

INSPECTION REPORT

ST NICHOLAS FIRST SCHOOL

Old Marston, Oxford

LEA area: Oxfordshire

Unique reference number: 123021

Headteacher: Mrs M Hill

Reporting inspector: Miss S Ramnath
21334

Dates of inspection: 2nd October – 5th October 2000

Inspection number: 224469

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First school
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Raymund Road Old Marston Oxford
Postcode:	OX3 OPJ
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Nurse
Date of previous inspection:	27 th April 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21334	Miss S Ramnath	Registered inspector	Science Information and communication technology Art and design Under fives Equal opportunities English as an additional language	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements Teaching and learning Key issues for action
13526	Mr R Barnard	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
16971	Mr R Hardaker	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History Music Special educational needs	Leadership and management
6169	Mr M Bradshaw	Team inspector	English Design and technology Physical education Religious education	Quality and range of opportunities for learning

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Nicholas' County First School is situated in the village of Old Marston in Oxfordshire. There are 144 pupils on roll taught in six classes, five of which are mixed age. There is a slightly higher proportion of boys than girls. An additional 37 children attend the Nursery for two terms on a part-time basis and attend full-time for one term before starting school in the term after their fifth birthday. Almost all the children who attend the Nursery transfer to the main school. The local authority's baseline assessment indicates that children's basic skills on entry to school are in line or above those of children of a similar age in the county. However, as children have limited time before they start the National Curriculum in Year 1, most are not as well prepared in aspects of language and literacy and mathematics as they are in other areas of the curriculum. Twenty-nine children have been identified on the school's register of pupils with special educational needs with two statements to that effect. This proportion is average for schools of this size. Thirty-five pupils come from homes where English is not their first language. Fifteen of these children are at the early stage of English language development. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals at 13 per cent is below average. Since the last inspection, there has been a significant change of teaching staff, including the appointment of a new headteacher as well as an increase in the number of pupils on roll.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an improving school that has many good and some very good features. However, there are some important aspects of the school that require attention. The school was last inspected in 1998 and standards have improved in all subjects except English. The new headteacher has faced the challenge of raising standards with determination and this has led to substantial improvement in the attitudes and behaviour of pupils and an improvement in the quality of teaching. She responded positively to the findings of the last inspection report as well as to the HMI monitoring report of 1999. All staff work well together and share a commitment to further improvement. The senior management team and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have systems in place for ensuring that these improvements take place. The school is well led and managed and now provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher, a hard working staff and supportive governing body work well together and share a commitment to improve the school.
- Teaching is good or better in over two-thirds of lessons observed.
- The school has made good improvement since the previous inspection.
- There are very good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress.
- The deployment and contribution of support staff are very effective.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs or those who are at the early stages of learning to speak English is good.
- The quality of information to parents is good.
- Music provision is very good.

What could be improved

- Standards in reading and writing throughout the school.
- The children who start Year 1 are not always well prepared in aspects of language and mathematics.

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 identified as having serious weaknesses in the last inspection in June 1998 and since then its improvements have been good and the issues have been addressed. Despite the significant changes in staff at all levels, overall, the school has made a good response to the issues noted in the last inspection as well as those highlighted by HMI in 1999.

- The health and safety issues were promptly dealt with after the last inspection and since then, annual risk assessment and regular site inspections have taken place.
- The school has established good procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching. The improvement in the teaching as observed in this inspection shows the success of this aspect. Co-ordinators provide good leadership and all have undertaken some monitoring and evaluation of their areas of responsibilities.
- Good progress has been made in information technology and standards are now in line with national expectations. However, the use of information technology across the curriculum is still underdeveloped. Requirements for religious education are fully met and the curriculum for geography is now satisfactory.
- The governing body is diligent in carrying out the full range of its statutory responsibilities. Governors are now fully involved in the management of the school and they have a better oversight of the school's curriculum.
- The school development plan is now an effective management tool and priorities identified are now more manageable and planned for the longer term. Financial planning is now satisfactory and good procedures are in place for further improvement.
- The school timetable has been reviewed and all subjects are taught. A range of extra-curricular activities enhances the curriculum.
- The quality of assemblies has improved and they contribute to pupils' spiritual development.
- All schemes of work are now in place with a clear development plan to review each subject area.
- Assessment procedures are effective and the information makes a useful contribution to the planning of the next stage of learning. Good planning to meet the needs of all pupils and appropriate grouping of pupils in English and mathematics ensure that more able pupils are challenged satisfactorily. Support staff make an invaluable contribution to pupils' learning.

In addition to the above points relating to the key issues in the last inspection, the school has substantially improved its provision for children in the Nursery which HMI identified as an area of weakness in 1999. The present leadership of the school has the insight and determination to ensure that the school will continue to focus on identified weaknesses and make efforts to raise the quality of education provided for the pupils.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
Reading	E	B	D	D
Writing	E	A*	C	C
Mathematics	E	B	C	C

Key	
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

The table shows that in writing and mathematics, pupils' attainment was average when compared with all schools and similar schools. In reading, standards were below average when compared with all schools as well as with similar schools. Results in reading and writing test have fluctuated and have been below average and average respectively because many pupils start school with under-developed skills in these areas. Teacher assessment for the same year showed pupils' performance in science as well below average when compared with all and similar schools. This was partly due to the school's focus on literacy and numeracy and insecure subject knowledge of National Curriculum science.

Inspection findings indicate that current standards by the end of the foundation stage are above expectations in all areas of learning except in aspects of language and literacy and mathematics. Children are not sufficiently prepared in early reading, writing and mathematical skills. By the end of Year 2, and when pupils leave school at the end of Year 4, standards are average in mathematics and information technology. In science, standards have improved and are now in line with national expectations at the end of Year 2 and above expectations at the end of Year 4. In English, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 4 is below expectations. In religious education, standards now meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus at the end of Year 2 but are above at the end of Year 4. In all subjects, standards are average except in music and design and technology which are above expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 4.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Most enjoy their lessons, settle to work and are interested in the tasks they are set.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Most pupils are well behaved in class and around the school but some unsatisfactory behaviour affects learning. Pupils show respect for adults and nearly always for each other.
Personal development and relationships	Overall satisfactory. It is the same small minority of pupils who display challenging behaviour who have an overall impact on standards. Very good relationships exist between pupils and adults.
Attendance	Good. Pupils arrive on time and lessons start on time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	Aged 5-7 years	Aged 7-9 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 inspection, 98 per cent of teaching in lessons observed was satisfactory or better. Only one lesson was unsatisfactory. In 30 per cent of lessons the teaching was good or better with 24 per cent being very good and 13 per cent excellent. Pupils with special educational needs and those at the early stages of learning English are taught well. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection when 18 per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory and only five per cent was very good or better. This has a positive impact on what pupils learn. Teaching is consistently very good in Year 1 and in music. The strengths in the teaching are associated with the way teachers ask questions, have resources ready for use and demonstrate good subject knowledge. For example, in one music lesson the teacher's enthusiasm for the subject and the secure subject knowledge ensured that pupils were challenged well and attained high standards. The weaknesses are mainly linked to the negative attitude of a few pupils who make it difficult for others to concentrate and consequently learning is affected.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The school provides a wide range of learning opportunities, enhanced by good extra-curricular provision. There is a clear emphasis on teaching literacy and numeracy. Due to limited time in the Nursery and Reception class, children are not well prepared in aspects of language and literacy and mathematics as they should be.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils are given good support to help them make progress. High quality support is given to these pupils to ensure that they make good progress in relation to their prior attainment.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Effective support leads to very good progress at the early stages of learning for those identified pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall the provision for this area is good. Pupils are encouraged to reflect upon their actions and are given opportunities to take the initiative. They are taught right from wrong and helped to develop awareness of their own and other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good. Arrangements for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic performance are very good.

The school has very good links with parents and carers and involves them well in the life of the school. Parents are very pleased with the education provided by the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides strong and purposeful leadership. She has a very clear vision of the school's potential and works conscientiously with her staff. The senior management team and co-ordinators play their part well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governors are very supportive of the school and fulfil all their statutory requirements effectively. They have developed their monitoring role with sufficient attention given to standards.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school is a learning school. It reflects effectively on what works well and what is less effective. Monitoring of teaching and learning by the headteacher and some subject co-ordinators is rigorous.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school deploys its resources and grants effectively and is developing ways to evaluate the effectiveness of all decisions made.

The school currently has a strong team of well-qualified teachers supported by capable classroom assistants who know what is expected of them. Together, they teach the range of the curriculum and meet the needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs or with English as an additional language. The school's accommodation adequately supports the teaching of the curriculum. However, there is no secure play area for children in the Reception class. Overall, resources are sufficient to support learning in all subject areas except large apparatus and wheeled toys for children who complete the foundation curriculum in the Reception class.

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 children enjoy coming to school. • Behaviour has improved. • The school keeps parents well informed about how their child is getting on. • They feel that the school's attitudes and values have a positive effect on their children. • They find the staff friendly and approachable. • Provision for pupils with special educational needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant concerns.

The inspection team agrees with the views of parents about the positive things they like about the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

THE SCHOOL'S RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

1. The previous inspection in 1998 identified the school as having serious weaknesses in a number of areas including standards in information and communication technology, religious education and geography. These were below national expectations. However, in the last two years a number of initiatives have been put into place to address these weaknesses; monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, in-service training, additional resources and the implementation of new schemes of work. All these are having a particularly beneficial effect on the overall standards.
2. The results of the 1999 end of Key Stage 1 national tests at the end of Year 2 show that pupils, who are the present Year 4 cohort, attained standards which were average in mathematics and writing and below the national average in reading when compared with all schools as well as similar schools. The teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment in science showed standards to be well below average when compared with both similar schools and all schools. Results for the year 2000 have improved slightly for mathematics, are similar for reading and science and less good for writing. The assessments made by teachers were not always in line with test results. When the end of Key Stage 1 test results for the school in reading, writing and mathematics for 1999 are compared with the previous four years, they show a varying trend in standards. For example, standards in reading were below average in 1996, 1997 and 1999 and above average in 1998. In writing and mathematics the picture was better. Standards were below average in 1996 and 1997 in writing, and in 1997 in mathematics. Over the last four years, the school's national test results for mathematics and writing have been broadly in line with the national trend but below in reading. Evidence suggests that boys do less well than girls in writing but with no significant difference in reading and mathematics.
3. Senior managers have completed a very rigorous analysis of standards as part of their ongoing monitoring of the school's work. Weaknesses in standards have been detected very quickly and effective action taken. For example, in-service training was provided to help teachers in Key Stage 1 with their assessment of National Curriculum science. As a result, standards for 2000 have improved. Reading remains a weakness, though the school identifies this clearly in its priorities for improvement and is working hard to boost standards.
4. The findings of the inspection are that standards are improving in mathematics and science but are below the national average in reading and writing. Low standards in reading and writing are partly due to the fact that children are starting Key Stage 1 at levels below expectations in their early reading and writing skills. Standards attained in religious education have improved and are now in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus at the end of Year 2 and above at the end of Year 4. Standards in information and communication technology have also improved and are now in line with national expectations. In the non-core subjects, standards are in line with national expectations in all subjects except music and design and technology which are above expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. Compared with the school's last full inspection in 1998, standards have been maintained or improved in all subjects except in English.

5. Pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy are given appropriate emphasis in some other subjects. The use of stories, reports and instructions are featured well in subjects such as science, and geography. Pupils are introduced to appropriate vocabulary for the study of subjects such as science, religious education and music. This work supports the development of pupils' literacy skills. Pupils' numeracy skills are applied and developed satisfactorily in some subjects. For example, in science and design and technology in Key Stage 2 they are at the expected standards.
6. Children enter the Nursery with average standards of attainment, receive good quality teaching and make good progress so that by the end of the foundation stage, they reach above average standards in knowledge and understanding of the world, personal, social and emotional development, creative and physical development. In communication, language and literacy and mathematical development, standards are average. Despite this, children start compulsory education at levels lower than expected in the important areas of early reading, writing and mathematical skills. Most are not well prepared for the National Curriculum in Year 1. This is partly due to the limited time that children have before starting Year 1 and the too few opportunities provided for children to develop these skills in the Nursery and Year R.
7. Standards in nearly all aspects of English are below the expected levels at the end of Year 2 and when pupils leave school at the end of Year 4. The exception is speaking and listening which exceed expectations. Pupils talk about their immediate experiences clearly. Most listen attentively to teachers' explanations and instructions, respond appropriately to questions and many can express opinions confidently and articulately. Standards attained in reading by the end of Year 2 and Year 4 are below average but are improving in Years 3 and 4. Pupils in Year 2 know about authors and illustrators and although some use their phonic knowledge to help with the reading of unfamiliar words, the majority are unable to read with accuracy or fluency. By the end of Year 4, most pupils understand the value of using a contents page, but only a few can explain how the index is organised. Overall, pupils have too few opportunities to improve their reading. Standards in writing are below the national expectations by the end of Years 2 and 4. Throughout the school, pupils write for a variety of purposes; reports, instructions and stories. Younger pupils use capital letters and full stops appropriately but overall, pupils in both key stages have difficulty using words accurately or imaginatively. Standards in spelling have been recognised as a weakness and many pupils spell simple words incorrectly. Standards in handwriting practice and for display work are sound. However, presentation of written work in other subjects is inconsistent across the school.
8. In mathematics, standards at the end of Year 2 and when pupils leave school at the end of Year 4 are in line with national expectations. Progress is sound. The focus given to numeracy and the development of mathematics planning is beginning to have a positive impact on standards. At the end of Year 2, most pupils are confident when counting up and down in fives to 100. They solve whole number problems involving multiplication and division and they use simple fractions. By the end of Year 4, most pupils are competent in the use of multiplication facts and have developed a satisfactory range of strategies to solve problems using the four rules. They work well with fractions and decimals and have a developing understanding of percentages.
9. Standards in science at the end Year 2 are average, and above average when pupils leave school at the end of Year 4. By the end of Year 2, pupils accurately identify and name the different parts of the human body. They know that some materials change when heated and that some are better suited for specific purposes. However, opportunities are limited for pupils to develop their investigative skills. By the end of Year

- 4, most pupils have a good understanding of how to plan and conduct an experiment. They carry out investigations, make predictions about outcomes and use scientific vocabulary appropriately and with increasing confidence. They can list the requirements for simple experiments. Their work showed that they had predicted what would happen to grass seeds sown in differing conditions.
10. Standards in information and communication technology are in line with expectations at the end of Year 2 and when pupils leave school at the end of Year 4. Younger pupils demonstrate good control of the mouse, move items with skill and use function keys with confidence. Some pupils can print their work. By the age of nine, most pupils confidently use CD-ROM programs to research information related to their topic and are beginning to use computers to collate and produce graphs. There is little evidence of computer work in other areas of the curriculum apart from some work with paint programs. The use of computers is not yet an integral part of lessons across the curriculum.
 11. In religious education, standards at the end of Year 2 are in line with the expectations laid down in the locally agreed syllabus and above expectations at the end of Year 4. Pupils are aware of different religions, sometimes through special occasions or comparisons, and learn to appreciate their similarities and differences. They know that Christians worship in a Church and Muslims in a Mosque and about the important events leading up to Easter. By the time pupils leave the school at the age of nine, they have a good knowledge of a range of faiths and festivals associated with them.
 12. As indicated elsewhere in this report, standards in all other subjects of the curriculum show an upward trend and are much improved since 1998. Those for history, geography, art, and physical education are broadly average for the ages of seven and nine. Progress is sound. In music and design and technology, work is above national expectations and progress is good.
 13. Pupils with special educational needs reach good standards of attainment against the learning targets set for them in their individual educational plans and their progress is good as seen in their reviews and in their class work against the targets set. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress and attain standards that are comparable with other pupils in the school once they have achieved a reasonable level of competence in English. The good progress made by these pupils results from positive attitudes to learning which are encouraged by the school's supportive ethos. There was no evidence of significant variations in the attainment of boys or girls, ethnic minority groups or pupils from differing backgrounds during the inspection.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Pupils' attitudes to school, appreciation of values and personal development are satisfactory. Although standards are showing signs of improvement since HMI monitoring in 1999, they are not yet having an overall positive impact on pupils' learning.
15. Most pupils enjoy coming to school. The youngest children are settled well into the Nursery and in all lessons observed, showed very good attitudes to learning. They get on with tasks quickly at the start of sessions and maintain interest well, due to good stimulation provided by the teacher and support staff. Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes to learning are uneven. In many lessons, where teaching is very good and lessons are interesting and challenging, pupils respond well and show good interest in their learning. This was particularly evident in Year 1 when in a mathematics lesson, pupils were very enthusiastic when learning about numbers. Throughout the school,

pupils' very good attitudes in music lessons are having a positive impact on their achievements. In a minority of lessons, pupils' lack of attention and concentration limits the amount of learning achieved in the time. A number of older pupils, especially boys, have been unsettled by the number of staff changes in the school over the past two years and do not yet know how to behave properly in lessons. For example, in a Year 4 dance lesson, the silliness and lack of attention and consideration for the needs of others by a minority of boys, limit the level of attainment of all pupils in the lesson despite of the teacher's good effort to control the situation. The consistent approach by staff to rectify this situation is beginning to impact within lessons, but currently, attitudes and behaviour in classes are still no better than satisfactory overall.

16. Pupils' behaviour around the school, in assemblies and in the playground is satisfactory. Some boisterous behaviour occurs on the playground but it is not serious. There have been no temporary or permanent exclusions during the past two years, a figure well below average for primary schools. Most pupils know the rules well and behave accordingly. A small minority are silly and behave in a manner which does not take account of the feelings of others, such as not listening to others' contributions to lessons.
17. Relationships between pupils are satisfactory. In some areas they are good, for example in the playground where older pupils play well with the Nursery children. In many lessons, pupils work together well in pairs or groups but the silly behaviour in a small number of lessons prevents co-operation.
18. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. All pupils undertake duties, such as returning registers to the office and tidying up resources, in a keen and helpful manner. They respond well to the opportunities for extra-curricular activities. The school has a new personal, social and health education policy which seeks to rectify this.
19. Attendance levels are good being above the national average. Few pupils are late and lessons start on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

20. The overall quality of teaching and learning is sound. During the inspection, teaching was at least satisfactory in 98 per cent of lessons. Thirty per cent of lessons are good and a further 24 per cent are very good. Fourteen per cent is excellent. These figures are a substantial improvement on the previous inspection when 18 per cent of lessons were considered unsatisfactory and only five per cent very good or better. Since the last inspection, nearly all of the staff are new and factors which contributed to unsatisfactory teaching are no longer weaknesses.
21. Inspectors' overall judgements about teaching are based on evidence from the lessons seen, from looking at pupils' previous work and from talking to pupils and teachers about what they do.
22. Good teaching was seen in all subjects. This has a positive effect on pupils' learning in all stages of their education, particularly in Year 1 where good, very good and excellent teaching was observed. High expectations of work and behaviour, shared objectives and the purposeful atmosphere that the teacher created in her classroom encouraged pupils to do their best and learn effectively. Music teaching is a great strength with teaching often of the highest quality.
23. The quality of teaching for the Foundation Stage in the Nursery and Year R is good in

nearly all areas of learning. It is sound in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. All staff understand how young children learn and relationships are very good. The care with which children are assessed ensures that the activities which teachers plan lead effectively towards attaining the goals identified in the Foundation Curriculum. Lessons have a good structure and sufficient opportunities are provided for the children to explore and experiment and to build on earlier learning. A very good example of this was seen in the singing lessons where children confidently and competently used musical instruments to support their singing. However, due to the limited time that children spend in Nursery and Year R, most are not well prepared for the National Curriculum in Year 1 in aspects of language and mathematics. Overall, not enough opportunities are provided for children to develop their early reading and writing skills.

24. Teachers have a sound knowledge of most of the subjects they teach. This enables them to deliver the subject matter confidently, answer questions from pupils correctly and make pertinent teaching points in lessons. Pupils can therefore make good progress in their own understanding of the subject. This was well demonstrated in a Year 1 science lesson where the teacher effectively used a range of practical task to introduce forces. Appropriate scientific vocabulary was introduced and new words were clearly explained. Information was imparted in a lively and stimulating way which engaged pupils' interest and motivated them well. This led to pupils making good progress during the lesson. Subject knowledge in information and communication technology is developing and confidence amongst staff varies. Consequently, the use of information and communication technology as a means of supporting other areas of the curriculum is undeveloped.
25. In most lessons across the school, teachers have high expectations of their pupils' work and behaviour and plan work which is challenging and designed to stretch the thinking of all pupils in their class. A Key Stage 1 literacy lesson was a good example of this. Pupils were developing their phonic skills and the teacher had planned the work extremely carefully to ensure that pupils had tasks that closely matched their prior attainment and were designed to move them swiftly on to greater understanding. All the pupils worked diligently and behaved in an exemplary manner throughout.
26. Teachers use a good range of methods to teach. Lessons are a good balance of whole-class teaching and opportunities for practical work. Setting is used in Key Stage 2 for English and mathematics. This allows teachers to match work closer to pupils' abilities. When appropriate, for example in a Year 3 numeracy lesson, pupils work together in group. They were able to support each other to find pairs of numbers which made 20p and then added a third number. Very often, teachers use the end of the lesson discussions to review what has been taught and to give pupils a chance to show and talk about their work with others.
27. The teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers ensure that work is at an appropriate level. They make good use of the learning support staff to support the work of pupils identified with special educational needs. The close attention which support staff give individuals and groups of pupils allows pupils with special educational needs to gain increased understanding of the work and leads to good progress. In addition, pupils benefit from lessons taught by a skilled support teacher and their own class teacher. Teaching for pupils who are at the early stages of English acquisition is good when withdrawn for extra support and when they are taught in the classroom. The activities planned have clear learning objectives which match the requirements in their individual education plans, and these help pupils make progress in literacy.

28. Most teachers have effective class management skills and create a calm atmosphere which is conducive to learning. Good examples of this were seen in all classes. Teachers are firm but fair in keeping order and most handle easily distracted pupils sensibly by making good use of their voices and by using praise well. For example, praising those who put their hands up before answering questions in a numeracy lesson. In some lessons in both key stages, a number of pupils lose interest easily and their behaviour deteriorates. Because of this, these pupils make little progress in their learning.
29. Teachers use resources well in most lessons. They make good use of the time available and the pace of teaching is often brisk. This keeps pupils on their toes and challenges them to work hard at their tasks. However, in a few lessons where the introduction is too long and the pace of the lesson slows, a number of pupils lose interest and become restless. As a result, pupils make little progress in their learning. Other adults are used well by teaching staff. The use of information technology to support learning is marginal and rarely forms a part of teaching in any subject.
30. Teachers' planning is effective and has benefited from action on the key issue defined in the previous report. Planning now provides a secure foundation for covering most subjects of the National Curriculum in sufficient depth and ensures that literacy and numeracy are taught at the correct level to meet the needs of all pupils in the mixed age classes. Short-term planning has also improved since the previous inspection. Most teachers are skilful at raising pupils' awareness of the expected outcomes of their work and in the best examples, share the aims of the lessons with pupils. This ensures that pupils understand what is expected of them and allows them to work at a suitable pace.
31. Teachers are skilled at assessing what pupils know on a day-to-day basis. They do this by questioning pupils skilfully to find out what they have remembered and to promote deeper thinking. The use teachers make of information from assessment of pupils' work to plan the next stage of learning is proving to be very effective. Teachers listen and respond well to their pupils and help them to improve the quality of their work by giving helpful feedback and praise. This helps to motivate and encourage them. Work is marked well, but there is some variation with supportive comments and advice for improvement. As a result, most pupils understand what they are doing, how well they have done and how they can improve.

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

32. The previous inspection indicated that the curriculum was narrow and did not meet requirements, especially in the areas of geography, religious education and information technology. Time allocations were inappropriate, especially at Key Stage 2. Planning, including schemes of work, provided insufficient guidance. In relation to pupils' personal development, provision was satisfactory overall, but unsatisfactory for spiritual development. The curriculum has improved over the past two years. Requirements are now fully met and planning is much more detailed and helpful. Adequate time is provided for Key Stage 2 pupils. The provision made by the school promotes the intellectual, physical and personal development of pupils satisfactorily. It is enhanced by the provision of swimming and a good range of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum is balanced, with suitably planned provision for all subjects, except that there is not enough attention given to developing pupils' investigative skills in science in Key Stage 1. Schemes of work are detailed and helpful and inform the planning by the school. This represents significant progress recently. Where there are still weaknesses, the school

and co-ordinators have established plans to rectify the omissions, such as for dance in physical education. The plans to improve standards in information and communication technology are clear, but there is insufficient use of this area across the curriculum to ensure pupils' skills are reinforced.

33. The broad and relevant curriculum for children in the Nursery is good in many respects. The emphasis on personal, social and emotional development meets the needs of children well. Similarly, the development of children's physical and creative development, and knowledge of the world around them is good. In all these areas, preparation for starting more formal education in Year 1 is good. Children have relatively little time in school before starting the requirements of the National Curriculum in Year 1, and this means that they are not as well prepared in the areas of communication, language and literacy and mathematical development as they should be. Teachers in the Nursery have to take account of the conflicting demands of limited time and the expectations on entry to Year 1. At present, children who start Year 1 have not achieved the standard expected in English and mathematics, particularly in relation to early reading, writing and mathematics.
34. The provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved and is now good. Individual education plans are detailed and provide good guidance on how to achieve the identified targets, which relate mainly to English, but also include behaviour and mathematics. Teachers and learning support staff include these pupils in all activities. Group tasks in particular are successfully planned to match these pupils' needs. Their learning is enhanced by the support given; for instance in Year 2 literacy, the special educational needs teacher helped her group make good progress in the use of different types of punctuation. Pupils from homes where English is not the first language are also given good support. The input of the specialist teacher, although limited in time, is valuable in supporting their progress. A suitable balance is achieved between in-class support and small group withdrawal for both pupils with special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language. The equality of opportunity for pupils is satisfactory.
35. The school makes satisfactory provision for the development of literacy and numeracy within specific lessons. Effective use is now made of both the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. The analysis of test data, improved assessment and recording systems have provided information to help the school produce plans to improve standards further. Governors now have a greater involvement in monitoring the implementation of the strategies. Literacy lessons are used effectively to support learning in other subjects. However, staff do not emphasise the importance of pupils using their literacy skills within other subjects. As a result, spelling, writing and presentation are almost always weaker in other subjects when compared with English. Numeracy skills are not used consistently across the curriculum, although there are good examples of correct use in science and design and technology.
36. The school offers a good range of activities outside the normal curriculum, a further improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils in Key Stage 2 have the opportunity to learn the recorder, and there is weekly tuition for clarinet, violin and recorder. Pupils have access to drama, football, cricket and country dancing. The curriculum is further enhanced by visits to museums and art galleries. The information obtained is used well to promote learning in the classroom, such as considering the work of Picasso when planning three-dimensional art to enhance the school's environment. Residential visits are available for pupils in both key stages.

37. The school is taking an increasingly active role in promoting pupils' personal development. A draft personal, social and health education policy is in place and already informing the school's practice. Appropriate mention is made in specific lessons and within the normal curriculum to introduce pupils to aspects of sex education and drug awareness. Aspects of personal development are covered in personal, social and health education lessons as part of religious education, and during 'circle time' discussions where specific issues are explored.
38. The school has satisfactory links with the community and makes suitable use of visits and local experts, especially for art, music and drama. The active 'Friends of St Nicholas School' do much to support the school's activities. They have established useful links with local business and community groups. There are suitable links with the adjacent middle school and pupils took part in the 'Festival of Voices' at Dorchester Abbey. The school participates in teacher training and is part of a school centered training consortium.
39. The school's overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There is no clear policy for this area and subject policies do not make specific mention of it. Although opportunities are often taken when they arise, there is little planning to promote these aspects of pupils' personal development within lessons, except in religious education. The provision for these areas is especially strong in the Nursery, which contributes to the good progress in children's personal, social and emotional development.
40. The provision for spiritual development was unsatisfactory previously, it has improved and is now satisfactory. The school increasingly provides an environment in which pupils are valued as individuals. There is an increasing emphasis on celebrating success. Within religious education, there are increasing opportunities to explore feelings and the importance of friendships. Within other subjects, there are few occasions when pupils are encouraged to reflect on their learning or on the beauty of the world around them. An exception was in a Year 1 science lesson where pupils were encouraged to explore and share their experiences of investigating forces for themselves. Collective worship meets statutory requirements and promotes spiritual development effectively. Pupils enter the hall quietly and the importance of the occasion is emphasised by the attendance of all staff. During an assembly about Nelson Mandela, pupils were sensitively led to appreciate the impact of apartheid on the majority of children in South Africa. Pupils are guided well to reflect quietly on the theme of the assembly, although this period is often too brief. Teachers or children read suitable prayers which also aid reflection.
41. Provision for moral development is good. Pupils are encouraged to consider what is right or wrong. The school has developed a good behaviour policy which is being consistently implemented. In addition to school rules, each class has produced their own. These are displayed in each classroom and have been written in a way which promotes positive behaviour, rather than being essentially negative documents. Pupils also consider wider moral issues, such as the need to care for our environment and the production of waste and pollution.
42. Provision for pupils' social development is good. Pupils are encouraged to work in groups, for instance in literacy and numeracy, and to share resources when doing research topics, such as in religious education. The importance of co-operating when working in pairs during physical education is emphasised. There are occasions when teachers are not active enough in organising pairs or groups and, as a result, there is a tendency in some classes for boys to work only with boys, and girls only with girls.

Although teachers emphasise the possible impact misbehavior and calling out have on other children, a minority is not yet fully aware of this. Residential visits promote social development well. In religious education, the work of charities, such as OXFAM, is studied and this helps to raise both the moral and social awareness of pupils. Pupils have a range of roles around the school and within classes which help develop responsibility. Similarly, notices to parents emphasise the importance of pupils becoming more independent when coming to school, and looking after their clothes, bags and lunch, especially in Key Stage 2.

43. The provision for cultural development is good. It is promoted through a range of activities in geography and history, and through the study of artists, such as Klee, Kandinsky and Picasso. Pupils are introduced to some societies from the past, and about the life of Nigerian children in their village. Pupils gain further awareness of other cultures through the study of a range of faiths and good use is made of staff and parents to promote this. When entering assembly, pupils listen to music such as Holst's 'The Planets', but more could be made of these opportunities. Music makes a good contribution to cultural development, especially in relation to western culture. Although there are visits of musicians from other cultures, there are few opportunities for pupils to use non-western instruments or appreciate non-western art and music.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. The school takes good steps to care for its pupils. The key issue in the previous report in relation to health and safety was dealt with quickly and procedures are now good and effectively implemented. Child protection procedures are good. The headteacher has a good awareness of issues involved and has good procedures to ensure all staff are kept constantly aware of these. The school has recently devised a good personal, social and health education policy which provides an effective basis to improve pupils' personal development.
45. The school has good behaviour management procedures which, through their consistent application by all staff, are starting to improve standards of behaviour through the school. There are simple, clear procedures which are understood by staff, pupils and parents, with a strong emphasis on praise and positive attitudes. Class values are clear and displayed well and rewards used consistently in relation to both good work and positive or helpful attitudes. Particularly effective is the way a number of teachers use their voice, especially when lowering the tone, to control pupils in lessons. Any hint of oppressive or over-aggressive behaviour is dealt with quickly and effectively.
46. Procedures to monitor and promote attendance are good and effective in maintaining above average levels of attendance. The school has fully dealt with the issues raised in the previous report and now complies fully with all statutory requirements in relation to attendance.
47. The school gives good personal support to all pupils. In particular, support staff are used effectively to care for the youngest pupils and pupils with special educational needs, especially those with behavioural problems. External agencies are used appropriately to the benefit of the pupils. Liaison with such agencies is good. The school provides good support and guidance, which contribute positively to the progress pupils make. The school has good assessment and monitoring procedures for pupils on the special needs register. As soon as the school has a concern about a child's progress, parents are contacted. If, after initial support and monitoring, the concern remains, then parents are invited into school to meet the special needs co-ordinator (SENCO). Parents are closely involved in the setting of their child's individual education plan (IEP) and in

following up its effectiveness. The plans are of good quality; they have specific, measurable targets with clear indications of how these are to be achieved. Pupils' progress is regularly monitored and reviewed against the targets on the individual education plan. Individual educational plans are well constructed and give clear guidance to teachers as to what action is required to meet the particular pupils' needs.

48. The school has very good procedures in place to monitor pupils' progress in the core subjects of English and mathematics, for example, using baseline assessment as pupils enter the school, Key Stage 1 standard tests and QCA tests in Years 3 and 4. The results of these assessments are analysed in considerable detail. As a result of this analysis, the school sets itself challenging targets in improving overall performance of year groups of pupils in English and mathematics. All teachers are aware of the standards expected in literacy and numeracy at the end of each year and this level of expectation is contributing to the satisfactory progress pupils make in these two areas. Through its very good procedures the school can track the progress individual pupils make as they move through the school. The school has started to develop individual portfolios of work in which assessed and annotated samples of pupils' work are stored. Teachers maintain files in which details of pupils' achievement in all areas of the curriculum are recorded.
49. The school's day-to-day assessment procedures are sufficiently rigorous and consistent across the school. Teachers evaluate their literacy and numeracy plans at the end of each week and this information informs future planning. For example, planning for most numeracy lessons has clear learning objectives against which assessments can be made and targets set for future learning. Assessment is appropriately linked to planning. For example, older pupils identified as underachieving in numeracy are receiving tuition in a booster class in order that they might make up ground in this area of the curriculum. The school has a marking policy and teachers regularly mark pupils' work. There has been improvement in this area since the last inspection with teachers now writing evaluative comments in pupils' books and where appropriate, indicating to pupils through positive comment, ways in which they can improve their work.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50. The partnership between the school and its parents is very good and has a positive impact on pupils' learning.
51. The great majority of parents are happy with the school and feel it provides their children with a good standard of education. A minority felt that the school provided insufficient extra-curricular activities. Inspection evidence shows that extra-curricular provision is good.
52. The school ensures that parents are very well informed about the life of the school and their children's achievements. Comprehensive information about the Nursery helps children to settle quickly into the daily routines. Newsletters provide detailed information about school life and also, on a termly basis, what work and topics pupils are to undertake. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are appropriately involved in identifying their needs and they are involved in the reviewing process.
53. Annual reports provide very good information on pupils' achievements in the year and include 'next steps' which indicate clearly, areas for future development. Parents are made welcome in the school and staff are approachable and readily available to discuss issues. Consultation arrangements over issues such as school uniform and the

home/school agreement are effective. Parents are appropriately involved in the work of the school and contribute well to their children's learning. Many provide regular and valuable help in the classroom. In particular, parental support in the Nursery effectively supplements the professional support.

54. Parents ensure their children attend school regularly and promptly and give good support to shared homework. The Friends of St Nicholas School are very supportive especially in relation to fundraising. They now regularly meet with governors to ensure funds are allocated in line with the school's educational needs.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

55. The school is led and managed well; the headteacher provides firm leadership and gives the school very clear educational direction. She has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Performance data is analysed very well and evaluations are used effectively to target weaknesses. Under her leadership, the school has made significant improvement since the last inspection and has the capacity to do even better. At present there is a balance of experienced and inexperienced teachers on the staff. There are a small number of senior teachers and they give good support to the headteacher. They support their junior colleagues well and all share a commitment to improving the school and raising standards for all pupils.
56. The school's aims and values are well focused and wholly appropriate. The school promotes them well. For example, in its endeavour to develop the potential of all children whatever their ability, the school is aware of the importance of meeting the learning needs of all pupils. In its response to this aim, the school provides a satisfactory range of learning opportunities which include good provision of extra-curricular activities and good learning provision for pupils with special educational needs.
57. There is a shared commitment to further improve the already clear structures in place to monitor standards in the core subjects. The headteacher effectively monitors teaching in all classes giving teachers detailed written feedback. She monitors pupils' learning by scrutinising teachers' planning, pupils' work in books and thoroughly analysing the results of assessment tests. The mathematics co-ordinator also monitors teaching in classrooms and some monitoring of science has taken place by the local education authority adviser. All subject co-ordinators effectively monitor progress by scrutinising pupils' completed work and teachers' planning. In English and mathematics, there is detailed analysis of the attainment of individual pupils, classes and year groups, and results are used to set challenging targets for both teachers and pupils.
58. The school's strategy for teacher appraisal and performance management is developing. The headteacher has regular reviews with teachers to discuss their professional development. Staff development is used well to improve the effectiveness of teaching. This is amply demonstrated in the successful way in which the school has implemented the National Numeracy Strategy which is having a beneficial effect on standards of attainment. Arrangements for the induction of new staff and for supporting newly qualified teachers are fully in place. Newly qualified teachers receive good support from a mentor and the headteacher. Their teaching is regularly monitored and overall performance is reviewed half-terminly. Two teachers in the school have recently completed their induction year as newly qualified teachers. The support they received has had an enhancing effect on their teaching performance.
59. The governing body is becoming increasingly effective. This represents a considerable improvement since the last report. Members of the governing body have a strong

commitment to the school and confidence in the headteacher. They support her and the school well. The chair and vice chair of governors meet regularly with the headteacher. Governors are kept well informed by the headteacher and her teaching staff, and play an active role in monitoring standards within the school. For example, they monitor the impact of the literacy and numeracy strategies on the school and discuss pupils' annual performance in the national tests of attainment. As part of this process of monitoring, some governors visit school and observe lessons. Governors have been allocated linked responsibilities. For example, one governor is responsible for monitoring the Early Years provision and the provision for pupils with special educational needs. Other governors have responsibility for assessment and recording, numeracy, literacy and other aspects of school. There is governor involvement in the strategic management of the school. Most governors are well placed to make strategic decisions as they are well informed and talk about relevant issues with confidence and informed knowledge. Governors show a commitment to training and as a result, they are becoming even better informed and better placed to play a greater role.

60. The school has recently established good procedures for budget setting and approval. The headteacher has established a secure base for future budget planning. She has taken full account of known commitments, such as maintaining six classes and future pupil numbers, in establishing a financial plan for the next two years. This will ensure that funds available may be allocated to priorities identified in the school development plan and allow delegation of budgets to curriculum co-ordinators.
61. A recent audit report identified financial monitoring and administration as satisfactory. The recent turnover of key staff has presented difficulties in this area. However, the appropriate staff and governors are developing good systems which identify issues to ensure a secure future. For example, the finance officer has identified the need to include commitments as well as actual expenditure in budget monitoring information.
62. Funding received under specific grants is used effectively to meet the designated purpose, for example, special educational needs. The governors and headteacher recognise the issues related to the principles of Best Value and are well prepared to implement them.
63. There is an adequate number of suitably qualified teachers for the teaching of the curriculum. Since the previous inspection there has been a significant change in the teaching staff. All teachers have clearly designated responsibilities and they work closely on a daily basis to share their curriculum strengths with each other. Teachers are suitably deployed in the school. There are appropriate systems to support newly qualified teachers and those who are new to the school. The teaching staff is very well supplemented by a good number of specialist teachers, classroom and welfare assistants, all of whom contribute to the teaching team spirit which is very evident in the school.
64. Accommodation is satisfactory. The school building is generally well cared for and constitutes a good learning environment. Classrooms and other areas are maintained as stimulating and interesting environments. For example, well presented displays of pupils' work and other stimulus displays are on show. The school enjoys extensive outdoor playing space but the playground surface is in a poor state of repair and there is no secure play area for children who complete the foundation stage in Year R.
65. Resources for teaching are satisfactory overall. The library is adequately stocked, there is a good supply of fiction and non-fiction books available. Resources for use with pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory. There is a good range of indoor and

outdoor resources available for use in the Nursery. These are used well. However, there are inadequate large resources for outdoor play for children in the foundation stage who are being taught in the main school. Resources in all other areas of the curriculum are satisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The school has many strengths. In order to build on these and improve the overall quality of the education provided, the governors, headteacher and staff, in co-operation with the local education authority, should:

- **Improve standards in English, particularly reading and writing by:**
 - ensuring that there is a whole-school systematic approach to the teaching of reading and spelling;
 - planning further opportunities for pupils to practise and improve these skills at length across the curriculum;
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are able to achieve in terms of presentation. (Paragraphs 2, 4, 7, 35, 78, 79, 81, 83, 84)

- **Extend the quality of provision for children in the foundation stage by:**
 - ensuring that there are more regular planned opportunities for children to link their oral work more closely to their written work;
 - providing a secure outdoor play area with suitable large construction materials and equipment for good quality outside play to develop children's physical skills and independence in learning.
(Paragraphs 6, 23, 35, 65, 67, 69, 72)

Other issues which should be considered by the school:

- Increase the quality and range of opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology within the curriculum. (Paragraphs 10, 24, 93, 96, 102, 116, 121)
- Increase the amount of investigative and experimental work pupils are expected to do in Years 1 and 2 in science. (Paragraphs 9, 94)
- Ensure that teachers provide opportunities for spiritual development across the curriculum. (Paragraphs 32, 40)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	47
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	24

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
14	24	30	30	2	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	Nursery	Y1 – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	25	144
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		28

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	Y1 – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		29

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	35

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.7
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	23	22	45

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	17	17
	Girls	17	19	19
	Total	30	36	36
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	69	80	80
	National	82	83	87

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	15	15
	Girls	17	17	19
	Total	30	32	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	67	71	76
	National	82	86	87

Percentages in brackets refer to the year 2000 results.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	6
Bangladeshi	4
Chinese	5
White	136
Any other minority ethnic group	9

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y1 – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	29.8
Average class size	29.8

Education support staff: Y1 – Y4

Total number of education support staff	7.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	104

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	27

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	50

Number of pupils per FTE adult	9.0
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	397126
Total expenditure	394359
Expenditure per pupil	2033
Balance brought forward from previous year	20028
Balance carried forward to next year	22795

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	228
Number of questionnaires returned	55

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	60	29	5	0	5
My child is making good progress in school.	51	44	0	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	58	5	4	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	62	11	0	5
The teaching is good.	49	47	0	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	35	15	2	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	33	2	0	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	44	0	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	40	38	15	2	5
The school is well led and managed.	45	47	2	2	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	49	44	0	0	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	18	29	33	9	11

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

66. Children are admitted to the Nursery in the term following their fourth birthday. They attend for two terms on a part-time basis and attend full-time for one term before transferring to Year R in the term after they are five. There are two intakes into Year R – at the start of the spring and summer terms. Some children have two terms of full-time provision in Year R to complete the foundation curriculum, whilst the youngest children have only one term. Most of the children who enter Year R transfer directly from the Nursery. During the inspection, 26 children attended the Nursery in the mornings and 24 in the afternoon. There were no children in Year R. The assessments on entry are carried out during the first term in Year R and results indicate that children start school with average and above average attainment. However, their early reading, writing and mathematical skills need more thorough assessment to prepare them for Key Stage 1.
67. The previous full inspection reported that under-fives were given a good start to school in all the areas of learning. However, HMI monitoring in 1999 raised concerns about the overall provision for children in the Nursery. Since then, the school has made very good progress in addressing the weaknesses identified. Inspection findings currently show that provision is now good in nearly all areas of learning, and by the end of the foundation stage, most children successfully attain standards above those expected in all areas of learning except in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development which are average. Children with special educational needs or those with English as an additional language are identified early. They are monitored and supported well and they make good progress. Despite the overall good progress that children make in the Nursery and Year R, the majority are below average when they begin Key Stage 1 in aspects of early reading, writing and recording in mathematics. This is partly due to the relatively short time that children have in these classes before starting Year 1 and the lack of emphasis on early writing and recording skills. Consequently, children are not sufficiently prepared for the National Curriculum in these important areas.

Personal, social and emotional development

68. The provision for this area is a strength. Children make good progress and by the end of the foundation stage, attain standards above those expected in this area of learning. Very positive relationships have developed between children and adults that effectively promote a happy and secure environment. Children come into the classroom happy and confident and part easily from their parents and carers at the beginning of each session. The children have learned the school routines speedily and as a result, they make good progress in this area of learning. They demonstrate independence in selecting activities and show an eagerness to explore new learning situations. Children behave well around the classrooms and during group occasions. They listen carefully to staff and respond readily to questions and requests. They work and play well together, particularly in the sand-pit for example, and co-operate suitably when taking turns to use wheeled toys or the computer. They show good perseverance and concentration, for instance when using pastels for their observational drawing of the fruits from the book 'Handa's Surprise' or listening to instructions on how to use the Roamer. They are encouraged to care for the plants in the garden and happily look after Humphrey the hamster. They treat school property carefully, help to put away the chairs after singing, prepare the fruit for snack time and queue sensibly in the hall for their lunches. They relate well to teachers and other adults and are beginning to develop an appropriate understanding of

right and wrong. Children with special educational needs or those who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language are clearly identified at an early stage and are well supported.

Communication, language and literacy

69. The provision for this area is sound. By the end of Year R, children attain the recommended goals but the majority are below average when they begin the National Curriculum Programmes of Study in all aspects except speaking and listening. All staff are aware of the importance of speaking and purposefully intervene to engage the children in conversation and increase their vocabulary in every area of the classroom. Through structured play, younger children develop their speaking and listening skills and are beginning to use language appropriately to express their ideas in the role-play area set up as a 'Travel Agent'. By the end of the foundation stage, most children are fluent, articulate speakers who are keen to talk about what they have done. They respond quickly to instructions and often reply to questions by answering in sentences and using the appropriate vocabulary to convey meaning. All children listen well. Even the youngest children in the Nursery listen attentively in small and large groups. They enjoy listening to stories such as 'Walking through the jungle' and are encouraged to express opinion. Children handle books carefully, turning pages correctly and know that print is read from left to right. Some can 'retell' a story using the pictures in the storybook to illustrate the meaning and most answer questions about the events in a story. All children are encouraged to take books home regularly to share with adults. However, most children are at the early stages of reading development and their knowledge of initial sounds is just satisfactory. Some can recognise a few words and can name and say the sounds of letters. A few more able children know how to put sounds together to form words. There are group sessions during which children learn the letter of the week. These are effectively followed up through worksheets and practical tasks. For example, when making tiger masks to reinforce the letter 't'. Children know that writing carries the message and are beginning to write shopping lists for 'Old Mother Hubbard' and make posters for 'This week's special' at St Nick's Supermarket. All children recognise and write their names and some copy the teacher's model with developing control. In Year R, a few more able children write about their friends and complete a sentence about the gingerbread man with adult support. However, by the end of the foundation stage, most are unable to form letters accurately or write independently.

Mathematical development

70. The mathematical development of children by the end of the foundation stage is average. Through practical work and games, all children learn to sort, match and count. In the Nursery, children begin to use mathematical language such as 'more than' and 'less than' when mixing ingredients for making 'Handa's surprise cakes'. They learn to sort equipment according to criteria such as colour, shape and size and explore concepts of capacity and measures when they use sand and water and fill containers with various items. Most use correct mathematical language to describe simple shapes such as circles, squares and triangles and more able children accurately identify the individual faces on cylinders, cubes and cuboid. Number games are thoughtfully planned and help children to use their initiative and develop social skills. A good example is when children roll dice, write down the numbers and add them. All children are familiar with number rhymes and songs which reinforce their knowledge and understanding of number. Most develop an appropriate understanding of number and count and use numbers up to, and often beyond ten. By the end of the foundation stage, a few children successfully add and subtract simple numbers, recording their answers independently, while average attaining children do so with the help of number lines.

However, when they start Year 1, too many children are unable to identify missing numbers in a sequence, add two numbers up to ten correctly or write clearly formed numbers. Overall, children's oral skills are better than their written skills due to limited opportunities to practise writing numbers.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

71. Attainment in this area of learning exceeds the standards expected by the end of the foundation stage, and children make particularly good progress as a result of a wide range of well-planned activities. In the Nursery, children begin to understand the needs of living things by growing beans and planting bulbs. They are becoming observant and talk with interest about the things they observe on their weekly 'wellie walk'. For example, they learn about the habitats of ladybirds and the types of materials that are delivered by lorries. By making cakes and chapatis, they notice that certain ingredients change when they are cooked and that when water is added to bark chippings, it changes and becomes a slurry which looks like melted chocolate. They explore and recognise features of living things, such as the life cycle of a frog when sequencing cards, and learn about the different parts of the body when making gingerbread men. By the end of the foundation stage, most ask relevant questions about how things work and why things happen. In the Nursery, children learn about the clothes worn by Indian children on special occasions and the traditions associated with the Chinese New Year. They start to develop their geographical vocabulary in the course of following directions, making routes in the outside play area and can point out where different parts of the school are. Most correctly name the different fruits in their current focus story, 'Handa's Surprise', and know that the story was not set in England. They can talk about the past and present in the context of talking about their families and about things they have done. Many use the computer well to support their learning. Most know the function of the buttons on the keyboard and operate the mouse skilfully when 'dressing teddy'.

Physical development

72. By the end of the foundation stage, children exceed the standards expected. Most make good progress in developing the skills of cutting, sticking, joining, threading and modelling. By the time they are ready to start Year 1, they manipulate tools such as pencils, crayons, glue spreaders and brushes appropriately and with increasing precision. Good opportunities are provided for children to paint with different sized brushes and practise writing patterns, mould clay and play dough, and balance bricks. Children confidently take apart and build with construction toys, manipulate jigsaw pieces, pour water and sand into containers and place items accurately when engaged in small world play. They are adept at operating a mouse and pressing the keys on a computer. After physical education activities, they practise fastening buttons and putting on shoes. All these activities help children to develop fine muscular control. In the outdoor area, they use the space well and develop their co-ordination skills by pedalling tricycles, manoeuvring wheeled vehicles, carrying equipment, climbing and balancing on the adventure equipment with considerable skill and control. The staff make good use of the playground outside the classrooms. However, there is no dedicated enclosed play area for use by the older children who complete the foundation curriculum in Year R. This means that they do not have opportunities throughout each day to develop their large muscular skills. The school is aware of this current situation and plans are in hand to address this. Children have access to the playground and the hall for physical education during the week. Most children show that they are developing good skills when running, jumping, using small apparatus and throwing and balancing a beanbag. Where skills are proficiently taught, as was seen in the Nursery session, progress is often rapid.

Creative development

73. Children's creative development is higher than expected by the end of the foundation stage. They know how to mix paints to produce other colours and paint colourful pictures of flowers. They draw and colour pictures with varying degrees of accuracy and detail. Opportunities to look at the work of various artists and reproduce them show that children are developing good skills. Children experiment with water on the wooden shed outdoors and use chalk to create attractive designs on the playground. Collage work is well featured in the story of The Gingerbread Man. They learn to paint boxes when using these to construct 'monsters' and know that the paint must be of a certain consistency to cover the cardboard. Class pictures sometimes call for a corporate effort and others reflect part of a story such as Handa's Surprise'. These examples are useful for developing social and language skills. Children enjoy music and participate enthusiastically in singing a wide range of songs including 'Fireman Sam' and 'The wheels on the bus'. They enjoy using actions and exploring the beat in a song such as 'Walking through the jungle'. They use appropriate percussion instruments to illustrate part of a song with good skill and imagination and are beginning to understand the difference between loud and soft when listening to music. Imaginative play is successfully fostered through activities in the play area where children undertake different roles with confidence in the 'Travel Agent'.
74. The quality of teaching and learning in the Nursery is consistently good in all the recommended areas of learning except language, literacy and communication and mathematical development which is sound. There are instances of some good and very good teaching. All staff have a secure understanding of how young children learn and planning is firmly based on the Foundation Curriculum. Weekly and daily plans usefully include the learning objectives for each activity and these are based on an appropriate long-term plan which covers the intended learning in every area of experience. This is an area of appreciable improvement since the HMI review in 1999. Where teaching is most effective, lessons are purposeful and well planned and tasks are clearly presented. In these lessons, adults encourage children to talk about their experiences and ideas. They listen to what children have to say and through careful questioning, attempt to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world. Throughout the sessions, there is a constant focus on language development and activities are well planned to stimulate the imagination of children. Support staff make a very valuable contribution to the social development and welfare of children and the nursery nurse works very well with the class teacher. Very good relationships exist between the class teacher, learning support assistant and parents or governors who come in to help. This has a positive impact on children's achievements and learning.
75. Arrangements for both starting school and for children moving on to Year R are good. Parents very much appreciate the smooth transition arrangements and they are well informed and encouraged to take an active interest in their child's learning. Resources in the Nursery are adequate, used well and stored appropriately and the outdoor area is used well for a range of imaginative activities. In Year R, resources are also adequate but children have no regular access to a secure play area or large equipment and wheeled toys for the necessary outdoor play.

76. Leadership is very good. The co-ordinator is well informed and has a very good understanding of the new foundation curriculum. She recognises the need to provide more structured opportunities for children to practise and develop their early writing skills. Staff know the children well and check their learning systematically and effectively. They maintain careful records to make sure that all children experience all the activities on offer and make regular observations of each child's development to check on progress. The information is used well for the grouping of pupils and for matching work to the right level.

ENGLISH

77. In 1999 at the end of Year 2, attainment recorded in National Curriculum tests was similar to the national average in writing, but below in reading. In reading, 69 per cent of pupils achieved the expected Level 2 or above, well below the national average, and 24 per cent the higher Level 3, below the national average. In writing, 80 per cent of pupils achieved the expected Level 2 or above, a figure below the national average, and seven per cent gained Level 3 which was similar to the average. Compared with similar schools, results in writing were about average, those for reading were below. The performance of boys is below that of girls in both reading and writing. Results for the year 2000 are similar for reading but less good for writing. In reading, 66 per cent gained Level 2 or above, and 14 per cent Level 3. In writing, 72 per cent achieved Level 2, but none Level 3. There was also an increase in those pupils attaining the lower Level 2C. Current Year 2 pupils are achieving broadly similar standards. Pupils who left Year 4 in July attained standards that were generally above the average, which reflected their good results at the end of Year 2. Current Year 4 pupils are not achieving as well.
78. The previous inspection found that standards in English were in line with expectations, although there was under achievement in writing for higher attainers. The school's results indicate that there has been insufficient progress since then, but they do fluctuate from year to year. Pupils who left at the end of Year 4 in July 2000 achieved standards that were above average; this was also reflected in their National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 2. The overall quality of teaching in English lessons was largely satisfactory and, within literacy sessions, this remains the case in Key Stage 1. Teaching has benefited from the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy. During the inspection, teaching in English in Years 3/4 was good.
79. When pupils start into Year 1, they have not consistently reached the standards expected for Reception children. Inspection findings for current pupils show attainment in English to be below average in Years 2 and 4. Pupils do not make sufficient progress, especially in reading and writing, although it is beginning to improve in Years 3/4. Achievement of pupils is usually too low, but was much better in Year 4 last year. Pupils with special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language are now also making better progress because of the effective use of additional teachers and support staff. The National Literacy Strategy has been satisfactorily implemented, however group activities are not always organised effectively. There are occasions when teachers use other subjects to support learning in literacy well, but this is not consistent enough.
80. Standards of pupils' speaking and listening are good. The vast majority of pupils listen well to the teacher reading or leading discussions, or to the contributions of other children in the class. In the Year 1 class, the teacher organised a good discussion following a science lesson. Pupils listened very well and asked sensible questions to ensure they could understand what other pupils had done. Although usually good, a minority of pupils, particularly boys in Years 3/4, do not listen carefully enough, despite

the efforts and clear messages of the teachers. Speaking skills are also good. Pupils speak clearly and use a suitable range of vocabulary. Teachers stimulate learning by providing good opportunities to answer questions at length. In the Year 1 class and Years 3/4 classes, good use of questions which encouraged explanations promoted speaking skills well.

81. In Years 2 and 4, standards of reading are below the national average. Pupils make insufficient progress. The school recognises that there is no coherent approach to the teaching of reading and that there is insufficient guidance for the inexperienced teachers on the staff. Pupils regularly read in whole-class and group sessions during the literacy hour, and also have regular quiet reading sessions. However, they do not make sufficient progress and their learning is not reinforced often enough. They do not, therefore, read with sufficient accuracy or fluency. During word work, pupils are not encouraged to be accurate enough or to use dictionaries consistently. By Year 2, pupils know about authors and illustrators. Most Year 4 pupils understand the classification system used in libraries. They understand the value of using contents page, but only the higher attainers can explain how the index is organised. Books are taken home regularly and teachers and parents comment on the quality of reading and areas for improvement. However, these records indicate that many pupils do not read sufficiently often to ensure improvement.
82. By the end of Years 2 and 4, attainment in writing is generally below average, but it is improving in Years 3/4 currently. Pupils in Year 4 last year were an exception and their writing was average or above, but even these pupils showed weaknesses in their spelling and handwriting. Many opportunities are provided to write within literacy and other subjects. Pupils write stories, reports and instructions. These show an improving vocabulary and interesting sentence structure. Few pupils have learnt the art of selecting appropriate information when completing research, such as about different harvest festivals and they copy large sections from the books and articles. In Years 1 and 2, pupils use limited descriptive vocabulary with simple sentence structure. A suitable programme for teaching handwriting means that most pupils leaving Year 2 can use a fluent, joined script. In handwriting sessions, pupils' work is neat and careful. However, because teachers rarely emphasise the importance of handwriting and presentation in other sessions, pupils' work is not careful enough. Writing is often untidy, letters poorly formed and there is a lack of care. Even pupils in Year 4 do not use a joined script consistently. The school has recognised that spelling is a significant weakness. There has been no systematic way by which spelling skills are taught and, because of inconsistent correcting of pupils' errors, many spell even common words incorrectly. This was illustrated by an above average pupil in Year 4 spelling boat as 'bote', and the incorrect use of 'dear' and 'deer'. The school hopes that recent changes will lead to an improvement. Teachers do not emphasise the importance of accurate spelling when copying from the board or books, and this results in pupils forming bad habits. Punctuation is used with reasonable accuracy. In Key Stage 1, pupils use capital letters and full stops correctly. When given effective support, pupils with special educational needs use more advanced punctuation, such as speech marks, question marks and exclamation marks, correctly.
83. The teaching of English is just satisfactory. Teaching in literacy lessons is satisfactory overall, although there are examples of better teaching, especially in Key Stage 2. The best lessons have a brisk pace and high expectations. Teachers use a quiet, but firm, voice well to gain attention. Experienced teachers are confident in teaching literacy and use suitable technical vocabulary correctly. In weaker lessons, group tasks are not explained clearly enough and, because pupils have no other means of checking what they should do, little valuable work is completed. The work given is not always

sufficiently demanding for higher attaining pupils, and clear targets are not given. Teachers do not intervene sufficiently when pupils engaged on group tasks are not completing their work and are wasting time and as a result, progress is unsatisfactory. Plenary sessions, at the end of each lesson, in some classes are used to explore pupils' learning and misconceptions. In the best sessions, teachers use good questions to help pupils extend their knowledge and check understanding. Teachers, especially in Years 3/4, use a wide range of strategies to improve behaviour and attention. This is becoming increasingly successful, although some pupils, mostly boys, do not behave well enough. In Year 1, pupils behave well because they are challenged and interested in the work. In other classes in Key Stage 1, there is still too much inattention and lack of concentration, especially by boys, during independent group activities. Although not disturbing other children greatly, this lack of attention and effort affects their progress and is one factor which accounts for boys' poorer results. Teachers, learning support staff and other adults provide good help to pupils whose English work is below most in the class. The quality of questions, in particular, helps them progress well. Teachers do not emphasise the importance of care and accuracy when pupils use their English skills in other subjects.

84. The headteacher took over responsibility for English shortly after her arrival at the school. Working with a senior teacher, she recognised that there were serious concerns about pupils' standards. A detailed action plan has been completed to bring about improvement. Analysis of data confirmed weaknesses, especially in reading and spelling. The plan is being implemented during this year, but it is recognised that the school has not yet fully considered how to improve pupils' reading and spelling. Good monitoring of teaching and pupils' work is helping inexperienced teachers to recognise their strengths and areas which need improvement. The curriculum for English is satisfactory. The National Literacy Strategy is firmly established, but teachers do not emphasise their expectations regarding literacy in other subjects sufficiently strongly. A strength of the school's English provision is assessment. The school now uses systematic procedures to track pupils' progress in all areas of the subject. This information, together with the analysis of National Curriculum Tests and optional test data, is helping the school identify weaknesses accurately and plan for improvement.

MATHEMATICS

85. The satisfactory standards in mathematics at both Key Stage 1 and at the end of Year 4 reported on in 1998 have been maintained. As a result of the successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy, standards of numeracy have recently improved throughout the school. Other contributing factors to the recent improvement in mathematics are improved teaching and the introduction of a numeracy booster group for developing the numeracy skills of the lower attaining pupils. In 1999, pupil performance at the end of Key Stage 1 matched average levels found in all schools as well as similar school. Performance of pupils in tests at the end of Year 4 in 2000 was above expected levels.
86. Discussions with pupils, observation of mathematics lessons and a careful study of pupils' previous work reflect the results of standardised tests. Pupils currently in Year 2 and in Year 4 are achieving standards of attainment that are broadly average. Almost all pupils in Year 2 are working at expected levels, with a small proportion working at above average levels in aspects of numeracy. Skills in mental calculation are improving as a result of work based on the numeracy strategy, and this is reflected in the satisfactory attainment of pupils in this area in Year 4. Pupil progress overall is satisfactory across both key stages. A significant number of pupils in Year 4 have identified special needs. A special mathematics booster group has been formed to address the learning needs of

these pupils. This arrangement is a contributory factor to the good progress these pupils make.

87. The pupils generally show a positive response to their work in mathematics. Pupils of all attainment levels make at least satisfactory progress throughout both key stages. This is largely due to effective lesson preparation. Where lesson preparation is good, teachers prepare work which meets the learning needs of all pupils, challenging the high attaining pupils and meeting the requirements of pupils with special educational needs. For example, a significantly large group of high attaining Year 4 pupils who left school at the end of last school year achieved standards that were above those expected generally for nine-year-olds. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported. The level of support they receive and the appropriate tasks they are set contribute to the good progress they make. During the inspection, a small group of lower attaining Year 4 pupils was observed estimating and weighing everyday products in their packages. These pupils used their mathematical knowledge in a practical context and they were building a conceptual understanding of weight. These pupils ended the lesson with a sound understanding of the relationship between the gross weight of a product and its net weight.
88. By the end of Year 2, most pupils can count up and down in fives to 100. They can count sequentially and order numbers up to 100. They confidently count in twos, fives and tens. Most pupils accurately add and subtract numbers up to 100 and sometimes beyond. They recognise sequences of numbers and work accurately handling small amounts of money. Higher attaining pupils describe strategies they use when adding two digit numbers together. They have an understanding of place value in numbers up to 1000. They solve whole number problems involving multiplication and division and they use simple fractions. There is an appropriate emphasis on numeracy and this makes a significant contribution to the pupils' understanding. Overall, standards of numeracy of seven-year-olds are satisfactory. Higher attaining Year 1 pupils are developing strategies for computing numbers. In one observed lesson, these pupils were adding nine to a given number by first adding ten and then taking away one. Most of the pupils were successfully applying the strategy and a number of them could explain it.
89. Most Year 4 pupils have a satisfactory grasp of number. They use a range of strategies when calculating and applying the four rules of number. Above average attaining pupils have good knowledge of data handling. For example, when studying a range of characteristics of themselves and class members, they collect discrete data on such things as hair colour which they record using frequency tables. They use information and communications technology to devise fields in which to group this data. They then use appropriate software to generate diagrams and graphs which represent an analysis of this data. They interpret these representations. By the end of Year 4, higher attaining pupils can estimate and measure accurately in metres and centimetres. They work in fractions and decimals and have a developing understanding of percentages.
90. The teaching of mathematics is good. In the lessons observed all lessons were at least satisfactory. The majority were either good or very good. The teaching of one lesson was excellent. The teaching of mental mathematics is mostly good and teachers have good knowledge of mathematics. In good lessons, teachers encourage pupils to explain their mathematical thinking and place an appropriate stress on the development of mental mathematics. They use ends of sessions well to consolidate and assess pupils' learning. These lessons are appropriately challenging and the pace of learning is good. In the excellent lesson, the teacher was working with a class of Year 1 pupils building on the work of the previous two days on subtraction. In this lesson, teaching was lively and

interesting. Pupils were making excellent progress working at a good learning pace. They quickly learnt to add on and take away one. They also learnt the signs used for adding and taking away. Throughout the school, pupils' mathematical vocabulary is being systematically developed. Most teachers have good expectations of pupils of all levels of attainment. In a small number of lessons where such expectations are not clearly communicated to pupils, a small number of pupils display elements of inappropriate behaviour. Scrutiny of pupils' completed work throughout the school shows that they have covered most aspects of the mathematics curriculum during the last year and it reveals the pace of learning to be satisfactory.

91. Teachers use assessment, both formal and informal, effectively. They mark pupils' work regularly. In the best practice, teachers make helpful and encouraging comments in pupils' books. This contributes to pupils' learning. All teachers keep good records in their monitoring of pupil progress. Planning of lessons is good with the inclusion of a range of appropriate activities which match the abilities of most pupils, including those with special educational needs. In their planning, teachers are adhering to the National Numeracy Strategy and lessons have well-defined learning objectives which are made clear to pupils.
92. Pupils use mathematics in other areas of the curriculum and this contributes towards learning. For example, Year 2 pupils count beats in music and sometimes use numbers when describing rhythm. In several classes, pupils use time-lines in history to represent events chronologically.
93. Provision for mathematics has improved since the last inspection. The school has successfully implemented the National Numeracy Strategy and this has contributed to the pupils' satisfactory progress in numeracy at both key stages. The co-ordinator, who gives good leadership, is currently absent from school on maternity leave. The subject is presently being well led in her absence by another senior teacher. This teacher is experienced and knowledgeable and she is maintaining a consistent drive to raise standards. Good assessment procedures are in place. Results from assessment are carefully examined and used to build up a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses in the subject. Learning resources are satisfactory and teachers use them effectively. Satisfactory use is made of homework to support pupils' learning in mathematics. Some use is made of information and communications technology to support learning, for example in data gathering, but there is need for further development in this area.

SCIENCE

94. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 is at the expected level and is above national expectations at the end Year 4. This is a slight improvement from the last report when standards were average by the end of Year 2 and Year 4 but a significant improvement from the 1999 teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 which indicated that standards were well below average when compared with all schools as well as with similar schools. Results for 2000 also show improvements. Rising standards are partly due to a revision of the science curriculum, improved planning, in-service training and a greater focus on experimental and investigative science especially in Years 3/4. However, opportunities for experimental and investigative science are limited in Key Stage 1.
95. In Key Stage 1, younger pupils successfully predict how far a model vehicle will travel when released down a ramp and know that pushing and pulling are different types of forces which make objects move. By the end of Year 2, pupils correctly identify and name the different parts of the human body. They know the differences between living

and non-living things and can identify the young of a variety of animals. They know the five senses and use their sense of touch when making predictions about different items in a 'feely' bag. Scrutiny of their work shows that their knowledge and understanding of materials and their properties are sound. Using a shopping catalogue, they accurately sort materials made from glass, wood or wool. They know that the properties of various materials make them suitable for different uses, such as glass for windows because it is transparent and bricks for walls because they are strong. Most correctly predict which materials are magnetic and non-magnetic and know that some materials change their state when heated, for example, chocolate. Pupils investigate and record the noises heard in the classroom in a variety of ways and know that electricity makes a bulb light up.

96. Since the last inspection, there has been a greater emphasis on experimental and investigative science especially in Key Stage 2 and as a result, pupils have a good understanding of how to plan and conduct experiments. By the end of Year 4, pupils accurately predict, test, refine and evaluate their work. This was well exemplified in a number of investigations, for example when investigating the sounds made when rubber bands were placed in different positions on the same sized box. Pupils noted that the pitch changed when they were placed further apart. They know that shadows are formed when an object blocks the light source and that shadows move and change in length during the day. They build on their earlier knowledge of materials and understand that materials can be solids, liquids and gases. Most understand the importance of fair testing and can devise their own tests for investigating what grass needs in order to grow, predicting possible outcomes, recording their results and drawing conclusions. They understand how friction affects movement and can apply this knowledge in a practical situation where they investigate the effect of different surfaces on their shoes. Literacy and numeracy skills are satisfactorily used to discuss, record and measure scientific findings in experiments and observations. The pupils read instructions and write purposefully to record their investigations. In Years 3/4 they represent their work in a variety of ways using graphs, tables and sets. A good example of this was where pupils used a bar graph to show the results of their observations on shadows at different times of the day. However, the use of information technology in lessons is currently underdeveloped to support and enhance pupils' attainment and rate of learning in the subject.
97. The majority of pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and pupils respond positively to challenge in lessons, which is having an impact on their rate of learning. They particularly enjoy practical activities and collaborate well with others, sharing ideas and equipment sensibly. This was well demonstrated in a Year 1 lesson when pupils worked on a variety of activities to investigate forces. However, a small but significant minority of pupils throughout the school disrupt and distract the learning of others. They take too much time to settle and find it difficult to listen to the teachers' instructions. As a result, the learning of these pupils and of others in the class is adversely affected.
98. The quality of teaching and learning, including that for pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is sound in Key Stage 1 and good in Years 3/4. Occasionally, teaching is excellent. In the most effective practice, teachers carefully plan a range of stimulating activities matched to the needs of pupils. Objectives were discussed with the pupils so that they knew what they were supposed to learn thereby enabling them to progress well in the session. Questions were used well to check pupils' understanding and to make the pupils think for themselves; 'What would happen if I twisted this ball of plastercine?' and 'How can we slow down the speed of the car?' In response, pupils willingly answered questions and made valuable contributions to class discussions. In most lessons, pupils are managed well so that

they learn in a calm learning atmosphere. They are often given timed targets to sustain their interest and effort. However, in some lessons, not all pupils are actively involved in discussion and so they become inattentive and a little restless during introductions and plenary sessions. This limits the progress they can make. Most teachers have a secure and confident subject knowledge which is used well to extend pupils' thinking. There is a good focus on developing key vocabulary and clear scientific language. This was particularly well done in a Years 1/2 lesson, where the pupils were discussing the different types of forces.

99. The subject is well managed by a knowledgeable and competent co-ordinator who is well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of science in the school. She offers good advice and support to colleagues and has organised workshops to improve staff confidence in assessing experimental and investigative science. There is a helpful policy and a scheme of work which provide guidance for teachers and ensure good coverage of all the attainment targets. Teachers' planning and pupils' work are monitored. However, there have been no recent opportunities for the co-ordinator to monitor the teaching and learning of pupils in lessons due to the national focus on literacy and numeracy. There are good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress and good use is made of the information obtained to help teachers plan suitable lessons. Resources are of sound quality and sufficient quantity to deliver the full curriculum.

ART AND DESIGN

100. The previous inspection indicated that pupils' attainment was in line with expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. The school has maintained the standards in art which are average, but has recognised that there is room for further improvements. Only one lesson in art was observed in Key Stage 2 during the inspection. Judgements take account of pupils' work, teachers' planning, discussions and display work in the classroom and around the school.
101. By the age of seven, most pupils confidently mix paints to paint portraits of one another. They draw, colour and paint pictures for display and to support their learning in other subjects. For example, in literacy when looking at the stories 'Elmer' and 'Handa's Surprise'. Pupils study the work of Kandinsky and many successfully capture the essence of his style when using the computer to create similar designs. In Years 1/2, displayed art work shows pupils' ability to work two- and three-dimensionally, use paint brushes, scissors and glue and a range of materials, but outcomes are frequently rather similar.
102. By the age of nine, pupils are increasingly competent in using a variety of media and working in a range of styles, for example, Paul Klee and Georgia O'Keefe. Pupils develop an appreciation of the work of famous artists, for example Picasso, when planning and designing a sculpture for the climbing area. After their field trip to Lympsham, pupils show a good eye for detail in their still-life drawings of fossils. They use charcoal successfully to show the effect of light and tone when shading and also to identify the finer details of the fossil. Particular strengths of art in the school was the whole-school project 'Under the Sea' where pupils worked together with an established artist to produce attractive friezes of sea creatures using the decoupage method and where some pupils worked with sixth formers and a local ceramist to make three-dimensional clay masks. These show originality and good expression. Throughout the school, pupils make good use of their artistic skills to support their work across many subjects of the curriculum. There are however, limited opportunities to use information technology skills to support art and the use of a sketch-book is insufficiently developed to provide

maximum progression in the extension of skills.

103. The previous inspection findings made no judgement on the quality of teaching. Currently, the quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the one lesson observed on planning a sculpture for the play area, the teaching was good. The clear instructions given by the teacher and the good organisation of pupils had a positive impact on the good progress made by pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. This was an example where careful preparation and particularly good intervention by the teacher enabled pupils to learn in a productive atmosphere, drawing on the information about the work of Picasso given during the recent museum visit.
104. Good teaching also has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes and their progress. They listen carefully and join in discussions willingly, giving sensible opinions on questions. Throughout the school, pupils of all ages and abilities identify art lessons as particularly enjoyable. There is a sense of pride about the work done with the local artists which is displayed in the hall. When given the opportunity to work collaboratively, pupils co-operate well and assist each other patiently, as seen in the Years 1/2 art lesson on leaf prints. Pupils show pride in their work and are happy to explain their work to visitors.
105. In the absence of the co-ordinator, the headteacher is overseeing art. She recognises that there is a need to have a more structured approach to the progressive development of pupils' skills and techniques and for tracking how well individual pupils build on their skills and expertise as they move through the school. A detailed action plan for the subject shows insight into the needs of the school, for example, the need to review the policy and to moderate pupils' work in order to ensure that all teachers are aware of pupils' progress and attainment in each year group. The school has sufficient resources for teaching art and has access to additional artefacts and posters to provide additional stimulus and excitement. Although there has been no formal monitoring of the quality of teaching, informal monitoring of pupils' work has taken place. Good use is made of the local museums to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of art and famous artists and work previously done by pupils was displayed in the Millennium exhibition at Blenheim Palace.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

106. The previous inspection indicated that attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 and Year 4 were similar to that expected. Resources were barely adequate. There has been an improvement and attainment is now good at the end of Year 4. There are sufficient resources to enable the wide curriculum to be taught effectively. Design and technology was not being taught during the period of the inspection, and judgements are based on discussions, scrutiny of pupils' work, displays and school documentation. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4, they have a good understanding of the importance of planning a design in detail before making the artefact. Teachers effectively aid this learning by making a clear distinction between the design and make phases. There are well-planned opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own design and those of others, usually during whole-class review sessions. Key Stage 1 pupils use a range of techniques to good effect to solve problems, such as making different parts move. In Key Stage 2, pupils show well-developed design skills when planning to make moving vehicles. Their good making skills are illustrated by the high quality metal frame fish and well-finished vehicles. Teachers encourage pupils to use their skills from other subjects in design and technology, which aids learning. Pupils measure accurately when cutting and make good use of their scientific knowledge to make games which include electrical circuits. All pupils, including those with special educational needs,

make at least satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and good progress in Years 3/4. Achievement is good by the time pupils leave the school.

107. Pupils' work demonstrates good attitudes to their design and technology work. This is illustrated by the pride and care taken in completing their products. The good planning evident in the school is one factor which has led to good teaching. The quality of pupils' work demonstrates high expectations by staff.
108. Although absent from the school during the inspection, it is evident that the subject is well led by the co-ordinator. The curriculum is organised effectively and well planned. Tasks in design and technology often arise from topics being covered, such as 'light and dark' or 'the Vikings'. There is, however, a clear recognition that the essential elements of designing, making and evaluating must be included within each task. The approach also helps pupils appreciate connections between the work they do. Teachers assess pupils' design and technology designing and making skills well.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

109. Seven-year-old pupils and nine-year-old pupils reach standards in both geography and history that are in line with national expectations.
110. Since the last inspection, there has been good improvement in the provision for geography. Pupils' attainment is now average at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. In history, standards have been maintained and are in line with expectations. An enthusiastic and appropriately knowledgeable teacher has recently been appointed co-ordinator of both subjects. With the involvement of the teaching staff, she has already produced an effective scheme of work which meets the requirements of Curriculum 2000 and which promotes progression. She has also produced a good action plan for geography and history which should guide the future development of the subjects. A priority in the plan is the carrying out of an audit of resources. At present these are adequate for teaching the National Curriculum but an up-to-date resource catalogue would be helpful for teachers when planning. In planning history and geography programmes of work, teachers now build in good assessment opportunities.
111. In geography, seven-year-olds are aware of places beyond their immediate locality. They compare and contrast living conditions in other parts of the world with their own experiences. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 are studying the life of people, particularly children, in Kabale in Uganda. They are provided with a range of resources from which they select and gather information. Through one of the teachers, the school has a useful contact in Uganda which gives the study greater relevancy for the pupils. Older pupils in Years 3/4 compare and contrast their own experiences with those of the people of Kenya, in particular those living in Nairobi. They express views about the environments they study. Nine-year-olds have a developing understanding of how people can both improve and damage the environment. In their writing, these pupils use a satisfactory range of geographical vocabulary in its correct context.
112. In history, seven-year-old pupils contrast the past with the present. For example, they learn about modes of transport and study the development of rail transport. They learn about the contribution of George Stephenson to rail travel. They learn to appreciate that there was a world before the invention of railways and consider how coal was delivered to factories before the development of a rail network. This leads them to a study of the construction of the canal networks and famous engineers linked with these endeavours. For example, they learn about the contribution made by James Brindley in this field.

113. During the inspection, only two lessons of geography were observed in Key Stage 2. In both lessons, pupils made satisfactory progress. Pupils with special educational needs received good support in the classroom. This support contributed to the satisfactory learning progress made during the lesson. In both these lessons, Years 3/4 pupils were developing satisfactory mapwork skills. The pupils have a satisfactory understanding of what a plan is and they know what the purpose of an accompanying key is. They draw their own plans of familiar places and choose sensible symbols to use with the key.
114. Pupils record their learning in a number of ways; by completing work sheets; by drawing and by writing. However, older pupils are given too few opportunities to write extended pieces of work in history and geography. There are too few opportunities for them to practise writing skills learnt in literacy in expressing their own views, opinions, reflections and discoveries in geography and history in pieces of extended writing.
115. The curriculum provision in geography and history is satisfactory and meets National Curriculum requirements. A programme of visits outside school effectively supplements work in school. The local environment is used well for geography fieldwork. For example, pupils use the school grounds and the immediate locality in their studies. Older pupils have the opportunity to participate in a residential visit to Lympsham, Somerset. On this visit they study a range of geographical features, compare and contrast life in Oxford with that in Lympsham, as well as visit an Iron Age settlement. Younger pupils also have opportunities to study beyond the classroom. For example, they visit Didcot railway museum as part of their study of rail transport, they also visit Cogges Manor Farm Museum as part of their study of Victorian times. Last term Years 1 and 2 pupils visited The Canal Museum at Stoke Bruern in connection with their study of waterways.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

116. Information and communication technology (ICT) was a key issue in the previous inspection report in terms of the low standards achieved by pupils. National Curriculum requirements were not met and progress was unsatisfactory because pupils were not given a sufficiently broad experience. Since then, the school has made good progress. A good quality scheme of work provides a better structure for planning, assessment procedures are well established and teachers' confidence is improving. As a result, standards by the end of end of Year 2 and when pupils leave school at the end of Year 4 are now in line with national expectations. However, pupils still do not have sufficient opportunities to use the computers to support and enhance their learning in other subjects of the curriculum.
117. By the age of seven, many pupils are confident users of computers. They show familiarity with the keyboard functions and skilfully use a mouse for pointing, selecting, dragging and moving items around the screen. They word process simple sentences onto the computer, delete and insert letters, and use upper and lower case type with accuracy. Pupils competently use an art package to create attractive designs in the style of Kandinsky and some obtain a printout of their finished results without adult support. They know how to control the movement of a floor robot using a sequence of commands and that many day-to-day devices respond to commands and signals.
118. By the end of Year 4, pupils use the basic editing functions of a word processor with confidence and become a little more sophisticated about what they do with the appearance of text. They successfully delete and insert letters, change the font size, style and colour to present their work in a more attractive manner. All pupils develop an appropriate vocabulary and talk about computer hardware and operations using relevant

terminology such as 'mouse', 'select', 'icon', 'edit' and 'file'. They know the difference between accessing information from a hard disk and CD-ROM programs which they have used to support their work on OXFAM. Many define fields when devising categories for data gathering and some use a variety of computer generated graphs to determine which is the most effective way of showing information. In discussion with them, it was clear that they understood that computers use text, pictures and sound to convey information and many use appropriate technological language to talk about their past work.

119. In the examples of information technology seen in use, pupils' attitudes were at least satisfactory and often good. They are keen to carry out tasks as seen by the pupils in Years 1/2 working on the paint program. During a whole-class session in Years 3/4, pupils listened very carefully, answered questions sensibly and confidently demonstrated to the rest of the group how to access the task. When working in pairs, pupils learn to share ideas and help each other to use the computer. This contributes well to their attainment. Pupils work productively and are confident in explaining their work. They behave well when unsupervised and handle equipment with care. They enjoy using the computer.
120. Teaching and learning of ICT are satisfactory overall and good in Year 1. Teachers have a sound knowledge of the subject and are growing in confidence and this is reflected in their work with the pupils. In the most effective practice, high standards are promoted both of work and behaviour and as a result, pupils respond by working hard and learning well. This was well demonstrated in the Year 1 lesson on making labels for the café. The teacher gave clear instructions using relevant vocabulary which ensured that pupils knew how to use 'erase' and the 'back space' key when making their labels. All teachers make good use of pupils to demonstrate tasks and of support staff to support lower attaining pupils. Pupils' experiences on the computer are recorded, and provide a check of what has been done. Some teachers create attractive information technology areas, with very useful guides to specific skills in some classes.
121. In the absence of the co-ordinator, a member of the senior management team is maintaining a watching brief. A very good subject development plan is in place which gives a clear picture for future progress and includes training needs for staff. The subject curriculum meets statutory requirements and makes a positive contribution to the pupils' social development when they are working in pairs on computers. Resources are adequate. Opportunities for pupils to use computers lack consistency. Lesson plans do not always identify opportunities for the use of computers within other subject areas. Overall, computers were not used well during the inspection

MUSIC

122. It was possible to watch three music lessons during the inspection. Two of these were of mixed age classes of Years 3/4 pupils; the other was a lesson of a mixed age class of Years 1 and 2 pupils. Standards of attainment achieved by pupils at both seven years of age and nine years of age are good. The standard of singing in whole-school assemblies is good.

123. In two of the observed lessons, Year 4 pupils have a good understanding of pitch and the ability to internalise pitch. These pupils clap complex repeated patterns, they change patterns and maintain different rhythms. When playing together using a range of percussion instruments, these pupils maintain a steady beat. They respond well to music and articulate their response. In listening to music, they identify and name a range of musical instruments and they know the difference between tuned and untuned instruments. The quality of singing of Years 3/4 pupils is good. In the other observed lesson, a group of well-motivated Years 1 and 2 pupils demonstrated the ability to repeat rhythmic patterns by clapping, first counting out beats aloud, then in the head. These pupils use a range of percussion instruments well when making music together and they are learning to follow the beat of a conductor. They use a range of vocabulary to describe sounds, for example, 'high', 'low', 'long', 'short'.
124. Satisfactory resources are available in school to teach music. There is a good range of tuned and untuned instruments available for pupils to use in lessons. Recorded music covering a good range of cultures and time is available; it is used to provide a focus for pupils as they enter and leave assemblies. Its use helps them to respond to recorded music in a positive manner.
125. The quality of teaching of the three lessons observed during the inspection was excellent. The teacher has a high level of musical knowledge and teaching skill. She has high expectations of the pupils. The result is that the pupils are highly motivated, respond enthusiastically to a wide range of well-planned activities and the pace of learning is excellent.
126. The subject is ably co-ordinated by a part-time teacher who is very knowledgeable and enthusiastic. She supports teachers by helping them develop their own music teaching skills through observing her at work with pupils in the classroom. Pupils have other opportunities to experience music making in addition to their work in formal lessons. Singing groups are formed to perform at a range of functions. For example, pupils perform at a Festival of Voices, which is a gathering of local schools brought together to make music. Pupils also have the opportunity to learn to play the recorder in the school recorder group. There is also an opportunity for pupils to receive violin and clarinet tuition in school through the Oxfordshire County Music Service.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

127. The previous inspection indicated that pupils' attainment was in line with expectations. However, although teaching was satisfactory overall there were shortcomings in control and management of pupils. The school has maintained these standards. Teaching is at least satisfactory, although some Key Stage 2 pupils, especially boys, present challenging behaviour. Standards of attainment are good in swimming, and satisfactory in other areas. Pupils with special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language make similar progress as other pupils.
128. It was only possible to observe three lessons during the inspection. One lesson focusing on catching and throwing was observed in Key Stage 1. All pupils threw a bean bag to a partner with reasonable accuracy; they also caught it well, the best consistently controlling the bean bag by pulling it into the chest. Pupils were well aware of their learning, and increased the challenge by moving further apart. Learning was enhanced when the teacher extended the task to involve movement, as well as catching and throwing.

129. Key Stage 2 pupils are making good progress in swimming and are confident to enter the water. Over half of the class can swim a width of the pool, either on the front or back, with the help of floatation aids. The majority of Year 4 pupils in the class can swim at least ten metres unaided. The learning of those who cannot yet swim confidently was enhanced because the teacher provided sensitive support throughout the lesson. In the dance lesson, attainment was below that expected, mainly because of lack of attention and effort by a group of boys, despite the teacher trying various strategies and including a range of interesting tasks.
130. Pupils usually enjoy physical education and behave well. Most have good attitudes and display good behaviour during lessons. The exception is that the high standard is not maintained by a significant proportion of boys in Key Stage 2. Relationships are usually good, illustrated by effective pair work in the throwing and catching lesson.
131. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. The standard has improved since the last inspection because more attention is given to control and pupil management. Opportunities for pupils to evaluate the performance of others were not always taken. In the swimming session, pupils who were reasonably confident with their swimming were not always kept sufficiently active. Teachers emphasise the importance of health and safety during lessons.
132. A new co-ordinator has recently taken over the leadership of the subject. She is already having an impact. She has conducted a clear audit of current provision and has identified the need to improve the guidance available to teachers in the area of dance. In addition, a system for systematic assessment is planned. All areas of the National Curriculum are taught, thus ensuring pupils develop skills across all relevant areas of physical education. The curriculum is enhanced because all pupils are taught swimming for half a term each year and there is a good range of extra-curricular activities, including football and cricket. Currently, there are few opportunities for the co-ordinator to monitor teaching or standards of pupils' work, but she has plans to enable her to do this. Resources are good, and include both a sports hall and gymnasium.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

133. The previous inspection indicated that pupils' work was below that expected. The school did not meet requirements as little teaching of religious education took place. Teaching was unsatisfactory because it failed to ensure that pupils made steady progress. Since then, the school has made great progress. Teaching is now good, supported by a detailed scheme of work based on the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Requirements are fully met and Year 4 pupils' work last year showed a wide and detailed knowledge of religious education and how it influences people's lives.
134. By the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 4, they have a good knowledge of a range of faiths and festivals associated with them. These include Christianity, Judaism and Islam. In work on harvest, pupils know that it is celebrated in many different ways around the world, such as 'Thanksgiving' in America and 'Pongal' by Hindus in southern India. By the end of Year 2, pupils know about the important events leading up to Easter, including Palm Sunday and the role of Judas. They know that Christians worship in a Church and Muslims in a Mosque. By the time they leave the school, pupils are familiar with significant Bible stories from both Old and New Testaments. They know about some of the features of the inside of a Church. Good use is made of visits to the local Church, together with visits from the local vicar or members of families from a range of faiths, to promote learning. Pupils' learning is promoted by good teaching, especially in Key Stage 2. For example, in one class, a good range of activities and resources from

books helped pupils to develop a broad understanding of the variation of how harvest is celebrated around the world.

135. Throughout the school, all pupils, including those with special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language, make at least satisfactory progress; it is good in Key Stage 2. Pupils are now achieving well in religious education. Discussions and the use of books and articles for research, help pupils extend and use their literacy skills. Pupils are interested and enthusiastic to contribute. In all lessons observed, they were respectful; in one case a group of pupils sensibly discussed, while completing a practical task, whether they believed in God or not. Behaviour is good and pupils are courteous to one another during discussions.
136. Teaching is satisfactory overall and generally good in Key Stage 2. Teachers use their subject knowledge well to plan suitable lessons. The correct use of specific vocabulary contributes to pupils' learning. Management of pupils is good and pupils respond to this well. Teachers are not always specific enough about the amount of work expected or the standard of spelling, handwriting and presentation; as a result, learning, especially of higher attaining pupils, is not always not as great as it could be.
137. The contribution of religious education to pupils' personal development is good and has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on issues such as friendship and trusting someone. Moral and social awareness is raised through considering the work of charities, such as Oxfam. The introduction of other faiths, especially Judaism, Islam and Hinduism, introduces pupils to a range of cultures. The headteacher took over responsibility for the subject shortly after her arrival in the school. She has produced clear subject guidance and has been responsible for the rapid improvement over the past year.