overall and never less than satisfactory. Pupils are taught how to handle tools and materials and to evaluate their ideas and designs. Design and technology tasks are often planned to link with the topic focus for each class. Teachers pay particular attention to the development of personal and social skills by expecting pupils to work collaboratively and share resources.

137. A subject policy and a scheme of work are in place. The co-ordinator has worked hard to support colleagues in their work. Planning fully addresses the programme of study for the subject. The range of resources, their quality and availability provide good support for teaching and learning. This represents a good improvement since the last inspection when the level of resources was identified as a weakness.

GEOGRAPHY

138. By the end of Key Stage 2 most pupils' standards of attainment in geography are above average as the result of good progress. Year 6 pupils acquire good subject knowledge and can explain some of the economic factors affecting the location of industry. Most are able to make comparisons between great rivers of the world, such as the Rhine and the Mississippi, and understand some of the advantages and problems associated with controlling their courses and flow. Pupils use information from the Internet effectively to help their geographical enquiries.

139. Younger Key Stage 2 pupils successfully use large-scale maps to locate their own homes. They benefit from visiting an actual place in the locality to record data about the shops and services available. Pupils make good use of photographic evidence to make accurate observations about life in Kenya. For example, how schools are different from their own and how town or countryside locations have a bearing on lifestyles. Older pupils develop some understanding of the differences between Mexico and the United States and the relationship between the two countries, using atlases to support their work.

140. No geography lessons were seen in Key Stage 1 during the inspection, but evidence from displays and from children's workbooks indicates that standards by the age of seven are those expected for the age group and pupils make satisfactory progress. Geographical skills are successfully developed through the drawing of plans and remarking on features such as houses, landscape, people and traffic, which are similar to and different from those in the local area. They express likes and dislikes when considering life on the imaginary island of Struay. By the end of the key stage pupils develop a satisfactory understanding of a distant locality by observation of maps, photographs and artefacts and discuss aspects relating to an actual journey to the Isle of Skye. Overall progress through the key stage is sound for all pupils.

141. Most pupils enjoy their work in geography. Many responded with wonder during 'Geography Action Week' when viewing video recordings about forces of the sea, hurricanes, volcanoes and tornadoes. A Key Stage 2 pupil expressed the view that "she did not know that waves could be so powerful". Several Key Stage 2 pupils wrote movingly about how they felt when people lost their homes in the course of natural disasters.

142. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 is good overall. No judgement can be made about Key Stage 1. Teachers have a good understanding of the subject. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace. There is a high expectation that work will be presented neatly. However, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to use their writing skills. The school's resources are used well. There are occasional examples of teachers using marking techniques, which help pupils improve their work and extend their knowledge. This good practice is not sufficiently widespread.

143. Since the previous inspection a new scheme of work has been successfully introduced together with a strategy to ensure curriculum progression, which takes account of the mixed-age classes. The co-ordinator keeps herself well informed of new developments in the subject which reflects in the good quality of some of the resources available. There is some formal monitoring of teachers' planning and children's work, together with informal consultations with colleagues.

HISTORY

144. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have good knowledge of the topics they have studied and standards are above those found in most schools. They make good progress. This reflects an improvement since the previous inspection. During Key Stage 1 children make satisfactory progress in history and by the age of seven levels of attainment are in line with those expected for the age group.

145. Throughout Key Stage 2 pupils show a knowledge of when events happened. They understand the use of time lines. Younger pupils ask and answer historical questions relating to motives behind the successive invasions of Britain and the effects of groups of settlers on the landscape and the people. Older pupils show a good awareness of Victorian society by using pictorial and written evidence to make deductions about their lifestyles. When required, they apply this knowledge to their own writing, for example, about themselves in the role of a chimney sweep. However, in some classes pupils have only limited opportunities to use their writing skills. Pupils have a good factual knowledge about the events and personalities of the Tudor Period. By the end of the key stage most pupils have made in-depth studies about some civilisations of the Ancient World and their influence on today's world. For example, by comparing and contrasting the Ancient Olympic Games with those of the modern day.

146. In Key Stage 1 pupils learn to compare and contrast the ways of life of former times with those of today through considering aspects, such as houses and homes, games and toys. They have very good experiences in handling historical artefacts, for example in the impressive role play area of the 'Victorian Kitchen', and they gain understanding by re-enacting the events of daily life. Through visits such as to the Toad Lane Co-op they learn how shopping experiences have changes over time.

147. Pupils' attitudes to history are good and this has a positive impact on the progress they make. They respond enthusiastically to being presented with historical information in interesting ways, join in class discussions and apply themselves well to the tasks set. Most take a pride in the appearance of their work. The subject makes a good contribution to their cultural development.

148. The quality of teaching in both key stages is good overall. During the week of the inspection there were examples of very good teaching in both key stages. In Key Stage 1 this involved extensive use of artefacts to re-create a Victorian Wash Day, giving children not only a very good understanding of how changes have taken place over time but also of chronology relating to the sequence of events involved. In a very good Key Stage 2 lesson pupils worked in groups as 'archaeologists'. There was a high expectation by the teacher for pupils to make deductions from historical information, conduct interviews and record their findings on tapes for the class to listen to. Teachers have good knowledge of the topics covered and successfully develop pupils' historical skills. Lessons are well planned, resources are well used and activities for pupils are relevant and usually interesting. There are a few good examples of pupils being asked to use their writing skills both in taking factual notes and to produce their own imaginative work and there is scope to develop these good practices still further.

149. Since the previous inspection a new scheme of work has been introduced and the delivery of the curriculum to mixed-age classes has been addressed successfully. The co-ordinator whilst not involved with classroom monitoring undertakes some formal monitoring and evaluation of teachers' planning and examination of pupils' workbooks is carried out as time allows. Artefacts for some topics remain in short supply and the school has identified a need for more historical secondary source documents.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

150. Significant improvements have been made in information and communication technology since the time of the last inspection when standards were judged to be below the national expectations and the requirements of the programmes of study were not met. National Curriculum requirements are now met and by the end of both key stages overall attainment is broadly in line with that expected for the age groups. Throughout the school all pupils make at least satisfactory progress including those who special educational needs. National Curriculum requirements are now met. Pupils now have an appropriate understanding of the importance of information and communication technology in the wider world.

151. Good use is made of the newly established information and communication technology suite to develop pupils' skills. This resource along with the additional training members of staff have received and the effective implementation of the national guidelines have had a positive impact on raising standards.

152. In Key Stage 2 Year 6 pupils work with basic spreadsheets. They competently input information about individual hand, reach and head measurements. The pupils can decrease the information to one decimal place after formatting. Year 3 pupils have accessed the Internet to find out information about ancient Egypt whilst Year 4 designed a poster advertising an aquarium. They were able to use clip art effectively to create picture images and included text. Older pupils are able to competently attach sensors for light, temperature and sound to an interface. From their work they noticed how changes in data caused alterations to the line graphs on the computer screen.

153. In Key Stage 1 pupils use their word processing skills well to label their robots. They type directly onto the screen, move the cursor, delete and use the space bar. Pupils have also collected information about such things as eye colour and represented their findings graphically by drawing pictograms using the 'My World' program. In Year 2 pupils type out lists using the space bar and return keys accurately. They use the 'Dazzle' program appropriately to draw their own pictures.

154. Attitudes to information and communication technology are very good. Pupils are keen to demonstrate their skills and talk confidently about their work. They show interest in the programs they use and collaborate effectively together in pairs to support each other when they experience problems. Pupils carefully follow the laid down procedures for operating the computers and take care of the equipment.

155. The quality of teaching and learning is good in both key stages. Skills are now being developed systematically as pupils move through the Key Stage. This is an improvement from the previous inspection when it was found that activities were not part of a coherent programme operating throughout the school. Clear explanations are given about the skills to be developed. In one lesson in Key Stage 1 the teacher made very good use of the time available to explain the work pupils were expected to do before moving across to the computer suite. This improved the quality of learning because it meant that pupils could have immediate 'hands on' use of the machines when they arrived in the computer suite.

156. A very good pattern of organisation exists throughout the school whereby the class is taught in two separate groups. As a result, pupils have more 'hands on' experience. This is helping to ensure that the quality of learning is good. For example, during one lesson seen during the week of the inspection pupils made noticeable gains in using the Excel program, because the teacher was able to move round and give support to individual pupils. In all lessons observed good use was made of the multi-media mobile projector to demonstrate particular skills to all the class. In a Year 1 lesson, the teacher allowed a pupil to use this piece of equipment to show the rest of the class how to open and shut down the computer.

157. The subject is very well managed and led. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and rightly proud of the improvements the school has made. The computer suite is well used and a valuable asset. However, because of lack of finance, there are no computers in classrooms and as a result the integration of information and communication technology into other subjects is a weakness. Successful in-service training has raised the expertise and confidence of the staff. As yet, there is no formal monitoring taking place or recording of the skills being learned. A portfolio of pupils' work in all strands of the subject is being developed. The school is well placed to raise standards further.

MUSIC

158. Standards in music at the end of both key stages are in line with those found in most schools and the majority of pupils make satisfactory progress. The quality of singing throughout the school is high. There are good opportunities for pupils in Key Stage 2 to participate in extra-curricular activities, make good progress and achieve standards which are higher than those found normally. These findings are similar to those of the previous inspection.

159. In Key Stage 2 pupils sing well and successfully use graphic notation. They develop their repertoire of songs. For example, during the inspection younger pupils successfully maintained two parts in the singing of 'Shalom'. Older pupils show good attention to dynamics when singing the 'Amen' chorus of 'Mary Had a Baby' as a four-part round. Year 4 pupils use recordings of their own performance of 'Keep on Dancing' to gain a satisfactory understanding of the relationship between tempo and mood. Composition skills are developed throughout the key stage. For example, a group of Years 5 and 6 pupils used a recording of their own composition about a space journey to improve its texture. However, there is scope to build on pupils' good rhythmic skills to include more melodic material in their compositions.

160. In Key Stage 1 children engage in an appropriate variety of musical activities that successfully promote a balance of knowledge, skills and understanding. Younger children are introduced to the rhythm of playground chants. They learn to clap the steady beat whilst singing nursery rhymes. They respond well to visual signals that tell them when to start and stop singing and when to play loudly or softly. Older children select and experiment with unpitched percussion instruments to classify the sounds they make. They work well together to compose simple musical pieces which they perform for others, sometimes using their own written symbols as a support.

161. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have the appropriate subject knowledge and plan their lessons carefully. Almost all share the learning objectives of their lessons with their pupils. Lessons are well organised, resources are readily to hand and good use is usually made of the time available.

162. Pupils' attitudes to music are good. They enjoy their lessons. They are eager to play the musical instruments and usually handle them carefully. During times when the school community sings together most pupils join in enthusiastically and produce a sound that is pleasing for others to listen to.

163. Pupils in both key stages are given regular opportunities to listen to music in settings other than music lessons, for example in the school's acts of worship and in dance lessons. Singing and playing are integral to the school's celebration of Christmas and the annual concerts in which pupils of all ages participate. Key Stage 2 pupils have additional opportunities to join the choir and to perform before audiences outside the school. For example, during the inspection they were preparing for a highly disciplined performance, with organ accompaniment in a Manchester church. Opportunities to learn a musical instrument are good. Pupils reach a high standard in the recorder group where tuition is provided voluntarily by a friend of the school, and in keyboard, flute, violin and guitar, provided by outside agencies for which a charge is made, in line with the school's charging policy. Annual visits to the Halle Orchestra are made by groups of Key Stage 2 pupils. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development.

164. A scheme of work has been put in place since the previous inspection. There has been a recent purchase of a range of good quality musical instruments and there are sufficient resources available for teacher use. The enthusiastic co-ordinator has drawn up a system for assessing and recording pupils' progress, but this has still to be agreed and implemented.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

165. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in addressing areas identified for improvement. All teachers now manage time well, all pupils change into suitable clothes for lessons, resources have been improved and the subject has a newly appointed co-ordinator.

166. No overall judgement on standards in physical education can be made at the end of Key Stage 2 as only a limited range of the activities on offer could be observed during the week of the inspection. The performance levels in educational dance are higher than those normally found by age eleven. Records show that standards in swimming are above average. Almost all eleven-year-olds achieve the expected 25 metres and some progress well beyond this level. A very good feature of the swimming provision is that all Key Stage 2 pupils go to the baths for a blocked period of time during the year.

167. Standards in physical education at the end of Key Stage 1 are higher than average. In both key stages pupils with special educational needs take a full part in lessons and make good progress.

168. Progress in dance, games and gymnastic skills is good during Key Stage 1. By the age of seven pupils' co-ordination, balance and control are above average. In games lessons they demonstrate satisfactory levels of accuracy when throwing and bowling a ball. During dance pupils can interpret and explore ideas as they adapt movement to music. In one lesson they successfully mimed the movements associated with sweeping, polishing and dusting. Good teaching encouraged them to really stretch and pull.

169. Pupils make good progress during Key Stage 2 in developing dance skills. Pupils listen attentively to the music and demonstrate good levels of control and movement. For example, in one class they accurately perform as puppets in response to music related to the story of Pinocchio. Very good teaching in this lesson allows pupils time to perfect their movements and as a result the mirror movements performed with a partner are of a high quality. In one gymnastics lesson younger pupils showed good co-ordination and control when travelling across the hall in different ways. In a games lesson pupils demonstrated a good understanding of the rules of 'kick rounders'. Pupils sustain vigorous activity, including energetic warm-ups and are developing a sound understanding of the effect exercise has on the body.

170. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes in physical education lessons and work with enthusiasm. They work sensibly on their own to improve their performance and collaborate well in pair or group activities. Behaviour is always very good and they respond immediately to instructions and suggestions from their teachers. Key Stage 1 pupils have to come across to the hall from another building for their lessons but do so very sensibly.

171. The quality of teaching is good overall in both key stages. Lessons are well planned and contain an appropriate balance of activities. Good routines have been established, instructions are clear and pupils are given positive encouragement to do well. Where teaching is very good, opportunities are provided for pupils to look at what makes some performances better than others and to use these ideas to improve their own standards.

172. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and has a good understanding of the subject. A scheme of work provides a framework for teachers' planning. Resources are satisfactory overall, stored efficiently and are accessible. However, the school field has a drainage problem that restricts its use. The infant playground is uneven in parts and is a potential safety hazard. The hall is of average size and is very clean. Some teachers give generously of their time to offer a good range of extra-curricular physical activities. There is also a good level of inter-schools competitive sport including a swimming gala. Year 5 pupils benefit from a one-day intensive course that allows them to take part in adventurous pursuits.