

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST MICHAEL'S C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Braintree

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115157

Headteacher: Mr A Jones

Reporting inspector: Michael Edwards  
13246

Dates of inspection: 20 - 24 November 2000

Inspection number: 224492

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

© Crown copyright 2000

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	5 - 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Maple Avenue Braintree Essex
Postcode:	CM7 2NS
Telephone number:	01376 344866
Fax number:	01376 550842
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Terry Clark
Date of previous inspection:	10 June 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
13246	Michael Edwards	Registered inspector	Geography	What sort of school is it?
			Special educational needs	The school's results and pupils' achievements?
				How well are pupils' taught?
				How well is the school led and managed?
				What should the school do to further improve?
9502	Rosalind Hall	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils?
				How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
19774	Maura Docherty	Team inspector	Mathematics	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			History	
2705	Pat Holwill	Team inspector	Science	
			Design and technology	
			Physical education	
8223	Diane Pilbro	Team inspector	Under fives	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
			Art	
			Music	
18456	Jill Rankin	Team inspector	Equal opportunities	
			English as an additional language	
			English	
			Information and communication technology	

The inspection contractor was:

icp

360 Lee Valley Technopark  
Ashley Road  
London  
N17 9LN

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7-11</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>12-15</b>
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>15-16</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>	<b>16-19</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>20-23</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>23-24</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>25-28</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>29-44</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Michael's Church of England Primary School caters for pupils aged between five and 11. Pupils enter the school at the beginning of the term in which they are five. It is bigger than other primary schools, having 372 pupils. Two per cent of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Four per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals which is below the national average. The percentage of pupils on the register of special educational needs, 11 per cent, is below the national average. Two per cent of pupils have a statement of special educational needs, which is in line with the national average. On entry to the Reception year pupils' attainment overall is above the average for the authority. A major impact on the school since the last inspection has been the absence of a permanent headteacher and deputy headteacher for much of the time and the frequent change of acting headteacher; seven in three years. A permanent headteacher was appointed in September

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

St Michael's Primary School is an effective school with a strong commitment to improvement. The aims and values of the school permeate its Christian ethos and pupils with behavioural difficulties are supported well. Standards in the national tests at age 11 are improving and are high in English and mathematics. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, and very good in the Reception year and in the special educational needs groups. The day-to-day management of the school is good: the new headteacher is making a good start in identifying strengths and areas for development. The governing body is in the early stages of developing an effective overall strategy for the school and the means of monitoring and evaluating its progress and effectiveness. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- Everyone has a very strong commitment to improvement.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards the school and their learning and show a high level of respect for the feelings, beliefs and values of others.
- The school reflects its aims within its whole life and the underlying Christian ethos within the school leads to a mutually caring community fostering very good relationships.
- The teaching and learning of children under five is very good and consequently the standards of work and their achievement is high.
- The provision for special educational needs, and the support provided by the special educational needs co-ordinator and learning support assistants, enable these pupils to make good progress.
- The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has led to improvements in standards and provision.
- Procedures for ensuring good attendance are effective and parental support for the school and pupils' learning is strong.

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

- The quality of teaching, particularly for some pupils aged five to seven: teachers' expectations of pupils' standards and achievement are too low and the use of on-going assessment is not well developed.
- The rigour and quality of the school's monitoring and evaluation of its own performance, including the use of test data, so that it can plan and take action more effectively.
- The links between the development of the school, its identified strengths and weaknesses and the use of resources, including curriculum time and finance are unsatisfactory.
- The standards of attainment in all aspects of writing for pupils aged five to 11 and science for pupils aged five to seven.
- The quality and quantity of curriculum resources to match the needs of the curriculum and pupils' levels of ability.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The last inspection in June 1996 found St Michael's Primary provided an effective education for pupils in almost all its work but identified some aspects that needed improving. The considerable disruption in leadership has meant that, overall, unsatisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. Good progress has been made on improving the quality of teaching, with lessons planned carefully and improved classroom management skills. Assessment information and data are not yet used effectively to monitor pupils' progress and inform teachers' planning. Although some improvement has been made in the support and monitoring role of subject leaders, this improvement is insufficient. There has been very little progress on developing the role of the senior management team and in reviewing the work of the school. With the appointment of a permanent headteacher strongly committed to improvement, the shared vision of all staff and governors and the clear support of parents, the school is in a strong position to continue to improve.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	C	B	A	C
Mathematics	B	C	B	C
Science	B	C	C	D

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

In 2000 the results for the national tests for pupils aged seven showed that standards were well above national average in reading, above average in writing and average in mathematics. When compared with similar schools they are average for reading and writing, but below average for mathematics, showing a marked improvement on the previous three years. The results for pupils aged 11 were well above the national average in English, above average in mathematics and average in science. When compared with similar schools they are average in English and mathematics and below average in science. The results in English and mathematics show an improvement on 1999. The inspection shows that pupils make very good progress in Reception and reach high standards. Progress and standards in reading through the school are good. Progress made by pupils in special needs withdrawal groups and where they have support in class is very good. Progress and standards in writing, including handwriting, are not high enough. Pupils aged five to seven years make insufficient progress in mathematics, but in the upper two years of the school progress is good. Overall progress in science through the school is unsatisfactory. For pupils aged five to seven years attainment in mathematics, information and communication technology, physical education, history and art are in line with expectations. In science, design and technology, music and geography standards are below those expected. Standards for pupils aged seven to 11 standards are above expectations in physical education, similar to those expected in science, mathematics, history and information and communications technology, but below expectations in design and technology, music, art and geography.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good attitudes to learning. Pupils enjoy school, are keen to learn and respond to their work and teachers in a mature manner. They are involved in the activities of the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good in classrooms and around the school. There are elements of over-boisterous behaviour in the playground.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is very good. They have a strong respect for the values, feeling and beliefs of others. They willingly take on a range of responsibilities. The relationships between adults and pupils and pupils are very good.
Attendance	Attendance is good.

Pupils' attitudes to the school and their learning and relationships at all levels throughout the school are strengths of the school. These have a very positive effect on the school's ethos and pupils' learning. Good attendance contributes to the progress pupils make.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	unsatisfactory	satisfactory

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

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with good teaching observed in all year groups. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 92 per cent of the lessons observed with 32 per cent being good, 13 per cent very good and five per cent excellent. Eight per cent were unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection when 17 per cent of the teaching was unsatisfactory and four per cent very good or better. Teaching in the Reception year is very good. Teaching in some lessons for some classes of five to seven year olds is unsatisfactory. Teaching of the older two years of the school is good. Overall, the teaching of numeracy is good and of literacy is satisfactory, with weakness in the teaching of writing. Strengths in teaching include the use of support staff and resources, the management of pupils and the relationship teachers have with their pupils. Weaknesses in the teaching of the Reception year relate to the effectiveness of teachers' planning and in the teaching of five to 11-year-olds to too low expectations of what pupils can and should achieve and the quality and use of assessment and marking in planning their work. Strengths in learning in the Reception year include the acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding and the effort and concentration children make leading to a high degree of productivity. In some classes of five to seven year olds the pupils work too slowly and do not produce enough.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Although relevant to the pupils, the overall balance of the curriculum is unsatisfactory, with too much variation in time spent on subjects across classes. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities to support pupils' learning and interests.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good provision for pupils with special educational needs. Support within and outside the classroom is very good enabling pupils to take a full part in lessons. Less good in lessons where there is no extra support.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The provision for pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall the provision is good. Pupils develop a good understanding of moral and social responsibilities. The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. The provision for pupils' cultural development is unsatisfactory partly because of the range of the curriculum but also due to the lack of a multi-cultural dimension.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The personal welfare of pupils is promoted very well through an effective system of support and guidance, including very good procedures for monitoring and improving attendance. It has sound procedures for monitoring academic progress but these are not yet embedded in practice. Assessment of pupils' work is not effectively used to plan the curriculum.

The school works well in partnership with parents. Although the curriculum meets statutory requirements, there is no clear agreement on time allocated to various subjects, nor on the way aspects of the subject will be developed through the school to ensure pupils make progress. The monitoring and promotion of good attendance are strengths of the school. A major weakness is that the school does not use the assessment of pupils' progress and attainment as a guide to its planning and provision.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher was appointed in September and has made a good start in analysing and evaluating the school's strengths and areas for development. The day-to-day management of the school is good. The roles both of the senior management team and subject leaders are underdeveloped.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Currently the governing body is not fully effective in fulfilling all its responsibilities. The strategic roles of the governors are underdeveloped.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school does not possess effective systems for evaluating its performance in order to identify areas for development.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of staff. Curriculum time within the school day is not used to best effect. The school does not effectively link the budget to the areas for development.

There is a good match between the number and qualifications of staff and the demands of the curriculum. Support staff are well managed and led by the special needs co-ordinator and make a major contribution to the progress of pupils with special educational needs. The computer suite enhances pupils' learning. The quality and range of curriculum resources are insufficient in a number of subjects. There are too few non-fiction books and the library is not adequate for research and investigative work.

A particular strength in management and leadership is the total commitment of the headteacher and all staff and governors to school improvement. The reflection of the school's aims and values throughout the school and the sense of team commitment between adults are real strengths. The school does not yet have an appropriately rigorous programme for monitoring and evaluating its own performance and for taking appropriate action. The governing body has not yet formulated a clear long term plan for the school, nor has it systems for monitoring how well the school is succeeding against its plan, particularly in relation to the quality of education provided and the standards pupils achieve. Priorities in expenditure are not sufficiently linked to the school's identified areas for development. The principles of best value are being implemented with regard to competition, but the school needs to develop its consultation with parents and to be more aware of how it compares with other schools.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• The children make good progress.</li> <li>• The quality of the teaching.</li> <li>• Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school.</li> <li>• The school expects the children to work hard and achieve their best.</li> <li>• The school is helping their children become mature.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some are concerned that their children do not get sufficient homework and it is not always taken note of by teachers.</li> <li>• Some parents feel that the school does not provide an interesting range of extra-curricular activities.</li> <li>• Some parents feel that the school does not work closely with them.</li> <li>• Some parents feel they are not adequately kept informed of their child's progress.</li> </ul>

The inspection team broadly agrees with the parents' positive comments, although there are weaknesses in some aspects of teaching. The inspection finds that the range of extra-curricular activities is good. Reports to parents now provide a good guide to their child's progress and newsletters keep them informed. The governing body is addressing how to involve parents further. The school is addressing homework and this is becoming more consistent in its setting and marking.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The attainment on entry to Reception in all areas assessed through the statutory baseline assessment is above that expected of children of this age and above the average for the county. In particular, the children enter the Reception classes with well-developed literacy and numeracy skills.

2. The results of the 2000 national tests for seven-year-olds show that pupils attain standards well above the national average in reading, above average in writing and broadly in line with the national average in mathematics. An above the national average percentage of pupils achieve at a higher level in each of these subjects. In comparison with the schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, standards are average in reading and writing, but below average in mathematics. Teacher assessments in science are well above national average with almost all pupils attaining the expected national standard. Compared with similar schools the results are average. However, as no pupil reached the higher level, the school is well below average both nationally and in relation to similar schools for those attaining at that level.

3. The 2000 test results for 11-year-olds show that pupils attain standards well above the national average in English, above the national average in mathematics and in line with the national average in science. An above the national average percentage of pupils achieve at a higher level in English and mathematics. In comparison with the schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, standards are average in English and mathematics and below average in science.

4. The 2000 national test results for seven year olds show an improvement on the 1999 results in reading, writing and mathematics. However, until 1999, results in writing and mathematics have been lower than at the time of the last inspection. In reading they are still below the level they were at the last inspection and in mathematics they have been below the national average until 2000.

5. The 2000 national test results for 11-year-olds in English, mathematics and science show an improvement on the 1999 results and on the results at the time of the last inspection. However, the improvement in English is less than the improvement nationally.

6. During the early part of the autumn term, the school raised its targets for English and mathematics for 2001 to a challenging level. Originally the targets were below the pupils' results in 2000 but these have now been raised to above the 2000 level.

7. The inspection finds that by the age of seven, pupils' attainment is broadly in line with that expected nationally in English and mathematics. Attainment in science is below national expectations. Attainment in information technology, physical education and art is in line with national expectations. In design and technology, music and geography, attainment is below national expectations.

8. By the time the pupils reach 11 years old, the inspection finds that their attainment in English and mathematics is broadly in line with national expectations. In science, history and information and communications attainment is in line with national expectations. Attainment in physical education is above expectations, but below national expectations in design and technology, music, art and geography.

9. In English lessons most pupils aged between five and seven years achieve the expected level in writing and above the expected level in reading. By the time pupils reach Year 6 the overall standards of writing are below those expected. Standards in reading continue to be above the expected level and it is this aspect of English that contributes to the above average results in the

National Curriculum tests. The introduction of the literacy strategy and the limited introduction of target setting have contributed to the improved standards in the last year.

10. Most pupils have good speaking and listening skills. They can communicate their ideas appropriately and use a widening vocabulary, share their ideas and contribute to lessons taking into account each other's opinions. A small minority of pupils, mostly boys, loses concentration during whole-class discussions. Pupils listen to instructions and are keen to participate during question and answer sessions.

11. Throughout the school pupils make good progress in reading and read to a good standard. They read fluently, accurately, with good expression and evident enjoyment. They can talk about the book they are reading and more able readers can discuss favourite authors, different genre and non-fiction versus fiction. They are able to use a range of skills to extract information from a book. Pupils' make insufficient progress in writing and by the time they are 11 pupils' standard of writing in their books is below average overall. Where pupils have a good written style, they can write complex sentence structures which are used to develop a plot with convincing characters and a series of events that creates an interesting story line. However, the writing styles of many pupils are too simple. Their work is rarely structured into paragraphs and contains poor punctuation and spelling. It is written in a careless, often untidy, script. Too many pupils produce an insufficient quantity of written work. When pupils with special educational needs are supported in class they make good progress and those pupils taught in withdrawal groups make very good progress in their lessons. However, their books show that when that level of support is not provided their progress is more in line with their peers.

12. In mathematics pupils are attaining in line with national expectations at seven years old although their progress is slower than is expected. They know and can use multiplication facts for the 2 and 10 times table. They understand halves and some pupils can use the appropriate notation and understanding of equivalent fractions. In the upper part of the school pupils make good progress so that by the time they are 11 years old they are attaining above national expectations. They use mental strategies to solve complex problems and rough estimates to guide their work, being able to round numbers up and down appropriately and draw on known number facts. They are able to use inverse calculations when checking their answers. They are able to explain coordinates and how to plot positions in the first and second quadrants, predicting where numbers would be if they drew the axis in the third and fourth quadrants.

13. In science pupils, particularly the higher achievers, make insufficient progress so that by the time they are seven years old they are working below the level expected. Pupils know about the life cycles of frogs and butterflies. They can sort the animal kingdom into groups for example into birds, fish and mammals and they know the conditions plants need to grow. They can sort materials by hardness and roughness and have investigated light and dark and experimented with different strength torches to find the brightest light. By the time pupils reach 11 years old they have made more consistent progress and are achieving at the expected level. Pupils have satisfactory knowledge of solids, gases and liquids and have investigated reversible and irreversible changes. They know that water, light and temperature affect plant growth. Pupils are able to carry out investigations, such as the rate of evaporation of liquids.

14. By the age of seven and 11 pupils' attainment in information and communications technology is in line with national expectations. By the age of seven pupils can use a computer for word processing and can use such functions as caps lock, space bar, bold and fonts and can delete using the arrow keys. They have good control of the mouse and use it adeptly. They can fill colour and understand the techniques necessary to succeed. By the age of 11 pupils can word process with confidence although their typing skills are very slow due to lack of experience earlier in the school. They devise newspaper reports manipulating and combining graphics and text. They can use spreadsheets to determine the cost of a meal, using drag techniques and SUM to set up formulae. They can set up a database and produce a graph. They can design a series of well-organised pages incorporating sound and animation using powerpoint to do a presentation to the rest of the class. They can use sophisticated tools in the art packages to swivel, resize and stamp their paintings. They do not have the opportunity to use computers for controlling devices.

15. Overall, the progress pupils make is satisfactory. However pupils aged five to seven make slower progress than expected. Generally, pupils' progress improves as they move through the school, so that in the upper part of the school it is good. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in their work because of the level and quality of support provided. Those pupils in withdrawal groups make very good progress because of the teacher's high expectations and the brisk pace of lessons. Achievement is not always so high in lessons where support is not provided. There are no significant differences in levels of attainment between boys and girls.

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

16. Pupils' attitudes to the school and their learning are very good and are a strength of the school. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen to take part in its activities. The support and interest of parents in their child's work and progress contributes to the pupils' placing importance on their learning. Where teachers' expectations are high they are enthusiastic learners, listen attentively in class and concentrate on tasks, even when not directly supervised. When it is clear what is expected of them, they take a pride in their work and make good responses to tasks. In class, pupils rise to the challenge of new ideas, are alert to possibilities and draw on previous skills and knowledge to help them make progress.

17. Overall, pupils' behaviour is good. Teachers have clear expectations of pupils' behaviour in classrooms and when moving into ability groups and other classrooms. Pupils know, understand and accept what is expected of them. Consequently pupils' behaviour within the school building and in classrooms is very good and they settle to tasks quickly. Because there is this spirit of co-operation teachers and learning support assistants are able to support appropriately individual pupils and groups knowing that the rest of the class will work on their set tasks. However, the school is aware of the tendency for over-boisterous behaviour in the playground and, through consultation in the school council, is seeking pupils' ideas for equipment for playtimes. Some of the more boisterous behaviour is due to the arrangements made for pupils waiting for their call for dinner. There has been one fixed exclusion during the past year.

18. Pupils are involved in the daily routines of the school, for example, as register monitors. They seek opportunities to help and are very responsive to taking responsibility. The Year 6 pupils are confident and mature in the responsibilities they undertake, including their responsibilities in supporting younger pupils.

19. Relationships between pupils are very good. Pupils work well together in groups and pairs, for example, when sharing the computer and in physical education lessons. Where pupils have behavioural difficulties or medical conditions other pupils are supportive, showing a mature understanding of each other's needs and feelings. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. Teachers and support staff encourage and listen to the pupils and the pupils respond with respect. Because of the quality of relationships, pupils, including those with special educational needs, are willing to share their thinking and justify their results. For example, in mathematics they enthusiastically describe their mental calculation, offer alternative routes to a solution and learn from a miscalculation. They are confident about challenging teachers' conclusions with good judgement, for example, pupils in a Year 2 class challenged a teacher's assertion that there was only one way to half a triangle.

20. Pupils have a high degree of respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. There is no evidence of bullying, sexism or racism. One major contribution to the pupils' attitudes in these areas is the excellent role models provided by the adults in the school. For example, the staff in the school office respond positively to all pupils' requests and listen sympathetically to problems. Further, the school is not complacent in these areas and takes positive steps to discuss them. The school council, through discussions in class, is taking the area of bullying very seriously and seeking ways to ensure that all pupils continue to remain free from oppressive behaviour. Pupils remind each other of what is expected of them and appreciate each other's efforts. They actively point out when one of their number is being unfair or displaying behaviour likely to cause offence. One pupil encouraged friends to see that it was not fair to "take the mickey" when someone was really trying. Pupils willingly share their learning about people of faiths different from theirs with

interest and respect. The introduction into the curriculum of circle time and bubble time, provides opportunities for pupils to talk about issues and concerns that affect their lives. Some of these discussions are at a deep level and are always dealt with in an atmosphere of mutual support, respect and concern. The influence of this approach is evident in the life of the school, but is also beginning to have an effect on other areas of the curriculum. So, for example, in a history lesson on Victorian childhood and disease, they are aware of the hardship compared with their own lives and spoke with empathy of a child's death from typhoid.

21. Attendance at the school is good. The attendance rate is above the national average and the rate of unauthorised absence is below the national average. This has a beneficial effect on pupils' learning and reflects the high level of parental support for their child's education and the effectiveness of the school's procedures.

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

22. Overall, the teaching at St Michael's is satisfactory. Because of the frequent changes of headteacher there has not always been a consistent approach to improving the quality of teaching since the last inspection. However, under the previous acting headteacher and now under the current permanent headteacher a programme for improvement is being implemented. This has resulted in the improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection, when almost one in six lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory, and has contributed to the improvement in test results in 2000 both for pupils aged seven and eleven. Ninety-two per cent of lessons are now at least satisfactory, with 50 per cent being at least good. Nearly one in five is very good or excellent. Overall the teaching of numeracy is good, but the teaching of literacy is inconsistent, with unsatisfactory teaching overall for pupils aged five to seven, and satisfactory teaching for pupils aged seven to 11. The teaching of special needs pupils in withdrawal groups is usually very good and often excellent.

23. There are several important characteristics of good teaching at St. Michael's that enables pupils to make appropriate progress.

24. In all classes teachers prepare their lessons carefully by planning what they will cover and the activities they will use. This ensures that resources are available and the organisation of the classroom enhances learning. A good example of this was in a Year 6 science lesson on reversible changes, where the carefully prepared organisation of the lesson ensured pupils could carry out group investigations of burning candles in safety. In most lessons the planning sets out what the teacher wants the pupils to learn and to be able to do by the end of the lesson. Where this is clear and specific, as in a Reception class literacy lesson, there is a good focus on pupils' learning. The well-planned range of activities during lessons help pupils to concentrate: just when pupils are beginning to lose concentration teachers change the activity or pace of the lesson. An excellent example of this was in a Year 4 special needs withdrawal lesson for literacy. Here the session moved quickly with appropriately frequent changes of activity keeping the pupils on their toes and alert, thereby ensuring pupils remained enthusiastic and made good progress.

25. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. Pupils are treated with respect and consequently feel valued and encouraged to contribute to lessons. For example, in more than one lesson when the pupils did not understand and asked for an explanation the teacher calmly explained again, but emphasised that the reason the pupils didn't understand was "because I didn't explain it well first time." This response enhanced the pupils' self-esteem and made them willing to indicate again when they did not understand. Teachers are particularly skilled at managing those pupils who present very challenging behaviour. In a Year 3 mathematics lesson the teacher firmly dealt with a potentially confrontational situation. Similarly, in a Year 6 physical education lesson the teacher's appropriate responses to disruptive behaviour ensured the successful continuation of the lesson.

26. Where teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach and understand how to present and discuss subject material in a way that helps pupils really understand, the pupils become enthusiastic and eager to learn. A good example of this was in a Year 2 mathematics

lesson, where the teacher brought her pizza "lunch" and used it to demonstrate fractions. In a Year 4 information technology lesson the pupils were able to carry out advanced operations on the computer because the teacher had the knowledge and confidence to teach them. Teachers' confidence enables them to ask searching and probing questions that challenge pupils' thinking and take them on in their learning. For example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson the very good questioning gave pupils the opportunity to consider the efficiency of different mental calculations of the same number problem and to reach conclusions. Teachers' knowledge of the subject also encouraged pupils to develop correct terminology. In a Year 6 science lesson pupils were encouraged to emulate the teacher's use of scientific terms and phrases, thereby extending their knowledge and vocabulary.

27. There are weaknesses in teaching, particularly of pupils aged five to seven, but also in other parts of the school. The unsatisfactory lessons and the weaknesses in otherwise satisfactory lessons are linked to low expectations on the part of the teacher leading to the pitch of the work being unchallenging as in a Year 2 literacy hour. In part, this is due to lack of subject expertise and understanding of the levels expected, as in developing pupils' writing. In too many lessons the pace is leisurely and there is a lack of urgency leading to pupils becoming bored and restless, coming off-task and producing too little work. This leads to pupils neither making sufficient progress nor achieving as highly as they could. In some cases teachers did not ensure pupils were focused and paying attention during explanations, as in a Year 4 mathematics lesson. The scrutiny of pupils' work confirms that in too many cases teachers do not make sufficiently high demands of the pupils in terms of presentation, handwriting, spelling and the skills required by the subject itself. The high reliance on worksheets in some classes contributes to the underdeveloped skills' elements in subjects such as science and geography. In turn, this leads to pupils' not developing an appropriate level of skill in non-fictional writing such as explanations and argument. The quality and use of day-to-day assessment, including marking, is too varied in quality. So, for example, in Year 6, the use of capital letters and full stops in a number of pupils' books has been identified by the teacher as incorrect, but no programme of work to address this major weakness has been carried out. Consequently, pupils continue to make the same errors.

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

28. At the last inspection, the school's curriculum was judged to be broad, balanced and relevant and was seen to be having a positive influence on standards. This inspection finds that the school meets the statutory requirements for the curriculum and provides a satisfactory quality and range of learning opportunities. Sufficient time is allocated to the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The school has a successful strategy for teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, through the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. The implementation of these national initiatives has had a positive effect on the standards pupils achieve. However, there are areas of weakness within curriculum provision. The curriculum for the Reception pupils does not fully address the six areas of learning appropriate for this stage. For five to 11-year-old pupils the balance of the curriculum in terms of time allocation and the balance between the knowledge and skills content of the subjects are inconsistent and often unsatisfactory for pupils as they move through the school. These imbalances are having a negative effect on pupils' attainment and progress in a number of subjects, including science, geography, design technology, music and art.

29. The inefficient use of curriculum time is a weakness within the school and arises because the use of time is not monitored and evaluated and there has been no whole-school agreement on the allocation of curriculum time according to the needs of the curriculum and those of pupils' learning. Teachers' timetables show that the amount of time allocated to each subject varies without good reason in different years and across classes in the same year group. In some classes time is used inefficiently. For example, the periods of time allocated for general work in some classes at the beginning of the day are not always well spent and prevent a brisk start to the first lesson. In some classes the organisation of the school day results in extended literacy hours and mathematics lessons towards the end of which pupils lose concentration and produce little



work. The organisation of the curriculum time does not always reflect identified weaknesses in the pupils' attainment and learning. For example, although reading is a strength of the school and receives very good support at home, some classes have a large number of silent reading periods. Similarly, writing is a weakness but no additional time has been allocated to address this. The total time allocated for teaching at Key Stage 2 is less than that recommended.

30. The curriculum for pupils in the Reception class has weaknesses. The planned curriculum is based on the subjects of the national curriculum and does not fully address provision across the six areas of learning appropriate to this stage. The assessment of children's learning does not fully address the early learning goals that define the standards expected at the end of the Reception year. The formality of the planned curriculum does not meet fully the learning needs of the youngest pupils. The requirements for learning through play, both indoors and outdoors, are not being met. The management of the learning environment is limiting the children's opportunities to develop independence in choice and consolidate and extend learning at their own pace.

31. High quality support from learning support assistants and, where appropriate, the provision of specialised equipment for those pupils with physical needs, ensure that pupils with special educational needs have equal access to, and opportunities to succeed in, all areas of the curriculum. Individual education plans are of a good quality and well known and used by support assistants working with the pupils concerned. The school meets the provisions required for those pupils with a statement of special needs. The special educational needs co-ordinator ensures that the additional support is well-focused as a matter of priority on literacy, numeracy and communication skills. Pupils' work and lesson observations demonstrate that pupils make good progress when they are supported in the classroom and in withdrawal groups. However, the school is less successful in ensuring that pupils with special educational needs make as good progress in those lessons where there is not additional support. In part, this is due to some teachers not planning appropriately for these pupils and not fully taking into account the targets in their individual education plans. The school makes every effort to ensure that the withdrawal of pupils from class for small group and individual teaching does not disadvantage them in other areas of the curriculum. Setting in mathematics in the upper part of the school has benefited all pupils, including higher attaining pupils. The arrangements for setting in one year group are unsatisfactory as the frequent change of teacher leads to different levels of expectation and disruption in the pupils' progressive development of numeracy skills.

32. The inspection confirms the school's decision to have as priorities within its development plan the production of good quality schemes of work for all subjects and planning its own curriculum for the foundation stage. The development plan identifies the need to bring the school's curriculum into line with the early learning goals and the revised National Curriculum and to ensure the appropriate development of the necessary skills for each area of learning and subject. It is planned that the schemes of work will provide clear guidance to teachers on the manageable coverage of the content of the National Curriculum in the time available and a coherent structure to the development of the skills of each subject as pupils move through the school. An appropriate start has been made on reviewing the current schemes of work and the school is making appropriate use of the guidance material from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

33. The provision made for sex education and drug awareness is sound and based upon clear policies appropriately agreed by the governing body. Personal, social and health education is taught through lessons focusing on aspects of the agreed school curriculum and specific sessions called circle time and bubble-time during which pupils discuss issues of personal and school concern. Although there is not, as yet, an agreed programme for these sessions, they are well prepared and taught sensitively by teaching and support staff. At times they focus on issues being considered at the school council so that the representatives can express the views and concerns of the class at those meetings. Pupils take the sessions very seriously, confidently expressing their ideas in an atmosphere of mutual trust and learning to see a different point of view. The sessions are making a very positive contribution to the development of the pupils' personal and social skills and behaviour. However, not all pupils have the benefit of these sessions, as there is not yet consistent practice or coverage across the school.

34. Overall, the links with the community are good. The school is closely linked to the local church, using the building for appropriate services. The curate takes assemblies and also a weekly after-school football club. The school successfully seeks to involve pupils with local senior citizens through the distribution of harvest gifts and inviting them to aspects of the Christmas celebrations. Members of the local community, such as the police, the Salvation Army and disabled people visit the school to widen the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the wider world. There are good links with a local secondary school with curriculum issues and target setting having been discussed and pupils visit there as part of their information technology studies. Pupils from the local secondary school perform a Christmas pantomime at St Michael's school. The Reception class teacher visits local playgroups as part of the induction of new pupils. The headteacher is on the committee of the Braintree Schools' Federation that organises in-service training and conferences on topics such as accelerated learning.

35. The good range of extra-curricular activities, which is well supported, enhances the curriculum. For example, pupils can join the choir, the Wildlife Explorers, art club, football, tennis and a before-school gym session.

36. Overall the school makes good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

37. The provision for spiritual development is sound. The legal requirements of a daily act of collective worship are fully met. Assemblies are well planned and appropriate for the ages of the pupils who attend them and, together with religious education, they provide opportunities for reflection on values and beliefs. Pupils are able to reflect upon their own experiences and those of others in the circle and bubble-time sessions. However, there are too few planned opportunities for spiritual development in the wider curriculum.

38. The school's provision for moral development is good and is enhanced by the excellent role models provided by all adults who work at the school. The school effectively fosters Christian values and attitudes and promotes honesty, fairness, justice and respect for property. Pupils are taught the difference between right and wrong and to think about the effect that their actions have on others.

39. Pupils' social development is promoted well and, through the high quality of the adults' modelling of values such as respect and courtesy between themselves and with the pupils, their levels of self-esteem are good. The creation of the school council enhances the opportunity for pupils to understand what it is to live in a community where there are both rights and duties. All pupils have the chance to take part in its deliberations through the classroom discussions that inform the class representatives' contributions at the meetings. Currently the council is discussing how best to spend a set budget on playground equipment - an excellent example of the application of the best value principle of consultation. The level of contribution at the council meeting has been good, with all pupils' representatives, no matter how young, being listened to as they voice their opinions. Other areas under discussion at the council include bullying. There was a high degree of sophistication in the council's questioning of the registered inspector concerning the inspection process and his experiences of school councils and their workings. The teachers support the council excellently. All pupils undertake acts of responsibility and take these seriously. For example, the Year 6 pupils who act as dinner monitors help younger pupils sympathetically and in a very practical way. Co-operation and collaboration is encouraged in lessons through the use of paired and group work. The school fosters the pupils' understanding of living as part of the world community through pupils' raising money for charities such as for Mozambique and making their own contributions to gifts for Operation Christmas Child.

40. The school's promotion of pupils' cultural development is much weaker. Although they enjoy well-organised visits to places such as Castle Hedingham and Daws Hill Nature Reserve which are linked to the curriculum, broader opportunities to learn about their own heritage, such as through art or music, are limited. The school has used an Indian dancer to raise awareness of other cultures and the study of a limited range of beliefs of others from different religious backgrounds makes some contribution to cultural development. However, there is little to promote

a wider understanding and appreciation of the diversity and richness either of their own or other cultures. Resources, including books and music, to promote an awareness of the breadth of cultural experiences are poor.

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

41. All adults give the pupils' pastoral care and welfare a high priority, seeking to promote the care of pupils and to minimise the possibility of significant harm. The very good relationships and the good communication that takes place between all that work at the school help to ensure that teachers know their pupils very well. Because pupils' physical, emotional and intellectual needs are known, they receive good support and guidance as they progress through the school. The health and safety policy provides a sound basis for the day-to-day procedures and supervision to be effective. A full external audit is to be carried out next term. The majority of staff are aware of child protection procedures and the headteacher has had appropriate training as the designated person. The school has increased the number of qualified first aiders since the previous report and coverage is now good. Detailed records are kept of incidents and treatment.

42. The school's procedures for the promotion of attendance are very good and are supported well by parents. The school operates a system whereby parents are rung on the first day of absence if they have not already contacted the school. This ensures that information on absence is received more quickly and that the safety of those not attending is ensured. Lateness is recorded and monitored. Registers are accurate and the computer data is analysed carefully to spot pupils whose attendance gives concern. Such pupils are discussed with the educational welfare officer and action is taken to encourage their attendance.

43. The school has responded to a concern that behaviour has slipped by adopting an appropriate code of behaviour with a tiered reward system of stickers and certificates. In classes this has been an effective incentive for good behaviour. There is a good system for the class teacher to record and monitor incidents of poor behaviour. The school makes very good use of the county behavioural team in its efforts to support a number of more challenging pupils. The school is aware of the need to take further steps to tackle the over-boisterous behaviour of some pupils in the playground. The level of supervision at these times is good but expectations of behaviour are lower than at other times. The school is seeking to address this area through the school council and in other ways. There are effective procedures in place for dealing with bullying and racial incidents and there was no evidence during the inspection of any incidents of this nature. Pupils have been discussing bullying and the school council is being encouraged to seek pupils' solutions to ensure that incidents do not happen.

44. The school has arrangements for assessing pupils' attainments and progress. However, the school has made too little progress on this key issue from the last inspection, as it is only recently that this information has been collated into a form that makes its use manageable. Apart from the statutory assessments, arrangements are not yet in place to ensure the security and validity of the assessments through cross-checking. Currently some teachers do not possess the necessary experience to enable them to assess pupils' work against the levels of the national curriculum. This results in too low expectations of the pupils. Good use is made of assessment for pupils under five years old. The observation and assessment of children at work and analysis of baseline data information is ensuring that children's learning needs are identified and that teaching is focused effectively on raising standards in literacy and numeracy and across other areas of the curriculum. However, the school is less effective at using assessment data elsewhere. It does not carry out a detailed analysis of the statutory assessments at seven and 11 and other assessment information. Consequently it is unable to use assessment information effectively to improve achievement for individuals and groups of pupils or to identify strengths and weaknesses in provision and the curriculum in order to help it plan future actions. However, assessment information is used effectively to assist in identifying pupils with special educational needs and the procedures for placing the pupils on the register are consistent. Pupils' personal and social development is monitored and is appropriately reported upon to parents.

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

45. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school. At the meeting they stated that teachers are approachable and that behaviour is generally good. They felt that support for children with special educational needs is a strength and that links with the church benefit children. Some parents expressed concern about homework, about the lack of a Parent School Association, about the lack of rewards and about arrangements at lunchtimes. The school has plans to address all these areas in the near future.

46. The results of the questionnaire showed a positive response. Almost all the parents who answered the questionnaire agree that their child likes school and two thirds strongly agree with this statement. They also agree that teaching in the school is good, that the school expects their child to work hard and become mature and that they would feel comfortable in approaching the school. Over 20 per cent disagreed with the statements that their child gets the right amount of work to do at home and that the school provides an interesting range of activities. They also do not feel well informed about how their child is getting on or that the school works closely with them. The inspection team broadly agrees with the parents' positive comments. The inspection finds that the range of extra-curricular activities is good. Some of the other concerns relate to the difficulties the school has experienced since the last inspection. Reports to parents now provide a good guide to their child's progress and newsletters keep them informed. The governing body is addressing the issue of how to involve parents further in the life of the school. The school has begun to address the issue of homework and this is becoming more consistent in its setting and marking.

47. Throughout the turbulent events of the past few years parents have been kept informed about what is going on and their support for the school has remained high. Weekly newsletters and a well-presented prospectus are available and office staff are particularly approachable and handle parents' immediate concerns or queries very well. Teachers are available at the end of the school day to discuss pupils' progress and twice-yearly parents' evenings are very well attended. The school has held meetings on literacy and numeracy and some information is provided about what their child will be learning each term. The parents of pupils with special educational needs are closely involved in their child's individual education plans. Annual reports are detailed and meet requirements; they contain the individual targets set for each child in English, maths and science.

48. Home-school books are used as a good tool for communication. Reading is supported well by parents throughout the school and this has a significant impact on the standards achieved. Homework is set and completed by many pupils. Much of what was seen was interesting and extended work done in lessons, but it is variable from class to class.

49. Parents help readily in answer to specific requests such as in the preparation for a Year 2 art lesson on weaving. They help in class and when children go swimming or on trips. Parents have been involved in many successful fundraising activities for the school such as the Summer Fete, Rummage Sale and Quiz Night. A formal Parent School Association is soon to be launched.

50. The school is effective in its links with parents and in involving them with their children's education. In turn, these links allow parents to make a good contribution to their children's learning at home thereby assisting the school in promoting their children's learning.

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

51. The current permanent headteacher has been in post only since September 2000. For the previous three years the school had a very disrupted time with seven acting headteachers, some part-time and others for as little as half a term. For much of that time the school has functioned without a permanent deputy headteacher. The different styles and emphases of these acting headteachers led to an inconsistent approach to school development and frequent changes of direction. The current position regarding the leadership and management of the school needs to be seen in this context.

52. The newly appointed headteacher has, in a very short time, brought a sense of stability to the school. He has displayed a number of features of very good leadership and his day-to-day management of the school is good. His analysis of the school demonstrates he is aware of the major weaknesses and is beginning to tackle them. He has established very good relationships with all the staff and the governing body and is developing a shared vision of how the school can improve and achieve high standards. Previously, staff and governors had not been involved extensively in the school's development planning process. Through involving all staff and governors in the meetings for agreeing the priorities for the school development plan, he has begun to develop an effective partnership for improvement. However, partly due to the short time he has been in the school, less clarity of thought has been brought to bear on translating this vision into the necessary structured programme to take the school forward. The recently produced school development plan makes a start, but, given the school's recent history, does not contain the sufficiently clear actions, timing and specific and measurable success criteria necessary to ensure the school is taken forward. For example, the school's new development plan makes no reference to the new and very challenging targets the school has set for the tests for 11-year-olds and the actions essential for enabling the pupils to reach those targets.

53. The deputy headteacher is hard-working and has made a major contribution to the smooth running of the school and the maintenance of staff morale during the difficulties of the past. She ably supports the headteacher and an effective partnership is developing through a commitment to a shared set of aspirations for the school. The major areas of special educational needs and the development of assessment are very well led and managed and the good management of the implementation of National Numeracy Strategy has ensured its success. The headteacher has a clear view on the role of the senior management team and other staff with management responsibilities and they are very willing to take on the challenge of their roles. However, because of the past situation, there are different levels of understanding and skills among those with a management role. Consequently there is a need for a programme of training and development linked to identified priorities so that all the staff with responsibilities can make an appropriate contribution to school improvement.

54. The school does not yet possess a strong culture of self-evaluation leading to action for improvement. This is a weakness. There are too few rigorous systems for the leadership to evaluate the school's performance or to systematically diagnose its strengths and weaknesses. Consequently effective action to effect improvements has not been taken in a number of areas. Although in the lead-up to the inspection there has been some monitoring and support of teaching, there has not been a systematic approach to this in the past. This has led to variations in the quality of teaching within the school and in standards across the school. Similarly, there has been too little monitoring and evaluating of pupils' work and progress both during the year and as they move through the school in order to effect improvements in provision or practice. This has contributed to the decline in standards and quality of provision in a number of subjects and areas since the last inspection. It is only recently that the newly appointed assessment co-ordinator has assembled and begun to analyse some of the relevant statistics for pupils' tests in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in performance. Where a link has been formed between assessment, monitoring, evaluation and provision, as in the case of special educational needs, there is noticeably more effective practice.

55. The governing body has a clear structure that should enable it to fulfil its responsibilities. Statutory requirements are met and regular meetings of the governing body and its committees have clear agenda and are well minuted. The turmoil of the past years has led to an underdeveloped approach to the governing body's strategic and monitoring role and a concern almost solely with maintaining the school during its difficulties. This it has done effectively.

56. Due to the work of the previous acting headteacher and the current permanent headteacher, the governing body has developed a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and the challenges it faces. Although currently it does not provide a strong sense of direction for the work of the school it has begun to take the necessary steps to develop a more strategic approach to its work. Its involvement this term in working with all staff in creating the priorities for the current school development plan is a major step towards developing its

strategic role. However, because it does not possess a long term view on development there is little to guide its decision-making and against which it can evaluate the effect of its decisions.

57. The governing body's procedures for judging the standards and quality of education within the school are currently underdeveloped. Governors regularly visit the school in accordance with an agreed programme for discussing developments with subject leaders. They have visited classrooms to observe the pupils at work. The special educational needs governor meets with the appropriate co-ordinator to gain an overview of this area. Reports of these visits are made to appropriate committees. A highly significant move forward in this area has been the excellent lead the headteacher has taken in seeking to raise the school's targets for 2001 and to set challenging targets for 2002. Through carefully discussing the basis for the proposed targets and referencing them to the performance and potential of individual pupils, the headteacher has provided governors with a clear insight into the significance of the statistics and how they can contribute to a programme for evaluating the school's performance and progress. This has led governors to recognise that they do not possess sufficiently rigorous procedures for monitoring the implementation of the school development plan and evaluating its effect on the standards pupils achieve and the quality of education provided.

58. The school has a very good ethos based upon its Christian principles and the aims and values of the school are reflected in its practice. The school actively promotes equal opportunity in all areas of its life. There are strong relationships among staff who are very supportive of each other. The staff adopts a corporate responsibility for all the pupils and the headteacher's support for teachers in dealing with pupils with behavioural problems is exemplary. Governors point to the quality of the commitment of all staff to the well-being of each other and the pupils as a strength of the school. The inspection supports this view.

59. The school's strategic use of financial resources has some major weaknesses partly arising out of the frequent changes in leadership. There is a very large financial underspend which was also present at the last inspection. The plans for using this money are confused at present, with changes having been made during the past two terms. The school has, wisely, not made hurried decisions on the spending of this money, as a major weakness in the current procedures is the inadequate link made between decisions on spending and educational priorities. This weakness partly arises out of the lack of a clear strategic overview for the school. Consequently the budget has not arisen out of a careful analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses in terms of educational provision and standards of the pupils. One result of this has been the lack of an appropriately costed school development plan. Specific grants have been used appropriately, but money has not been allocated to subjects based upon a clear requirement for the subject leaders to carry out a detailed analysis of need and develop a planned strategy for improvement linked to the demands of the curriculum. The principles of best value are being implemented with regard to competition but the implementation of the other principles, whilst being applied to some areas, needs to be extended.

60. The number, qualifications and experience of teachers and classroom support staff match the demands of the curriculum. All teaching and support staff are conscientious and work very effectively as a team. The classroom support staff are experienced and make a very significant contribution to pupils' progress. They are very effectively managed, supported and deployed by the special education needs co-ordinator. The arrangements for performance management are secure.

61. Overall, the school provides children and pupils with pleasant and good quality accommodation. Plans are well advanced to replace the unsatisfactory temporary classrooms with a permanent building. Lack of storage space causes difficulties for staff and the building does not provide for ease of disabled access. The buildings are kept clean and in good condition. A small number of minor health and safety issues were raised with the headteacher during the inspection and a major assessment of the health and safety of the school is planned for the near future.

62. Outside facilities are pleasant but insufficiently developed as an educational resource. There is no outside area for the foundation stage pupils and this adversely affects the breadth of the

curriculum provided. The new computer suite is a strength and is making a major contribution to pupils' progress in information and communication technology. A major weakness within the school is the sufficiency and quality of learning resources. Resources are insufficient for the effective delivery of the national curriculum in a number of areas. In particular the resources for science, geography, music and fiction books. The library, although pleasant, is not stocked sufficiently well to support research and investigation in a number of subject areas. The range of difficulty of the books means that pupils with special educational needs are unable to access much of the material.

63. Many of the weaknesses identified within the school arise from the unsettled leadership over the past three years. Within the current situation of stability in leadership everyone is committed to pupils progressing as well as they can and there is a very strong focus on improvement. The strength of the governing body's capacity to contribute fully to the school's improvement lies in the quality of its members and its total commitment to the school and the developments needed to improve standards and provision. The headteacher's actions and the positive response of staff to focused change and the understanding the governing body has developed of its roles and responsibilities point to the school having the capacity to succeed. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

64. In order to raise standards further, the governors, headteacher and staff should now:

(1) raise the standards of attainment in all aspects of writing for pupils aged five to 11 and in science for pupils aged five to seven, in particular by:

- developing a structured approach to teaching writing, including handwriting;
- increasing the time given to teaching writing, including in other subject areas;
- improving teachers' skills and methods in teaching writing;
- providing opportunities for pupils to perform at a higher level in science;
- improving the teaching of investigative science.

(Paragraphs 80, 83, 88, 89, 90, 103, 104, 110)

(2) improve the quality of teaching through raising teachers' expectations of pupils' standards and achievement and improving the use of on-going assessment by:

- providing all teachers with a clear understanding of the level and quality of work expected of pupils in all subjects based upon the national curriculum and prior attainment;
- making use of the information gained from marking pupils' work to address identified weaknesses;

(Paragraphs 27, 44, 99, 110, 112, 123, 129, 130, 147)

(3) improve the rigour and quality of the school's monitoring and evaluation of its own performance, including the use of test data, so that it can plan and take action more effectively by:

- developing the monitoring and support role of the senior management team and subject leaders; (Paragraphs 53, 112, 118, 123, 131, 135)
- more closely monitoring pupils' progress through their work and assessments during the year and addressing identified weaknesses; (Paragraphs 44, 54, 112, 118, 123, 142, 147, 153)
- monitoring teaching and providing teachers with the necessary support to enable them to meet the pupils' identified needs; (Paragraphs 31, 54)
- devising and implementing a structured programme for the governing body to check on and judge the effectiveness of the school's progress towards fulfilling its development plan and reaching its targets; (Paragraphs 54, 57)

(4) improve the links between the development of the school, its identified strengths and weaknesses and the use of resources, including curriculum time and finance by:

- agreeing a strategic overview for the educational direction of the school; (Paragraphs 55, 56)
- devising a school development plan with clear targets and success criteria linked closely to the identified strengths and weaknesses of the school; (Paragraph 52)
- ensuring that the financial planning effectively addresses the school's educational priorities; (Paragraph 59)
- making more effective and efficient use of curriculum time so that it both focuses on identified weaknesses and ensures an appropriate balance between subjects; (Paragraphs 28, 29, 30, 118, 123, 131, 135, 147)

(5) improve the quality, and increase the quantity, of curriculum resources to match the needs of the curriculum and pupils' level of ability. (Paragraphs 62, 93, 112, 123, 131, 135, 147, 153)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important issue should be considered for inclusion in the school's action plan:

- to raise standards in art, design and technology, music and geography.



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed

95

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

33

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5%	13%	32%	42%	8%	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	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		372
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		15

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		7
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		44

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	22
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	4.3
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	0.5

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	32	28

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	31	29	29
	Girls	24	24	26
	Total	55	53	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (81)	88 (79)	92 (85)
	National	84 (82)	85 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	31	30	32
	Girls	24	25	27
	Total	55	55	59
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (79)	92 (72)	98 (92)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2000	35	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	29	29	30
	Girls	20	21	21
	Total	49	50	51
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	82 (81)	83 (71)	85 (79)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	25	30	23
	Girls	23	21	19
	Total	48	52	42
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 (76)	87 (66)	70 (79)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	80 (75)

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

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	2
Indian	4
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	345
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	1	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

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

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Average class size	29

#### **Education support staff: YR– Y6**

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	305.5

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999
	£
Total income	684,700
Total expenditure	676,100
Expenditure per pupil	1657
Balance brought forward from previous year	93,000
Balance carried forward to next year	101,600

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	376
Number of questionnaires returned	79

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	63	32	3	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	52	41	8	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	51	10	5	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	53	18	5	1
The teaching is good.	46	44	5	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33	44	14	9	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	39	8	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	43	8	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	32	41	16	9	3
The school is well led and managed.	34	34	10	5	16
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	46	43	1	1	9
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	37	25	8	9

### Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Parents and carers are very supportive of the school. At the meeting they stated that teachers are approachable and that pupils' behaviour is generally good. They felt that support for children with special educational needs is a strength and that links with the church benefit children. Some parents expressed concern about homework, about the lack of a Parent School Association, about the lack of rewards and about arrangements at lunchtimes. The school has plans to address all these areas in the near future.

## **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**

65. The overall quality of teaching in the Reception year is very good. Children make very good progress because the teacher has good knowledge and understanding of the areas covered linked to very good teaching of basic skills. Because of the teachers' high expectations and the very good management of the children, they are interested, concentrate well and are prepared to make an effort to produce good quality work. Time and support staff are used well in the class so the pupils work at a very good pace. Practitioners make good use of on-going assessment to match the level of difficulty in their work to the children's needs. This in turn motivates the pupils to achieve at a good standard. A weakness in the teaching is in the unsatisfactory link between planning and the areas of learning to ensure a range of good quality experiences in all areas.

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

66. Children's personal, social and emotional development is good. Most children are likely to achieve the early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development expected nationally of children by the end of the Reception year. Many children attended pre-school groups before coming to school and they quickly settle to school routines. Children manage their personal hygiene needs independently and need little help with their coats and hats.

67. The children are making very good progress in learning to behave appropriately as a pupil in a class environment. Most children sit, listen, follow instructions and contribute to whole-group sessions. Behaviour is good overall. Because practitioners have clear expectations, firm management and consistent rules and routines, the small number of children demanding attention responds well in the class situation. Children show enthusiasm for new experiences and almost all have very positive attitudes to school. They are eager to learn and participate enthusiastically in activities. They confidently offer their own ideas and are beginning to show empathy and understanding in whole-class discussion, for example, when reflecting on feeling frightened during a story of Jesus and his disciples on the Lake of Galilee. Children join in whole-school activities, such as assembly, and maintain concentration over extended periods of time.

68. When opportunities are provided for them, most children play happily and confidently by themselves and in small groups, taking turns and sharing equipment. They take initiative, using materials imaginatively and selecting and returning the resources they need and use. However, the teaching programme offers few opportunities for children to plan their own learning experiences and develop activities and interests over time. Consequently, a number of less confident and more dominant children are not being provided with sufficient opportunities to learn and develop appropriate behaviour in self-chosen activities as well as in more teacher-directed activities.

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

69. Standards of attainment in communication, language and literacy are good and are above national standards. All children participate in the full structure of the literacy hour. Teaching effectively targets children of average and above average ability and this group of children makes very good progress. This provision does not meet the needs of a small number of less able children who find concentration difficult over this period of time and so their learning is less effective.

70. Most children speak confidently and have a good vocabulary for their age. They ask questions and make comments about what they have heard, listen to others and often suggest different approaches to activities. All children recognise most of the letters of the alphabet and their associated sounds and are developing good phonological awareness in segmenting and blending phonemes. They read many high frequency words fluently and enjoy selecting books from the class library to share at home. They handle books well and have a positive attitude to reading in

whole-group and guided reading sessions. Many children recognise their names and can write them using the correct upper and lower case letters. When making and writing invitations for a party during a self-chosen activity, children use their word knowledge and phonemic understanding to write letters, words and phrases to communicate effectively for a purpose.

## **Mathematics**

71. Mathematical development is good and attainment is above national standards. Due to focused and challenging teaching, children are making very good progress in counting, developing mathematical understanding of number operations in practical situations, and using mathematical vocabulary.

72. All children participate in a full mathematics lesson. Most children can count confidently to 20 and some can count beyond from a given number. They are interested in large numbers. They confidently explore number relationships and patterns when investigating one and two more than and one or two less than a given number. Using a familiar action rhyme, children suggest their own starting points for exploring number patterns. Practitioners skilfully ask questions of varying difficulty to ensure that pupils of above average are sufficiently challenged. Children made good progress where the methods used are investigative and practical, as when they compared and ordered animals by their weight. Some children use positional language confidently. However, opportunities for children to develop and consolidate their understanding of shape, space and position through large-scale play experiences are severely limited by the available range of equipment and resources.

## **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

73. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is good. Their knowledge is developed through religious education, science, history, geography, design technology and information technology lessons. Most children are well on track to meet the standards expected at the end of the Reception year.

74. Practitioners promote good practice through encouraging the children to talk about the similarities and differences between clothes that the teacher has brought into the classroom. Good teaching ensured that they were able to look closely at materials and explore their touch and feel so that they could discuss the effects that different weather conditions may have on the clothes we wear. A number of children have well-developed information technology skills. They can control the mouse effectively and make good use of the interactive controls on the programme to support their learning. Children are beginning to use the new computer regularly as part of their learning in other subjects, for example, when playing mathematical games and developing fine motor control through drawing programmes.

75. Children's cutting skills are well-developed. They confidently select materials and investigate ways of joining materials using glue and stitches when designing and making an outfit for teddy. The opportunities for children to build and construct and join on a large scale are restricted because of the limited range of large construction equipment.

## **Physical development**

76. Children's physical development is above the expected national standards. Children make very good progress in the teacher-led activities in physical education lessons in the school hall. Children are developing good body control and co-ordination. They learn about health and safety in physical exercise and use space well, exploring speed and changes in direction. They work collaboratively with a partner to control a ball, through rolling, bouncing and catching and make good progress at all levels of ability over the lesson. Children are also taught effectively in the classroom to use tools and handle small equipment such as brushes and manipulate materials effectively.

77. The range of experiences children have for regular physical development overall is restricted by a shortfall in the range of equipment and resources at class level and by the lack of

planned access to the outdoor environment for small games play and other vigorous physical activity. For example, there are no wheeled vehicles or large equipment for developing climbing and balancing skills.

## **Creative development**

78. The children's creative development is satisfactory overall and is in line with national expectations. Children are taught to develop skills in music very effectively and they make good progress. Through game play as 'tortoises' children respond to loud and quiet drumbeats. They explore loud and quiet body sounds through clapping, and some are able to repeat sounds and patterns through responding to a simple musical score. Children can draw and paint with originality, but activities are sometimes too adult-directed to enable them to develop their own ideas.

79. When given opportunities to act out a train journey, linked to a literacy text "The Train Ride", the well-planned range of teacher-made resources supported good language development through role play and collaborative play at a high level for the children in the group. However, too few opportunities are provided for children to explore, investigate and create through materials such as sand, water, dough and clay. Limited resources for imaginative and small world play do not enable children to fully extend their creative ideas.

## **ENGLISH**

80. The year 2000 results in the National Curriculum tests in English for 11-year-old pupils are well above the national average, with an above average percentage of pupils achieving at the higher level. Results are average when compared with those for pupils from schools similar to St Michael's. These results show an improvement on 1999 and since the last inspection, although the improvement is less than that nationally. The results for the 2000 national tests for seven year olds are well above the national average for reading and above for writing. The results for reading and writing are average when compared to similar schools. The 2000 results show an improvement on 1999. However, the results for reading and writing have been lower since the last inspection until 1999, with those for reading continuing to be lower.

81. The inspection shows that most pupils aged between five and seven years achieve the expected level in writing and above the expected level in reading. By the time pupils reach Year 5 the overall standards of writing are below those expected. Standards in reading continue to be above the expected level and it is this aspect of English that contributes to the above average results in the National Curriculum tests. The introduction of the literacy strategy and the limited introduction of target setting have contributed to the improved standards in the last year.

82. Throughout the school most pupils have good speaking and listening skills. They can communicate their ideas appropriately and use a widening vocabulary, share their ideas and contribute to lessons taking into account each other's opinions. A small minority of pupils, mostly boys, find listening a difficult skill to master and lose concentration during whole-class discussions. Pupils listen to instructions and are keen to participate during question and answer sessions.

83. Throughout the school pupils make good progress in reading and reach a good standard. They read fluently and accurately with good expression and evident enjoyment. They can talk about the book they are reading and more able readers can discuss favourite authors, different genre, non-fiction versus fiction; they can predict, discuss characters and authorial style. When extracting information from non-fiction books they can use the contents page or the index and find the correct information from the relevant page. They understand alphabetical order with appropriate degrees of complexity and use it to find words in a dictionary. Over half the children spoken to visit the local library on a regular basis and many choose both fiction and information books with equal pleasure. They enjoy reading in school, shared texts as well as group reading and individually chosen books. They did find the choice of reading material rather limiting and several complained that some reading scheme books were rather boring and preferred to read at home. Learning support assistants effectively use an intensive phonics programme to support pupils experiencing

difficulties with reading. These pupils, together with those taught in withdrawal groups by the special educational needs co-ordinator, make very good progress.

84. Pupils' make insufficient progress in writing and by the time they are 11 pupils' standard of writing in their books is below average overall. Where pupils have a good written style, they produce interesting pieces in a variety of genre using an extensive and interesting vocabulary. They can write complex sentence structures which are used to develop a plot with convincing characters and a series of events that creates an interesting story line. However, there is too little writing of this quality. The writing of many pupils is too simple and does not reflect the conventions in style appropriate to the genre being studied. Their work is rarely structured into paragraphs and contains poor punctuation and spelling. It is written in a careless, often untidy, script. Too many pupils produce an insufficient quantity of written work. As they move through the school pupils develop, and take a pride in, a good style of joined script during the regular handwriting lessons. However, this quality is not often transferred into their classwork. Similarly, spelling is also taught regularly and pupils are tested weekly on challenging words, often in advance of those recommended by the literacy strategy. They take pride in learning them and getting full marks in the tests. But, once again their other work does not reflect this quality. When pupils with special educational needs are supported in class they make good progress and those pupils taught in withdrawal groups make very good progress in their lessons. However, their books show that when that level of support is not provided their progress is more in line with their peers.

85. Opportunities for writing include stories, newspaper articles, accounts, book reviews, instruction, letters and poetry.

86. The small number of pupils in the school with English as an additional language are fully included in class work. They are supported as necessary following the advice of the county support staff who visit regularly. They improve their English well and their language skills do not stop them from learning at the same pace as their peers.

87. The quality of the teaching of English across the school is inconsistent. Overall, the teaching of five to seven-year-olds is unsatisfactory with two out of eight lessons observed being unsatisfactory, including one literacy hour, and three lessons good or better. The teaching of the seven to 11-year-olds is satisfactory with five out of fourteen lessons being good or better and one, a literacy hour, being unsatisfactory.

88. Underlying the many good features of the teaching throughout the school is the effective establishment of the structure of the National Literacy Strategy. Teachers plan from the appropriate levels of work and share the learning objectives for the lesson with the pupils, enabling them to focus on what is to be learned. Where the plenary session is used well teachers are able to assess whether the lesson objectives have been achieved. Where teaching is good, the introduction is interesting and challenging, involving the pupils immediately in the text. In a Year 2 class, good questioning techniques guided the pupils to start thinking about characterisation – “look at their faces, what do think they are like?” Resources are well used to aid teaching. In a Year 6 class a tape of a professional reading of the text (a description of Scrooge) was used to promote an interesting discussion about the mood evoked by the words. In two classes teachers used the overhead projector and whiteboards to create a whole-class learning experience by enabling pupils to insert words or punctuation into the text in front of their peers and to explain their actions. Very good relationships within most classes enable pupils to take risks and become involved in their own learning. Praise is used well to encourage good behaviour and quality work; “I was really pleased to hear you say... .”

89. Although the National Literacy Strategy has had a beneficial effect on teaching English, there are still aspects of its implementation that need further attention, in particular, the guided reading and writing sections.

90. Key elements in the unsatisfactory teaching within the school are teachers' too low expectations of the pupils in terms of the presentation, quality and quantity of pupils' work and the allocation and use of time. Insufficient demands are made of pupils to ensure that the skills of spelling and handwriting are transferred from their exercises to their classwork. Too little sense of



urgency in some lessons results in pupils losing attention or producing too little work. Sometimes learning is hindered because teachers accept too low a standard of behaviour, with pupils unchecked as they talk whilst the teacher is addressing the class. Some work is not challenging enough for the pupils it is aimed at. For example, in a Year 2 class one group of pupils were asked to find words beginning with "s" when they were very familiar with double phoneme blends.

91. The low standards identified in writing result from a number of causes. Teachers' expectations of the quality of writing are too low with work being accepted that is of too low a standard. The methods teachers use do not encourage pupils to aspire to a higher level with guided writing time within the literacy hour not being used to good effect. Too often pupils are told to write without appropriate preparation, modelling and teaching to enable them to produce a piece of good quality. Insufficient time outside the literacy hour is allocated to teaching writing and too little writing occurs in other subjects such as geography and history with the result that pupils do not develop or extend their writing skills. On-going assessment is not used to good effect in writing. Pupils' work is marked and errors identified, but in too few cases does the teacher use this assessment to address the errors and improve and develop the pupils' skills. Often teachers' comments in books are not followed up.

92. Very good use is made of classroom assistants to support the pupils' learning. Many teachers include them in the planning cycle and they come into class well prepared with resources to hand. They support individual pupils and groups very effectively including the pupils receiving the Additional Literacy Support programme.

93. The recently appointed headteacher has encouraged the whole staff to address the setting of targets for individual pupils. This has begun to focus attention on raising standards. The target for pupils achieving Level 4 or above in the National Curriculum tests for 11-year-olds in 2001 has been raised to 85 per cent. This is a very challenging target for the present Year 6 cohort. The school has identified writing as an issue and has begun to provide training for teachers and additional support and homework for those who have been identified as being at risk of not achieving Level 4. However, there is not yet a fully focused, comprehensive action plan, including a programme for monitoring pupils' work, to address the issue thoroughly enough in order to ensure that the set targets are met. This term the subject leader has begun monitoring the standards of teaching and learning through classroom observation. However, too little training has been provided in this activity to make it fully effective as a means of support for colleagues.

94. As a result of an audit the stock of books has been rationalised, resulting in a very diminished selection of books, especially in the classrooms and the library. Some new books have been purchased. In several classrooms books are not given the priority they deserve, often being relegated to one shelf and reluctant readers would find little to entice them to pick up a book for pleasure. The library is understocked in most subject areas and the room doubles as a teaching area and television room thus preventing pupils from using it for information retrieval during lesson times.

## **MATHEMATICS**

95. At the last inspection pupils' attainment in mathematics was broadly in line with standards nationally for children aged seven and 11. The 2000 results of the National Tests at seven show that the percentage of pupils reaching expected standards in mathematics was broadly in line with the national average, though below the average for similar schools. The results for 2000 for 11-year-olds show that the percentage of pupils reaching expected standards in mathematics was above the national average, but only in line with the average for similar schools.

96. Inspection findings show that although most children are attaining levels that are in line with national expectations by the age of seven, their progress is slower than is expected. Good progress is made in the upper part of the school so that by the time they reach eleven they are attaining standards above national expectation. The observable improvement by age 11 is directly

related to the good teaching they are receiving in the majority of classes and the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy.

97. In Year 1 pupils are beginning to use mathematical language appropriately. They know and can order the days of the week and use ordinal numbers appropriately. They are able to record hours on the clock face and compare and order lengths of ribbon taking great care when difference requires fine distinctions. By the time they are approaching seven they know and use multiplication facts for the 2 and 10 times table. They understand that a half is one of two equal parts whether dividing a shape or countable objects. More able pupils can use the appropriate notation for fractions and demonstrate their understanding of an equivalent fraction, for example,  $\frac{12}{24}$  of a bar of chocolate as a half. When confronted with real tasks, for example making a cheese sandwich and halving it with a friend, the less able children responded well, drawing on their own experience of fair shares to help them and considering variables with good judgement.

98. By the age of 11 pupils use mental strategies to solve complex problems, for example, 55 per cent of £3.60. They use rough estimates to guide their work, rounding up or down as necessary and drawing on known number facts. They are able to use inverse calculation when checking their answers. Older pupils are able to explain coordinates and how to plot positions in the first and second quadrants, predicting where numbers would be if they drew the axis of the third and fourth quadrants. Younger pupils consolidate their knowledge of addition and subtraction and have good knowledge of place value involving hundreds, tens and units. Older pupils are able to discuss different ways of calculating a correct answer and consider the efficiency of each method without hostility. They write out the mental strategy for other pupils to consider.

99. Overall, the quality of teaching is good, with some very good and excellent teaching seen in lessons for the seven to 11-year-olds. Teachers' good knowledge of mathematics enables them to take the pupils on in their learning. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has led to focused planning and clear structures to lessons. Teachers have clear learning objectives for each section of the lesson and these are clearly displayed and shared with pupils. Consequently teachers and pupils are aware of what is expected of them and appropriate assessments are made during the lesson. Mental and oral work feature strongly, allowing pupils to become appropriately numerate. The plenary sessions at the end of the lesson enable all teachers to identify the learning needs of the pupils. Appropriate support is provided for pupils experiencing difficulty so that, for example, in a Year 5 class, while pupils worked in groups the teacher gave direct support to a group of children who did not fully understand what they were required to do. A brisk pace to lessons helps teachers to engage pupils' interest and supports their concentration. Where the teaching is good pupils are enthusiastic learners. They settle quickly into tasks and are willing to share ideas with the teacher and others in the classroom. They work with great interest and concentration, even when not directly supervised. They raise pertinent questions to challenge each other and are happy to use their own mistakes to further their learning.

100. Less satisfactory elements of teaching include low expectations of pupils in terms of the quantity of work they produce and the level of concentration they display. In some classes the discussion parts of the lesson are too long and lack pace. Consequently pupils begin to chat among themselves or become distracted. The presentation of pupils' work in books is sometimes careless leading to errors in the mathematics. Too little attention is paid to this in some classes, with no guidance being given before the pupils start work. In some classes, pupils are not expected to work at a challenging enough level and are not required to recall and use previously known mathematics, for example, the 3 times table. Where some mathematics lessons become extended beyond the recommended time, for example, 75 minutes in one case, the pupils become bored, lose concentration and the quality of work deteriorates. Some plenary sessions are used ineffectively, with teachers trying to tackle new work during them, resulting in confusion and inattention. Marking is effectively used in some classes to draw attention to errors, but in others it is cursory and has little impact on pupils' learning.

101. Pupils aged seven to 11 are taught in ability groups. This structure is enabling teachers to focus on specific learning needs and levels. However, when on some days there are additional groups, there is a need to strengthen the liaison between teachers to ensure a continuous

approach to pupils' learning. The arrangement where teachers frequently change the group they are teaching is currently less successful because of the different expectations in terms of standards, presentation and marking present in the year group.

102. The subject leader provides good leadership ensuring that the National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented and providing good support to teachers. The inspection agrees with the school that further opportunities for using and applying mathematics and developing data handling skills are areas to be addressed. A clearly focused monitoring of lessons has begun, concentrating on the mental starter at the beginning of lessons. Work in pupils' books is also checked and feedback is provided which staff find helpful and constructive. Overall resources are satisfactory in most classrooms, but there are gaps which need to be filled.

## **SCIENCE**

103. The year 2000 results in the National Curriculum tests in science for 11-year-old pupils are in line with the national average. However, since the last inspection the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 has not risen steadily as in other schools. Consequently results are below average when compared with schools similar to St Michael's. Results in the 2000 science teacher assessments for seven-year-old pupils are well above national average with almost all pupils attaining the expected national standard. Compared with similar schools the results are average. However, as no pupil reached the higher level, the school is well below average both nationally and in relation to similar schools for those attaining at that level.

104. Standards in the last inspection were judged to be in line with those expected nationally of pupils at ages of seven and 11. The finding of this inspection, through scrutiny of pupils' work and lesson observations shows that, overall, the achievements of pupils aged five to seven are below expectations, with too few high attaining pupils achieving the standards of which they are capable. This is because there is a lack of recognition among teachers that pupils of this age can achieve the higher level. By the time pupils are 11 they have made more consistent progress and are achieving at the nationally expected level because of the breadth and balance of coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study. However, the school's views on pupils achieving at the higher level results in too few higher achieving pupils reaching those levels.

105. There is inconsistency in the progress pupils aged five to seven make in different classes. Whilst overall it is satisfactory, it is too slow for most pupils, so only the more able Year 2 pupils, rather than the majority, are working in line with national expectations. Pupils aged seven to 11 are making more consistent progress in their learning from year to year. Consequently, by the end of the Year 6 standards of attainment should be more in line with those in similar schools.

106. Pupils know about the life cycles of frogs and butterflies. They can sort the animal kingdom into groups, for example, into birds, fish and mammals and they know the conditions plants need to grow. They can sort materials by hardness and roughness and have investigated light and dark and experimented with different strength torches to find the brightest light. By the time pupils are 11 they have made more consistent progress and are achieving at the expected level. Pupils have satisfactory knowledge of solids, gases and liquids and have investigated reversible and irreversible changes. They know that water, light and temperature affect plant growth. Pupils are able to carry out investigations, such as the rate of evaporation of liquids.

107. Most pupils are interested in science and enjoy their work, particularly when doing practical investigations. Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes to science are mainly good and sometimes very good. Pupils are keen to become involved in their learning and are eager to talk about their work with other pupils and visitors. Year 6 pupils co-operate well together when conducting their candle experiments, listen enthusiastically and work with good application and attention to safety.

108. In Key Stage 1 pupils learn about scientific topics such as the natural world, through their work on the life cycles of frogs and butterflies. They learn to sort the animal kingdom into groups for example into birds, fish and mammals and they know the conditions plants need to grow. They

have studied materials and sort them by hardness and roughness and have investigated light and dark and have used different strength torches to find the brightness light. Often, prepared worksheets stuck into books limit pupils' opportunities to write. This affects the higher attaining pupils, preventing them from expressing their own ideas. However, in one Year 2 class, pupils have written some very good scientific accounts of how materials can be stretched using heavy objects.

109. Key Stage 2 pupils have satisfactory knowledge of solids, gases and liquids, reversible and irreversible changes and that water, light and temperature affect plant growth. Teachers make appropriate links with mathematics as for example when a Year 5 class drew bar charts to record results of evaporation over time from containers with different surface areas.

110. Overall, the teaching of five to seven-year-old pupils is satisfactory, with one example of unsatisfactory and another of good teaching. Teaching of seven to 11-year-old pupils is mainly good, with some very good teaching in the upper school. Good elements of teaching throughout the school include making clear to pupils what they are to learn and what is expected of them. These, together with the good use of the formal structure of whole-class teaching, group work and a plenary session, ensure pupils are able to focus on learning. Good classroom organisation, planning, secure subject knowledge and good pupil management are keys to success in the best science lessons seen. For example, in a particularly effective Year 2 lesson pupils worked on the topic 'Forces' and investigated different ways of blowing a paper boat across water. As a result of the teacher's questions there was good development of pupils' science vocabulary enabling them to demonstrate and talk about different types of forces and how these could be measured. With the older pupils the enthusiasm of the teachers motivates pupils to develop their understanding and take investigations further. For example, in one Year 6 lesson, a pupil with special needs made a pertinent observation about irreversible changes through burning. Immediately, the class teacher used the opportunity to help all pupils express their own ideas and then find out whether their predictions were valid.

111. Where teaching is less effective, teachers have too low expectations of the pupils and there is a lack of challenge in the lessons, particularly for the higher attaining pupils. Insufficient teacher knowledge of scientific approaches leads to weak questioning skills which in turn results in pupils not fully understanding the implications of their work in relation to the science programmes of study. In too many cases there is a limited range of teaching strategies resulting in an insufficient focus on science investigation or skills. On occasions pupils are provided with opportunities to carry out investigations, but over-direction by the teacher limits opportunities for pupils to find things out for themselves. Where this happens it has a detrimental effect on the progress of the higher attaining pupils as the excitement and challenge is removed. In many classes, over-reliance on structured work sheets contributes to pupils' written records of practical work being significantly worse than their oral responses to questions. Similarly, the overuse of such worksheets limits opportunities for pupils to understand the strengths and weakness of different approaches to recording and presenting observations.

112. Comprehension skills, data analysis and the ability to evaluate and explain using correct scientific terms are being effectively developed within the curriculum especially in the upper part of the school. However, literacy, numeracy, problem solving skills and information and communication technology are not consistently planned for within science.

113. The school recognises the areas of weakness within science, particularly the too low expectations of higher ability pupils. There is too little monitoring and evaluating of science provision and standards in classes to provide a clearly focused programme for improvement. Some teachers' planning is monitored, but the evaluation of pupils' work is not yet an established practice. The formal assessment of science, including teachers' knowledge of using the level descriptions in the National Curriculum, is weak. Consequently pupils' progress as they move through the school is not carefully tracked and too little use is made of the analysis of the statutory assessments. The school has reviewed the key objectives in the good quality draft scheme of work and is bringing it in line with Curriculum 2000. The school recognises the poor level and quality of the resources for the subject; essential equipment and resources are insufficient to fulfil all the

requirements of the National Curriculum programmes of study and provide a good quality science education.

## **ART**

114. Taking account of lessons, discussion with pupils, pupils' work on display and sketchbooks, pupils' level of attainment is in line with expectations at seven, but below expectations by the time they are 11. There has been deterioration since the last inspection when standards by 11 were satisfactory.

115. Pupils aged five to seven enjoy artistic activities and respond well to opportunities to create, draw, paint and print. Many Year 1 pupils draw with imagination and show good pencil control for their age. They represent what they see with individuality and attention to detail when observing trees in the school grounds. Good progress is made when Year 2 pupils evaluate the effectiveness of using a range of media, including information technology, in representing fur on the image of a cat. Planned art experiences are often effectively linked to topics and literacy texts. Some Year 2 pupils can talk about famous artists and illustrators and are beginning to use art vocabulary for colour, form, texture, pattern, line and tone when selecting materials for weaving nets. Teachers make effective use of classroom assistants and parent helpers in art activities.

116. Pupils aged seven to 11 use two-dimensional artwork to illustrate topics and work in other subjects. This and the work on display and in books shows that many children have artistic talent. However, given their ability, their drawing, painting and colour mixing skills are underdeveloped and the quality of three-dimensional work is below expectations. Too little use is made of sketchbooks as a preparatory step for pupils' work. The limited opportunities for investigating, exploring and developing ideas are adversely affecting the quality of pupils' individual imaginative response. Pupils in some classes are developing their knowledge and understanding of art through looking at the work of other artists, but for all pupils this element is not consistently explored.

117. Pupils enjoy art. They are enthusiastic about what they produce and are keen to improve their skills.

118. Teaching in the few lessons observed is generally satisfactory. However, the quality of pupils' work and the standards achieved indicate that overall teaching is unsatisfactory. A major reason for the low standards is the large variation in pupils' art experience from year to year and teacher to teacher. Teachers do not spend enough time developing pupils' understanding of line, tone, pattern, texture, shape and form in two and three dimensions, on different scales. Resources are generally satisfactory and well organised to support a range of two and three-dimensional artwork. However, many teachers make ineffective use of artefacts, across a variety of genres, styles and traditions, to enrich pupils' art experience and raise standards in the teaching and learning of art. Information technology is beginning to be used as a tool for artwork and pupils in many classes throughout the school are using the drawing programmes.

119. The school recognises the underachievement in art and is taking steps to address the situation. The newly appointed co-ordinator has revised the art policy and curriculum framework so that it includes all the programmes of study. However, the lack of an agreed allocation of time for the subject results in a variation in provision. There is little provision for assessing pupils' attainment and tracking their progress and there is little monitoring and evaluation of the provision for art. A good start has been made on enriching pupils' art experiences through establishing a Years 3 and 4 art club, visiting galleries and contributing to local exhibitions. The underdeveloped nature of the subject means that it currently makes little contribution to pupils' cultural development.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

120. Because of the school's timetable arrangements, it was possible only to observe one design and technology lesson during the inspection period. Judgements are based on a scrutiny of pupils'

work, examples of pupils' work on display in classrooms and around the school and from discussion with pupils. On this basis attainment is below average by the time pupils are seven and 11 compared with the last inspection when attainment was in line with national expectations.

121. Pupils take pride in talking about their work to visitors. They report that they enjoy making things but only occasionally plan their work on paper or design in their own spontaneous and individual ways. Design and technology work is often linked with art. For example, as part of their topic on 'light and dark', pupils used their technology skills to produce shadow silhouettes in one class of younger pupils. The pupils have also worked to design and make a paper bag after taking one apart to see how it is made. In a class of older pupils they have designed pictures of houses and churches as part of their art and history topic. However, the designs do not progress beyond the pictorial to give views from more than one side and instructions to a maker. Throughout the school pupils show a satisfactory awareness of design process, but lack of opportunity and accuracy in making often spoils the appearance and effectiveness of finished products.

122. By the time they are seven, pupils understand the need to make choices and plan before trying to make things. Younger pupils shape and assemble card and paper to make box models of buildings and vehicles. They show developing accuracy in cutting, joining and decorating their products to achieve a planned effect. They also learn to shape and join as, for example, in cutting and fixing hinges on the doors of the paper houses the pupils make. In the one lesson Year 2 pupils learnt to weave under and over patterns, using a variety of textiles and the paper looms they had made in a previous lesson. They experimented with textiles and completed under and over patterns which resulted in some very attractive colours and designs. By the time they are 11, pupils are able to apply a wider range of techniques and knowledge in order to design card and paper structures, and make three-dimensional objects and model buildings.

123. Progress in the subject is unsatisfactory. Pupils are not challenged to develop their skills as they move through the school. Consequently the work of older pupils is little advanced on that of the youngest pupils. A significant weakness lies in the lack of quality and variety in the work of the older pupils. The oldest pupils' work shows no detailed planning or sequencing of the stages of construction. The work available consists almost entirely of simple decorated paper or card work with simple hinges or joints. Where other activities are tackled, the design technology elements are not exploited. Thus Year 5 classes have followed recipes to make cakes but the main focus for the activity was related to their science work on 'Changes'.

124. The current scheme of work gives teachers insufficient guidance on the standards expected and the means of developing pupils' skills through the school. The school is aware of this and has developed a comprehensive and detailed draft document for discussion. However, there has been no clear amount of curriculum time allocated to design and technology and no guidance for individual teacher timetables. This lack of clarity has led to variations in practice across the school. There is little monitoring and evaluation of provision and standards in the subject. Assessment procedures are underdeveloped. Available resources are poor and need to be extended if the full range of the National Curriculum programmes of study is to be covered.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

125. It was not possible to observe any geography lessons for pupils aged five to seven, and only two lessons were observed for pupils aged seven to 11. From the observations of these lessons and the scrutiny of displays and pupils' work, the standards for both seven and 11-year-old are judged to be below the expected levels. Pupils' make unsatisfactory progress in their learning. This is a decline in standards since the last inspection.

126. A strength of the geography in the school is the number of field trips the pupils undertake to broaden their first hand experience of other places. The pupils find these exciting, stimulating and fun and they add a very worthwhile dimension to their learning. They also positively contribute to the pupils' social and cultural development.

127. Because of their field trip, seven-year-old pupils are able to demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of some of the differences between Braintree and Castle Hedingham. However, there is little evidence in their folders that they are developing a breadth of geographical skills based upon asking geographical questions and recording their responses in a variety of ways. In too many cases, pupils' written work focuses on the visit in terms of a trip rather than on what they have learned from their experience.

128. Year 4 pupils are developing the means of recording data collected on a field trip, at an appropriate level. A good range of activities was organised so that the pupils demonstrated that they are able to use sketches and tables for recording information and can make simple notes. They are able to carry out a traffic survey and, from the tally charts, they are able to construct block graphs to display the information. In one class they used a computer to draw the graph. From the class work and field trip they have gained knowledge of some of the differences between Braintree and Sisted. However, their folders show little evidence of their acquiring the expected skills of being able to carry out a simple analysis and draw simple conclusions from the evidence they have collected. Pupils are able to draw simple imaginary picture maps, but there is little evidence of their drawing sketch maps or plans at an appropriate level from their field visit.

129. Older pupils' work on maps is well below the expected standard and shows no progression from earlier stages. They have drawn simple pictures looking at objects from above and sketch maps of the classroom, not to scale. Their work on rivers is often worksheet based and undemanding and their written work shows little development in geographical understanding.

130. In both lessons observed, good aspects of teaching involved stimulating the pupils and arousing their interest. In one lesson this was through the good use of questioning about the Ordnance Survey map symbol for churches and, in another, through moving a pupil around the room by giving instructions using the four cardinal points of the compass. Less satisfactory elements of the teaching involved the quality of tasks that either did not enable pupils to progress at a satisfactory rate or were inappropriately pitched for the more able or those with special educational needs. Good assessment practice has involved a teacher in identifying the needs of the majority of the class with regard to mapping and devising an appropriate programme to meet those needs. Thus, although the content of the lesson and work was of a low standard, the level was appropriate to most pupils' attainment. This would indicate that the skills have not been taught appropriately earlier in the school.

131. Taking into account the evidence available, the overall quality of teaching of geography is unsatisfactory. Pupils' work shows that teachers do not have high enough expectations. There is not enough challenge in the tasks being demanded of most of the pupils because the vital skills of geographical enquiry are not consistently brought into play. When closely questioned, pupils display understanding and skills well beyond those demonstrated in their work. For example, they are able to give cogent reasons for the difference in number of cars seen in Sisted and Braintree in terms of population and site. Teachers within the same year groups do not always have consistent expectations of presentation and quality. The quality and regularity of marking is too variable between classes and does not always provide pupils with an understanding of how well they have performed and how they can improve. Although supported well by the learning support assistants, pupils with special educational needs are often set the same work as other pupils and consequently either do not complete it or find it too difficult.

132. Pupils' geographical enquiry and skills are underdeveloped within the school partly because the detailed scheme of work does not offer sufficient guidance for teachers in these areas. Another factor in the low standards observed is the inconsistency in the amount of time spent on geography in different classes. Further, since the last inspection there has been little monitoring and evaluating of teaching or pupils' work in geography. Consequently there is not a clear understanding of strengths and areas for development. The provision of resources is poor. Some finance has been made available, but no audit of curricular need has been carried out to guide the purchase of new resources.

## **HISTORY**

133. Because of the timetable arrangements, few lessons were seen during the inspection, with none for pupils aged five to seven. Judgements are based on these lessons, an examination of work in books and discussions with pupils. The standard of work seen broadly meets the national expectation for pupils aged seven and 11, as it did at the last inspection.

134. Pupils are very enthusiastic in their studies and clearly enjoy exploring the past and making comparisons between then and now. Pupils show a good sense of chronology, understanding that life has changed. Older pupils are able to consider the census data for a parish register for 1831 to identify and discuss the incidences of death by typhoid. They are able to identify differences between domestic life in Victorian times and their own world. They are able to discuss the tragedy of a Victorian child's death portrayed on video and understood that mortality rates from typhoid were high because of ignorance about how disease was transmitted, for example, through dirty water. Pupils are also able to infer the best site for a home in a Victorian town by looking at a number of variables, for example, running water and the use of a toilet. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They listen well and raise good questions from the historical resources available. Pupils are able to use sources of information, for example parish register data, books, artefacts, photographic material and videos to speculate on life in different historical contexts.

135. Teachers engage pupils' interest through well-planned lessons and the provision of good resources. Teachers intervene with good questions to help pupils make progress. They offer pupils opportunities to link historical work with other areas of the curriculum thereby developing a good sense of period. For example, composing the front page of a Greek newspaper, transferring data from a census form to a block graph, painting a Victorian posy and studying a significant historical figure such as William Morris. However, the achievement of pupils, particularly higher attaining pupils, is restricted because of the lack of opportunity to extend their knowledge through research and investigation or pursue their own lines of interest.

136. The school is currently revising the scheme of work for history to bring it into line with the new statutory requirements and to ensure the consistent development of skill and understanding of concepts through the school. However, there is no overall agreed amount of time that should be spent on history in each year group. This lack of agreement results in inconsistency of practice through the school. There has been little monitoring or evaluating of the quality of provision for history and no regular audit of resources. Consequently the resources for history are barely adequate for ensuring the teaching of the National Curriculum programmes of study. The school makes good use of the library loan scheme to provide a valuable back-up resource. The school makes very good use of the local environment and area to extend pupils' historical experience. Visits to sites and museums, such as the Victorian classroom in Braintree Museum, enhance pupils' learning.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

137. At the time of the last inspection, standards of attainment in information technology for pupils aged seven was above national expectations, and in line for pupils aged 11. Current standards of attainment by the age of seven and 11 are in line with national expectations in the areas that have been taught. However, the lack of equipment and resources means that their achievement is below expectations in some areas of the National Curriculum, including using control skills, programmable toys and programs for simple instructions such as logo.

138. All pupils can switch on the computers and load the program of their choice. They can also save their work to their teacher's folder, print it and close down the computer at the end of the lesson. By the age of seven, pupils can use a computer for word processing and can use such functions as caps lock, space bar, bold and fonts and can delete using the arrow keys. They have good control of the mouse and use it adeptly in the art package to draw and paint such objects as the cat who was the main character in their book of the week in the literacy hour. They can in-fill



colour and understand the techniques necessary to succeed. They use a good software package to simulate and model problems and solutions.

139. By the age of 11 pupils can word process with confidence, although their typing skills are very slow due to lack of experience earlier in the school. Pupils in a Year 5 class successfully wrote a newspaper report using different fonts for headings, many of the tools on the toolbar and then spell checked their work before adding a picture and printing the finished article. They can use spreadsheets to determine the cost of a meal, using drag techniques and SUM to set up a formula. They can set up a database and produce a graph, they design a series of well-organised pages incorporating sound and animation using powerpoint to do a presentation to the rest of the class on their hobbies. They use sophisticated tools in the art packages to swivel, resize and stamp their paintings.

140. The teaching of information technology is good overall. Of the nine lessons observed three were satisfactory, four were good and two were very good. A key to the success of the teaching is the good subject knowledge teachers have acquired. They confidently introduce new software to the pupils because they have mastered it thoroughly themselves before the lesson. Teachers are very enthusiastic about the new computer suite and take pride in their ability to class-teach the skills needed before the pupils experiment for themselves. Teachers demonstrate the new skills to be learned clearly. They make new skills meaningful by embedding them in other curricular areas such as English, maths or history so that pupils see them in context and use. Pupils are well supported by the teacher and often a classroom assistant while they are working independently or more usually in pairs. New skills are effectively reinforced where necessary and for those who have successfully acquired them, appropriate additional skills are introduced. For example, in one class pupils were drawing and painting fish and then resizing and stamping them to make a composite picture. One girl wanted to overlap her fish and was taught how to do so successfully by the teacher. Because of the good teaching, pupils are making good progress and have rapidly reached the appropriate level for their age.

141. Due to many different styles of leadership over a two-year period, information technology was not well resourced and consequently not taught systematically. The school has taken very positive steps over recent months that have successfully addressed low standards and teachers' lack of confidence and skill. At the heart of the improvement has been the opening of a dedicated computer suite with a network of 20 good quality machines loaded with suitable software. The subject leader has provided very good leadership in co-ordinating the use of the suite and providing extensive and focused support to staff as they adapt to this new way of working. The training and support provided by the subject leader and the employment of a good technician who supports during lessons have enabled teachers to develop their own skills and confidence and so raise the standards of the pupils. Because the suite is timetabled for class use, all pupils receive an appropriate amount of time learning and practising skills. This, together with the adoption of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's guidelines and the subject leader's termly planning sheet, has enabled consistent teaching to take place leading to good progress. Consequently, pupils are being taught at the correct standard for their age and any skills found missing are being covered as necessary.

142. Although the stand alone machines in classrooms are used by some teachers to support English and numeracy lessons, the lack of printers and narrow range of software means that they are not currently being used to the full. It is planned to network these machines to the suite and the internet in the near future when they can be used profitably once again. Pupils are not currently using the CD-ROMS owned by the school to research information because there is no suitable space for these to be used as part of ongoing lessons.

143. At present there is little assessment or recording of pupil attainment, matched to national curriculum levels, although ongoing assessment by most teachers does inform planning.

## **MUSIC**

144. It was only possible to see a small number of music lessons during the inspection. Overall, the standards pupils attain in music are unsatisfactory for their age and ability. This shows deterioration since the last inspection when standards were seen to be in line with national expectations.

145. Younger pupils sing tunefully and with due regard to phrasing and rhythm. The Reception and pupils aged five to seven join together for singing and make use of this session to support the teaching of music and prepare for school events, such as Christmas celebrations. Pupils learn to use percussion instruments to accompany songs, but there is little evidence that pupils have opportunities to develop their composing and performing skills over time. In lessons for older pupils there is an effective link from music to dance and drama. Year 6 pupils made good progress during a lesson when listening to a variety of taped music sequences. They evaluate the quality of the mood created by the music and interpret and respond through movement. In Year 5, pupils use percussion instruments sensitively to creative stories in sound, in response to visual stimuli. In the hall session for all pupils aged seven to 11, the quality of singing was satisfactory in tone and expression. Pupils were able to sing a round with the choir singing a descant.

146. Pupils have only a limited range of musical experiences. Music is always played at the beginning and end of assembly and pupils have opportunities to listen to music by a variety of composers. The school choir meets every week. Concerts, school events and church services give pupils additional opportunities to perform music. The school makes arrangements for a very small number of pupils to take instrumental lessons one evening a week. Good relationships between staff and pupils are a strong feature of work in classrooms. Pupils behave well in lessons and are keen to succeed. Pupils with special educational needs are given full access to the curriculum and make good progress.

147. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was generally satisfactory. All teachers take their own class for music and there is no specialist teaching of the subject, apart from the singing times in the hall. Not all teachers feel confident in their ability to teach all aspects of music effectively. Planning focuses on the content of the lesson and does not make explicit what skills or knowledge are to be learned. Pupils are often given insufficient help to improve the quality of their music making.

148. A number of significant weaknesses in the management of the subject remain. Leadership of the subject is shared across the school. However, as the school recognises, there is no overall, coherent strategy for planning the development of the subject. There is a curriculum framework that briefly outlines the programme to be covered but there is no detailed scheme of work that identifies the key skills, knowledge and understanding to be taught to provide the support teachers need when planning lessons. There is no formal programme for the assessment and recording of pupils' progress as they move through the school. Music lessons are timetabled in most classes, but because there is no whole-school agreement, the time allocated to the subject varies from class to class, thereby affecting the quality of musical education the pupils receive. The organisation, range and use of resources to support the development of the subject are unsatisfactory.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

149. Standards in the last inspection were described as in line with expectations at the ages of both seven and 11 with a significant minority below at age seven and many pupils above at age 11. In this inspection standards are as expected for seven-year-olds and better than expected for older pupils, especially in dance and games. Due to weather conditions and timetabling, no games lessons were observed involving pupils aged five to seven and no gymnastics lessons for pupils aged seven to 11. Discussions with pupils and the scrutiny of planning enabled judgements to be made in these areas.

150. Pupils age five to seven make good progress in developing their ability to link movements together in gymnastics and remember a short dance phrase. In gymnastics, pupils know,

understand and can perform curled, stretched and balanced shapes working at different levels. Higher attaining pupils travel and remember to hold their shapes, performing a sequence of movements in a smooth and effective way. Lower attaining pupils and those with special needs move confidently and often succeed in remembering their sequence so that they can repeat it when asked to demonstrate to others. All pupils demonstrate well-developed resilience and perform curling, balancing and stretching with appropriate body tension. They put together a simple sequence of jumps and rolls and progress satisfactorily to repeating this on apparatus. In dance, pupils explore movement to illustrate parts of a story, for example, about a traveller's journey to find hidden treasure. They select, remember and refine their actions well and are developing good awareness of direction, dynamics and expression. Pupils are very good at observing and commenting on each other's work. Pupils lift, carry and place apparatus sensibly. They are able to talk appropriately about the effects of exercise upon their bodies.

151. By Year 6, pupils have a good understanding of defence and attack strategies in games such as netball and football. Throwing and catching, kicking and saving are well developed. They work well with a partner, dodging and marking and demonstrate a good awareness of space. Pupils are able to use correct terms when they describe and demonstrate how to intercept and gain possession of the ball. In dance, Year 6 pupils explore movements to communicate their story of 'The Magician' and hold starting and finishing positions well. The quality of expression and confidence in movement is very well developed. They remember the sequence and order of their movements and their movement memory is very well developed. Many pupils become completely absorbed in the story and their expressive movement is of a high quality. Pupils evaluate and give feedback to others in a mature and perceptive manner. This practice is well-developed and makes a significant contribution to pupils' speaking and listening skills. Most pupils have good awareness of space and move around the hall controlling their bodies well. They sustain vigorous physical activity for increasing periods of time and have begun to understand the effect of exercise on their body. Records indicate that most pupils swim 25 metres by the time they leave the school although no swimming were observed during the inspection week.

152. Pupils enjoy physical education and have good attitudes to the subject. For example, in a dance lesson there was excitement and delight when performing as a wizard casting a spell. In all lessons observed, pupils worked well and remained on task throughout. Most pupils persevere well to improve their performance and listen attentively when others are demonstrating. Behaviour is good. Pupils listen to instructions carefully and respond well to their teachers and relationships are very good. Pupils are sensible and responsible, for example when Year 2 pupils lift, carry and position the apparatus for gymnastics or when Year 6 pupils fetch balls and equipment for their games lessons.

153. The quality of teaching is mainly satisfactory and sometimes good. Lessons are well-planned and organised, with each lesson having an appropriate warm-up session, skills practice and close down activity. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and give clear instructions. In good teaching the pace of the lesson ensures that pupils are kept active and on task. Explanations and teaching points ensure that pupils clearly understand what they have to do to improve their performance. The teacher reinforces learning and challenges pupils to consider acquisition of further skills. Most teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject, and so are able to work to develop skills beyond a basic level. Their main strength is in showing pupils how their work might be improved and in developing skills of critical appraisal.

154. The subject leader, who gives teachers good ideas on how to develop skills from year to year, has prepared a new, good quality scheme of work. However, there are no formal procedures for assessing pupils' attainment but good use is made of assessment to inform planning. Appropriate links are made with other curriculum areas such as music. The school provides a range of sporting activities including football, netball and rounders and pupils participate in matches against other teams. A professional football coach contributes to coaching pupils and this is reflected in the pupils' enthusiasm for competitive games. Resources are mostly good, but some new equipment is needed for both indoor and outdoor activities. A good range of extra-curricular activities, including football, netball and gymnastics, makes a good contribution to the physical and personal development of all pupils, including those with special educational needs.

