

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. JOSEPH'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ross-on-Wye

LEA area: Herefordshire

Unique reference number: 116911

Headteacher: Sr. M M Fox

Reporting inspector: Mr M G Carter
20714

Dates of inspection: 16 – 20 October 2000

Inspection number: 224772

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	St. Joseph's RC Primary School The Avenue Ross-on-Wye Herefordshire
Postcode:	HR9 5AW
Telephone number:	01989 564655
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Canon P D Chidgey
Date of previous inspection:	19 – 21 March 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr M Carter 20714	Registered inspector	Mathematics Science Design and technology Music Physical education	How high are standards? How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
Mrs J Harrison 11077	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Miss J Taylor 4275	Team inspector	English Art and design History Information and communication technology Geography	Attitudes, values and personal development How good are curricular and other opportunities? The Foundation Stage Equal opportunities Special educational needs

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school has 129 pupils, which is smaller than the average primary school, and accepts children up to its limit of 20 in each year group. There are presently few spare places. About 60 per cent of the pupils come from Catholic backgrounds. Children enter the school in the September before they are five, most having attended one or more of several pre-school settings. The attainment of pupils on entry covers a broad attainment range from year to year but is above average overall. The school numbers are stable and there are currently 16 children of reception age. Very few pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds and two speak English as an additional language. The number of girls is about a quarter more than the number of boys. The proportion of pupils, 12 per cent, with special educational needs is smaller than average and one pupil has a statement of need. Two pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals and this is well below the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a strong Christian education in which pupils gain positive attitudes, work hard and behave very well. The standard of current work is satisfactory overall. The year groups are small and the results of the national tests vary from year to year, depending partly on the numbers of pupils with special educational needs, their attainment on entry and the number who leave or join the school during the key stages. The results in 2000 were well above average and results have reached this level in three out of the previous four years. The substantial majority of pupils increase their knowledge and skills by expected amounts between the ages of four and eleven. However, there is underachievement among a minority of the more able and less able pupils, because the teaching does not always stretch them sufficiently. The headteacher, governing body, staff and community provide a strong ethos of care for all the aspects of the pupil's development and a concern for improvement to ensure the school's general effectiveness. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The results of National Curriculum tests for 2000 were well above average.
- The pupils gain good skills in speaking and listening across the school and in writing in the junior classes.
- The pupils' behaviour and the way in which it is managed is very good.
- The pupils' attitudes to school and to their work are very good and supported well.
- The parents' contribution to the pupils' learning is good.
- The provision that the school makes to the pupils' development in spiritual and moral development is good and to their social development it is very good and they have very good relationships.
- The school's caring Christian ethos has been well maintained.

What could be improved

- There is under-achievement among some pupils of low and high ability and occasionally by some boys.
- Aspects of teaching such as the planning of well-matched work, teachers' knowledge and understanding of parts of the curriculum and the range of teaching methods used.
- The monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance and the implementation of policies.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum, the effectiveness of teaching and of aspects of equal opportunities.
- Standards in the pupils' knowledge and skills in information and communication technology.
- The assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' progress.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 1996. Since then trends in standards are broadly in line with the national trend, despite fluctuations. Overall, satisfactory improvements have been made on the shortcomings identified in the previous report. Standards in music in the juniors have improved. Progress in mathematics, design and technology and physical education have improved or there are systems in place to promote improvement. Resources in several subjects are much improved and the length of the school day is now appropriate for the juniors. The caring, Christian ethos has been well maintained and the school's accommodation has been significantly improved. There is an appropriate curriculum plan and scheme of work for each subject promoting a sound curriculum balance although these have not yet led to sufficient emphasis on progression in the pupils' skills and understanding. More assessments are made, but recording systems do not lead to sufficiently well matched work.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				<i>Key</i>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	A	A*	C	E	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	A	A	B	D	
Science	A	A*	C	D	

The small size of the year groups is leading to wider annual variations than is typical in most schools. The results in the table above are based on pupils who have now left the school and indicate a fall in standards since 1998, when in English and science they were in the highest five per cent of schools nationally. The results in 2000, not published at the time of the inspection but available in school, were substantially higher than in 1999, with over a third of pupils having high attainment in English, nearly two thirds in mathematics and four-fifths in science. The school's performance has risen at least in line with the national trend.

The standard of work of the pupils currently in the eleven-year-old cohort is good in English and close to average in mathematics and science but not as high as the results in 2000. The school's targets for performance are appropriately lower for the year 2001, though nevertheless challenging. Overall, the achievements of the current eleven-year-old pupils are satisfactory in relation to their attainment on entry; in English and singing, achievements are good. Only in information and communication technology for pupils at Key Stage 2 are standards unsatisfactory. At the end of Key Stage 1, the 1999 results were well above average for writing and mathematics and average for reading. The 2000 results at Key Stage 1 indicated no pupils with high attainment in writing but just over half in reading and two thirds in mathematics achieved well. In most year groups there is a smaller proportion of boys with high attainment and a larger proportion with low attainment. Although standards vary from year to year, there is satisfactory achievement overall. The two pupils with English as an additional language speak English fluently and do not receive extra support. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is broadly satisfactory.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The children are enthusiastic and involved in lessons. They are keen to gain from what the school offers.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The children respond well to the school rules, they move around school carefully and play well together on the playground.
Personal development and relationships	Good. The children are polite and considerate in their dealings with each other. They look after each other well.
Attendance	Good. Attendance is better than many schools of this type and there is little lateness.

The pupils are enthusiastic about school and are keen to learn. They listen attentively to their teachers and carry out instructions diligently. The youngest pupils are quick to make friends and help each other appropriately. The pupils' behaviour is very good and lives up to the expectations that teachers make clear. There have been no exclusions. Attendance is better than at the time of the last inspection and most pupils and their families value education sufficiently to avoid absence from school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is satisfactory overall. In just over a third of lessons it is of good quality. Nearly two-thirds of lessons are satisfactorily taught and there is only a very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is better in Key Stage 2, where over two-fifths are good. In Key Stage 1, about one-fifth of lessons are good. There have been some improvements in teaching since the last inspection largely due to the adoption of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy. For example, the teaching of writing is good in Key Stage 2 and often provides a high level of challenge. Even so, in reading, mathematics, and science the present teaching often provides insufficiently well-matched tasks for high and for low attaining pupils and this was so at the last inspection. This is partly because of some weak aspects of teachers' knowledge of the relevant learning for different levels of the National Curriculum and partly because some pupils find learning more difficult with the teaching methods used. Teachers are not always sufficiently aware of their pupils' prior knowledge and understanding to plan well-matched challenges for groups of different ages and abilities within their class. The pupils are well managed and good discipline is maintained. The teachers help their pupils to establish self-esteem, confidence and good work attitudes. The large majority of lessons have a good pace. Relationships are fostered well and pupils are treated with good respect.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. Appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Sound balance of time given to the other subjects and aspects. The termly planning does not identify what the children are to learn clearly enough.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall. Most children are supported well but sometimes the work set is too difficult and their progress becomes too slow, especially for boys.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are no children who have difficulties understanding and speaking English to a good standard.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Social development is very good. Spiritual and moral development are good. Cultural development is good in respect of Western cultures but not enough is done to teach children about other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school looks after the pupils well. All requirements for child protection and health and safety are fully implemented. However, procedures for monitoring and using assessments are insufficiently effective.

The parents have generally positive views of the school and their contribution to the children's learning is very effective through help at home, fund-raising, and support in classrooms and in other ways. The curriculum meets all the requirements and is enriched with educational visits, visitors, a residential trip and an appropriate range of extra-curricular activities. Progression in the pupils' learning is presently not well recorded and not used enough to provide well-sequenced work for pupils of different ability. However, the school uses an appropriate number of tests to chart pupils' attainment overall and is starting to evaluate the results. The pupils develop very well socially and are polite, responsible, friendly and communicative.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory overall. There is a strong and clearly defined mission statement and a set of aims that positively influences the school's work. However, teaching methods are not sufficiently well led.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are involved with the school's work and act as an appropriate support and critical friend.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory overall. The school has identified some weaknesses and action is taken to overcome them, but the monitoring and evaluation of teaching lacks rigour and assessment data is not fully used.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Funding is planned to meet the most urgent priorities and specific grants are used for their purpose.

The school's Christian ethos is based on a strong mission statement that is regularly considered and amended to revise its aims. Governors play an important part in this direction and the budget is formed appropriately to enable the action plans to take place. Monitoring procedures are not yet sufficiently developed to identify clearly issues for improvement and the school does not have a clear view of effective teaching, but there is a good sense of desire to improve.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children become mature and responsible. • Children are expected to work hard and do so. • Behaviour is generally good. • Teaching is good. • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of extra-curricular activities. • The amount of homework. • Information about the child's progress. • The closeness of working with parents.

The majority of parents are very supportive of the school and think their children achieve sound standards. They are particularly pleased with the children's attitudes. A significant proportion of parents are not satisfied with the range of extra-curricular activities but inspectors found that this is improving and the present level is similar to that found in many schools of this type. Inspectors also found that the overall level of homework was appropriate and that it was very well supported by parents at home. Information about children's progress is satisfactory although reports could be more comparative. An appropriate number of parents help in classrooms and in other ways and the school generally has good links with parents and the community. Inspectors found that teaching and leadership are satisfactory and that the pupils' behaviour is very good. They also agreed that the pupils are expected to work hard and that they have good personal development.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The standards attained by the current pupils are generally satisfactory. By the end of the infants, current standards are satisfactory in all subjects and, by the end of the juniors, standards in English and music are good and have improved since the last inspection. In information and communication technology, standards are unsatisfactory and not as advanced as they were at the last inspection. In all the other subjects inspected, standards are satisfactory and have been maintained since the last inspection. Except for 1999, the results of National Curriculum tests for eleven-year-olds show a picture of higher performance than that of current pupils. The tests for 2000 show high proportions of eleven-year-olds achieving a level above that expected for their age, 63 per cent in English and mathematics and 81 per cent in science. The year-by-year variation in test results for eleven-year-olds and the lower attainment of the present pupils, indicate a considerable difference in the performance of pupils in different year groups. To some extent, this reflects the differences in the attainment of year groups on entry to the school: baseline assessment results fluctuate from slightly below average in some years to above average in others. The attainment of the current children in the Foundation Stage is good in language, communication and literacy and in their personal and social development. In the other areas of learning attainment is average. Most year groups have below twenty pupils and these small numbers give greater scope for variation in test results.

2. There is also variation in the amount of improvement that different groups of pupils make during their junior years. For example, the proportion of high attainment for the year group that was tested in 2000 at least doubled in science from when these pupils were seven. On the other hand, the proportion of high attainment in mathematics for the present Year 6 pupils has reduced slightly since they were seven, the rate of improvement having been affected by the number of pupils leaving or joining the school. More often than not, over the past four years, pupils enter the reception class with slightly above average attainment and leave the school with above average attainment and this indicates good progress. Nevertheless, the learning of the present pupils shows some underachievement by the more able and some less able pupils. The monitoring of lessons by senior management has not yet identified the extent of this underachievement, nor has the growing data available been sufficiently analysed to track the progress of groups of pupils in classes.

3. Such variation is taken into account when the school sets its targets for attainment. However, the targets for 2000 were easily exceeded; those for 2001 are lower but provide an appropriate challenge. The school also now sets targets each year for the National Curriculum levels that are to be attained by pupils in year groups and at the end of each key stage. Target setting is developing well.

4. Throughout the school the pupils' current standards of speaking and listening are good. The large majority of pupils speak clearly, have a good vocabulary and structure sentences well. In lessons they usually listen carefully to the teacher and to each other. Interruptions are infrequent and pupils address others politely. They usually carry out instructions carefully, once they have understood what they have to do. The current standards in reading are satisfactory in both Key Stages and most pupils make steady progress. However, this is not as good as the average for similar schools. The pupils are supported well by parents at home and gain appropriate phonic and other reading skills through literacy lessons. Few pupils read at a standard above that expected for their age and this indicates some underachievement, but most have positive attitudes to books. The books provided for some pupils are too hard and this leads to a slowing of the progress of lower attainers particularly. Writing is satisfactory in the infants and good in the juniors, where they make good progress and show generally good skills of handwriting, spelling and punctuation. Lessons are provided for extended writing and these usually help pupils practise skills learnt in literacy lessons although occasionally teachers over-direct these, reducing the pupils' freedom to express themselves. However, taken together standards in English since the last inspection have been maintained in the infants and improved in the juniors.

5. In mathematics, current standards are satisfactory in both key stages and have been maintained since the last inspection. The National Numeracy Strategy has been adopted well and lessons involve appropriate sessions to teach skills in the mental calculation of numbers as well as other aspects of the subject. Throughout the school, pupils are learning strategies to calculate numbers but are not used to explaining how they do this. Junior pupils gain a reasonable knowledge of the multiplication tables but few infants can quickly recall the numbers that together make ten. While standards are satisfactory overall, learning is uneven because lessons are not always sufficiently well matched to the prior knowledge and understanding of groups of pupils within the classes. Consequently, tasks provided for higher and lower attaining pupils are sometimes too easy or too hard respectively.

6. In science, the standards of the current pupils' learning are satisfactory for both infants and juniors and have been maintained since the last inspection. There is much in the programme of study in Years 2 and 6 still to be learnt in order that pupils can achieve the expected level. The standard of pupils' current written work indicates a low level of thinking. For example, pupils in Year 6 are aware of the need to make experiments fair, but have little knowledge of how to design a test, control variables and form conclusions from their findings. High attaining pupils are not used to forming their own hypotheses and testing them. Scientific enquiry skills are not well developed. However, pupils learn and remember new vocabulary quickly and can make good deductions from given information.

7. In information and communication technology, standards are unsatisfactory in the juniors because the pupils have had too little experience and not gained enough skills from across the whole programme of study. In the infants, the pupils' competence is just satisfactory. The subject is a priority for development this year but standards have fallen since the last inspection. In art and design, design and technology, history, geography, music and physical education the standards of seven-year-olds are similar to those expected. In art, design and technology, geography and physical education the standards of eleven-year-olds are typical for the age group and have been maintained since the last inspection. In music standards have improved and are now above average. The pupils' standards of singing are very good and through this they show good musicianship. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.

8. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The targets contained in these pupils' individual educational plans are helpful but not always used. Often these pupils are given extra support and this helps them to overcome problems they have with the work set. Occasionally, however, they have tasks that they do not understand and, without help, they do not learn from these. Pupils of high attainment are occasionally given challenging tasks that are well suited to their prior knowledge. This is especially so in English. However, too often in other lessons, their work is not sufficiently challenging and does not help them to progress towards the next National Curriculum level. Consequently, there is underachievement by both lower attaining and higher attaining pupils. This was echoed by the 1999 National Curriculum test results in which, compared to similar schools, performance was below average. Even in the better performance shown in the results for 2000, there remained a number of pupils with low attainment in writing.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. The school's standards in these areas of its work have improved since the last inspection; attitudes and behaviour were good then and they are now very good. Pupils are eager to come to school and take advantage enthusiastically of all the opportunities offered to them including after school activities. In lessons, they are very interested in their work and attentive to their teachers. They devote themselves whole-heartedly to their tasks and concentrate with determination until they have finished. Their attitudes help them to achieve satisfactory and sometimes good standards of attainment. In the reception class the children respond well and they are eager to learn and enjoy new experiences. They are confident and establish good relationships with each other and the staff.

10. The children's behaviour is very good, both in classrooms and around the school. They are polite and respectful to adults and quickly do as they are told. As a result, very little time is lost maintaining discipline and teachers are able to get on with their lessons without interruptions. The pupils move around the building sensibly and most display consideration for others in the playground. The pupils show respect for their surroundings and handle resources with care. Exclusions are rare and no child has been excluded during the latest reporting period. There is no evidence of oppressive or intimidating behaviour. The pupils respond well to the good opportunities they are given for personal development. They adopt a mature and responsible attitude to this. Throughout the school pupils are happy to do things for their class. Many are able to take the initiative for their own well-being. There are effective circle-time sessions when the children talk about a range of subjects and they are learning to discuss personal matters sensibly.

11. The pupils' relationships with one another and with adults are good. Throughout the school they work well together in class, sharing resources amicably and discussing each other's ideas with interest. They are very supportive of others and treat one another well. In a literacy lesson in Year 6, for example, pupils immediately offered to provide homework lists for a child who had been absent. The pupils are aware of the feelings of others and even the youngest have a good understanding of how their actions can affect others. The reception children, for example, demonstrated an understanding of taking turns when playing musical instruments.

12. The level of attendance at the school is good. There is very little unauthorised absence. Since the last inspection, the national figure has improved and the school has kept pace with this. Punctuality is good. The pupils and their families value education and are keen to miss as little as possible.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

13. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Just over a third of lessons have good teaching. In a little under two-thirds the teaching is satisfactory and in a very small amount it is unsatisfactory. The teaching of pupils in the foundation stage and in both key stages is satisfactory overall but there is a higher proportion of well taught lessons in the juniors, especially the lower juniors. This picture is an improvement from the last inspection but is not quite as strong as the typical school, since there is no teaching of a very high quality.

14. Since the last inspection, there have been some improvements in teaching and these have come largely from the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. There is a reduction in the number of worksheets used and there is more questioning of pupils. The pupils' work continues to be regularly marked and sometimes, for example in writing lessons for older pupils, the higher attainers are challenged well. However, the range of teaching strategies is still too narrow and often lead to over direction even when pupils need to explore and gain independence in their learning. The work given to pupils is sometimes not well matched to their need, especially for low and high attainers. The school has recognised some teaching weaknesses and made efforts to improve them. For example, a number of teachers lacked confidence in teaching aspects of physical education and the school has employed specialists to help the pupils and teachers through a number of demonstration lessons.

15. In lessons generally, and particularly in sessions for personal, social and health education, the teachers help their pupils to gain good self-esteem. Generally, all the pupils are given good opportunities to develop their own personality and gain independence through discussion sessions. Occasionally, for example, in science, the pupils are over-directed so that they cannot develop skills independently. The teachers care for the pupils well and are concerned for their future. The relationships between teachers and their pupils are good. The relationships between staff are also good in effecting good order and the efficient running of the school.

16. In most lessons, the pupils are well managed. The classrooms and resources are efficiently organised and the pupils know the high standards of behaviour that are expected of them. The behaviour code is displayed and kept well. Teachers manage discipline well and consequently behaviour is good. The pupils' work is usually neat and well presented and in this the teachers make their expectations clear. Politeness is also well promoted by teachers and even when conditions are unfavourable, the pupils retain good standards of civility. In the majority of lessons, the teachers keep a good pace to discussions and there is little wasted time. In some cases, teacher expositions are overlong, but the pace of discussion is such that pupils usually maintain interest. Most lessons have a sequence of activities including a whole class session at the end when the learning objectives are reviewed. The homework set is generally appropriate and in most classes well organised. Parents play a significant part in supporting learning at home.

17. In a good proportion of lessons, the teachers' objectives for what the pupils will learn are either unclear or do not allow sufficient differences for pupils of low or high attainment. When they are unclear, too little learning results and when they do not cater for high and low attaining pupils, progress for these pupils is slowed. However, there are examples of clear, well-targeted learning for different groups of pupils, for example, in some planning for numeracy lessons. Teachers are frequently not fully aware of what their pupils already know, understand and can do. Some records are not sufficiently well used to help teachers plan the next learning needed by pupils. This is especially so for high and low attaining pupils. However, the teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and often supported by targets outlined in the pupils' individual education plans. Their learning is often supported appropriately by extra adult help in the classroom, or by withdrawal.

18. In several subjects, for example, in science, information and communication technology, music and physical education, about half the teachers are insecure in their knowledge of the subject and of the National Curriculum levels. Demonstration lessons by external specialists, training courses and guidance through published schemes are forms of staff development that are being used to meet these needs, where they have been identified. Teachers are able to choose training courses for themselves, but these have so far not fully met their needs.

19. In a high proportion of lessons the whole class direct teaching methods are less effective than they should be in helping pupils to understand new ideas because too much priority is given to communicating facts and not enough to extend understanding. Over direction of the practical work restricts the pupils' opportunities to explore and gain independence in learning. Instruction helped one class to learn the names of the main bones in the body, for example, but not the function of bones in vertebrate species. Similarly, in a mathematics lesson, the pupils' learnt how to convert one fraction to another but not the function of equivalent fractions. The youngest pupils, for example, are taught to classify two-dimensional shapes before they are sufficiently familiar with them from handling and exploring their properties for themselves. Since the last inspection, when the range of teaching techniques was found to be particularly narrow, teachers have adopted the direct teaching methods of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies well but are unclear about the role of

individual and group activities in pupils' learning. There is a lack of clarity about the appropriateness of different teaching methods for different purposes and their suitability for the learning styles of pupils from different groups. Teachers are given little guidance about the effectiveness of different teaching methods through school policies. These factors lead to some underachievement by groups of the present pupils.

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

20. The school meets its statutory obligations and teaches all the National Curriculum subjects as well as religious education. The curriculum has been improved since the last inspection when there were schemes of work needing revision. The school has now adopted the optional national schemes. Although there are still some weaknesses to be overcome, the overall quality of the long-term curriculum planning, which identifies what is to be taught in each year group, is satisfactory and the needs of most of the pupils at this level are met. The medium term plans, however, which show how the broad learning objectives for the year are organised each half term, are unsatisfactory because the learning targets are imprecise and do not specify clearly the learning steps to be taken week by week.

21. There is an appropriate emphasis given to the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and the rest of the curriculum is also given adequate time. Some of the other subjects are taught in blocks of lessons with history and geography alternating half-termly and the same system is used for art and design and for design and technology. All the other subjects are taught weekly. This system is working effectively and has supported the improvements in the children's standards and progress that were unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection. The school has successfully adopted the nationally recommended strategies for literacy and numeracy in both key stages and is providing an effective programme of activities to develop key skills in reading, writing and number work. The activities used to teach the core skills of literacy are strongest in Years 4 and 5.

22. The foundation curriculum for the children in the reception class has been adapted from the Key Stage 1 curriculum and does not always take sufficient account of the new Early Learning Goals. This curriculum is usually sufficiently challenging in practice although the style of learning, which is based on Year 1 methods, is inappropriate for the reception age group. The early years provision has too few opportunities for the youngest children to learn through exploration, investigation or discovery.

23. The children with special educational needs receive a generally appropriate curriculum. This is aided by their individual education plans, support in lessons and by withdrawal. However, occasionally, the pupils have tasks that are too hard and sometimes the tasks are not challenging enough. This leads to slower progress than is appropriate, especially in the core subjects of literacy and numeracy. A small proportion of the teaching of pupils with special educational needs and of those learning to play musical instruments takes place by withdrawal from lessons. These pupils often miss the same class lesson each week and this should be avoided. Despite this, the school offers satisfactory equality of access to the curriculum due to the planning and additional support offered to pupils.

24. The school provides an appropriate range of extra-curricular activities, including music, information and communication technology and sport. There are additional opportunities for specialist music lessons. The range of extra-curricular activities is similar to most schools of a similar size. The school responded appropriately to parents' requests for more activities by organising additional clubs.

25. The school makes good provision for the pupils' personal, social and health education as it did at the time of the last inspection. There is a good programme for circle time that provides regular opportunities to discuss many topics. There is appropriate provision for work on drugs awareness and health education across the school. Sex education has not previously been taught but there are plans to begin lessons for the older children.

26. There is a very good range of links with the community. Through many local visits, the children are familiar with their community and neighbourhood. They visit senior citizens and a home for mentally handicapped adults and issue invitations to school functions. There are many links with the church and other Catholic schools. The local community joins with the school in fetes and functions. The school takes advantage of local facilities and businesses as well as the cultural opportunities available in the town and the cities of Birmingham and Cardiff to broaden the curriculum for its pupils.

27. The school liaises appropriately with receiving secondary schools to enable its pupils to settle smoothly into the next stage of their education. The school belongs to an early years partnership, which promotes contact with local playgroups. Induction procedures into the reception class are, however, over-formal. Good relationships have been developed with those schools and colleges whose students work at the school.

28. Overall, the provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The spiritual and moral aspects are good. The social aspect is very good. The cultural aspect is satisfactory overall, being good for the pupils' experience of their own culture but needing further development of their experience of other cultures. At the time of the last inspection all these aspects were found to be good.

29. The children's spiritual development is promoted well through the daily act of collective worship. These emphasise the school's strong Christian ethos and support values such as belief, caring, sharing and respect. Visitors to the assembly enable pupils to see how faith influences people's lives and widens their opportunities to listen to stimulating speakers. The children are provided with brief opportunities to reflect on their values and beliefs and to apply them to their daily lives. The strong and effective links that the school has with the church make a positive contribution to the pupils' spiritual development.

30. Very good behaviour is fostered throughout the school by an effective moral code that is accepted and understood by the children and extends their understanding about moral issues, fairness and justice. The pupils' behaviour and their relationships with each other and adults are good. Through their behaviour in class and about the school, as well as in discussion of moral issues, the children show that they understand the differences between right and wrong. They treat each other and adults with courtesy and respect and cooperate well together. There are instances of many spontaneous acts of kindness. The children respect the fabric of the school. The staff foster this caring behaviour and their relationships with the pupils are good. The school is a community where all children are valued. Their work is supported by effective policies for behaviour and anti-bullying, which are implemented consistently.

31. The pupils' social development is promoted and developed very well through a broad range of school activities. They are given opportunities to take on responsibilities, such as helping in classrooms, jobs around school and helping new pupils to become accustomed to the school. The pupils have the opportunity of participating in residential visits in Year 6. A suitable range of after-school clubs is popular and well supported. The school runs various seasonal sports teams. The school has developed very good links with the community and pupils visit senior citizens and other community members and invite them into school. Each year the children are actively involved in supporting several charitable organisations through activities to raise money. Some of the older children independently raise money for charities.

32. The school has made good provision for the children to develop their experience of their own cultural traditions through many visits to the local area. Visits to sites such as museums, galleries, historical locations and geographical field trips are included in the curriculum. Some opportunities are provided for the pupils to examine works of famous artists and to appreciate the works of famous composers. The provision to develop the children's understanding of other cultural traditions is satisfactory overall. The school includes the recognition of some of the festivals from other world religions and cultures in the assemblies. Some opportunities are provided for the pupils' wider cultural development through aspects of geography in the upper junior classes and through very good links with a school in Uganda. The school's resources for multi-cultural education and to illustrate the beliefs, traditions and religious artefacts from other faiths and religions are unsatisfactory. The children's awareness of the range of cultures represented in our society is under-developed.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

33. The school looks after the pupils well. Parents are pleased with the standards of care. Arrangements to fulfil the school's responsibilities for child protection, under current legislation, are in place.

34. Health and safety procedures are good. The deputy headteacher inspects parts of the building each week as a continuous risk assessment. Teachers and mid day assistants supervise the children well during the breaks and lunch times. There are appropriate procedures for first aid and to care for children with known medical conditions.

35. Teachers make suitable enquires about pupils who are absent and there is negligible unauthorised absence. However, the procedures to record attendance are unsatisfactory. In some classes the figures for afternoon attendance are completed in the morning; this does not meet statutory requirements. The school lacks written guidelines to ensure staff use consistent registration methods.

36. The headteacher and staff have established a very good climate for learning. The house system of merits is working well. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour both in lessons and around the school and no pupil has been excluded for unacceptable behaviour during the latest reporting period. Bullying is rare and, if it does occur, it is swiftly dealt with.

37. There are satisfactory procedures to monitor and support pupils' personal development, but teachers do not keep written records of this or their behaviour. However, because the school is small and teachers know their children well, these

informal systems work satisfactorily. The pupils help their teachers with small duties and older pupils help those younger. Pupils' personal development is helped by the effective use of occasional lessons in which the pupils sit round to talk and discuss problems, often offering emotional support. Such activities help to promote good relationships and maintain the school as an orderly, caring community in which everyone is valued.

38. Until recently, academic records were kept of what each child had been taught. In some cases these were extended to include what they had learnt. However, these records are in abeyance pending amendments to suit new curricular requirements. This situation leaves the school without detailed records of each pupil's learning and is unsatisfactory, especially in view of the need to maintain progression through the curriculum when classes contain more than one age group. The assessment policy provides some principles but inconsistent guidance in how teachers can assess and record pupils' learning. Whole-school portfolios of assessed work in English, mathematics, science, and religious education, help teachers identify levels of attainment. However, these do not help teachers know what pupils have learnt previously. Individual teachers keep some records of aspects of learning but this is not consistent through the school and is seldom helpful in planning the next work.

39. The headteacher keeps a satisfactory record of each pupil's results in formal assessments that are done at the end of each year. There is now an appropriate set of assessments at the end of each year as well as some made at the ends of sections of work. There is already a significant data-base from which to analyse and evaluate individual pupils' progress as well as the progress of groups of pupils, such as higher attainers. It also provides sufficient information for the school to evaluate the progress of year groups and the overall performance of the school. The headteacher is starting to use appropriate methods of analysis that will support the school's self-evaluation procedures. However, this is in the early stages and few conclusions have yet been drawn.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

40. The school has effective links with parents, and these support the children's learning. Parents' views expressed at the pre-inspection meeting with the Registered Inspector and in the questionnaire are generally positive. Parents consider that the school expects their children to work hard, is well managed and provides a good standard of care. Parents are least satisfied with the range of extra-curricula activities, the partnership between school and home and the information they receive about progress. A few parents are also concerned about the provision for special educational needs and some think that the teaching is directed too much at the average attaining children, such that others are not stretched enough.

41. The written information sent to parents, including the prospectus and governors' report to parents is satisfactory. Parents receive regular newsletters and there is a notice-board for parents in the reception area. The last inspection noted that some parents would welcome more opportunity to be involved in and aware of curriculum issues so as to support their children's learning. There has been some improvement in this with the literacy and numeracy initiatives but more remains to be done.

42. The end of year written reports on children's progress meet statutory requirements. However, the inspectors agree with parents that the reports need to be clearer about standards of attainment so that parents know how their children are doing in comparison to other children nationally and whether they are reaching their own potential.

43. The school holds two formal parents' evenings each year. There is a teacher available each day after school to meet with parents to discuss any concerns they might have. This is good practice. However, parents whose children have special educational needs are not always adequately consulted or involved in reviews of their children's progress.

44. The school is receptive to parents' views. The school recently broadened the range of extra-curricula activities and revised the timing and format of the annual consultation evenings to take account of the needs of working parents and the need for more privacy at the consultations. Most parents support their children's learning at home well. They are concerned that homework tasks are completed fully.

45. Parents are very supportive of the school and the value of education; this has a positive effect on standards. They support the school's homework and discipline policy and regularly attend the annual consultation meetings with teachers. The Friends of St. Joseph gives good support: they are currently working towards improving the resources for science and have effective links with Catholic community activities. Parents readily help with trips and several parents provide help in the classroom. Parents also run an after school sports club and football sessions.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

46. The school's leadership and management is satisfactory overall. There are some strong aspects, for example, its mission statement and aims, but also some that are weak, such as those concerned with promoting more effective teaching.
47. The school works within a strong set of principles that are generated by its mission statement. This statement is reviewed annually and the implications of any changes result in amendments to the school's aims. This system provides a strong Christian philosophy and a high degree of awareness of the principles by which the school operates and its daily decisions are made. Staff and governors are fully involved in this and the headteacher leads this principled approach strongly. For example, the respect for adults and pupils at the school leads to a strong concern for individuals in which personal issues are dealt with understanding and care in a private and supportive way. The school's administration is efficient and runs effectively without overburdening teachers or interrupting lessons. Relationships between staff are good and this fosters effective communication. The headteacher is careful to listen to the views of staff and responds whenever possible.
48. The headteacher and the teachers are keen to promote improvements and there is a good level of discussion about ways by which results may be raised and the pupils' education improved. The school development plan is of satisfactory quality and helps to promote improvement in standards. Appropriate priorities for development are identified through discussion with co-ordinators and reviews of the schools' work using a new self-evaluation system. Governors discuss the plan and costing implications influence the development of the budget plan for the coming year. All these features are positive and helpful but the self-evaluation plan does not yet draw fully upon the available school performance data. Consequently, the variation in the progress of different year groups is not clearly charted.
49. The school has correctly identified a need for more expertise in the use of performance data and in monitoring and evaluation procedures. This is planned for the spring term. A start has been made and classroom observations are made by the headteacher and senior teachers. The outcomes offer helpful advice about discipline and organisational matters but little help about improving the pupils' learning. The school does not have a sufficiently well defined view of what constitutes effective teaching, and leadership in this aspect is unsatisfactory. The last inspection identified a narrow range of teaching strategies being used. There has been some improvement through the adoption of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. However, the range is still narrow, especially for pupils of differing attainment or when their understanding is insecure. Teachers have little guidance of the most appropriate methods for teaching different subjects and types of learning. The action plan created from the last inspection report, appropriately suggests improvements to overcome all the identified weaknesses. Improvement has been generally satisfactory and most of the weaknesses overcome. However, the range of teaching strategies is still restricted and pupils are still offered too few opportunities to gain independence. The school's management has done insufficient to improve these issues from the last report.
50. Monitoring of the school's effectiveness presently lacks the detail needed to form secure evaluations. Some means are available and the subject co-ordinators sometimes scrutinise pupils' work and the teachers' planning. The headteacher monitors the pupils' standards through the yearly tests now being used. However, none of these systems is sufficiently rigorous to provide detailed information about strengths and weaknesses in the school's provision for each pupil. The governors are kept informed about the progress of initiatives and several visit and have a first-hand view of developments. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities soundly and, with the headteacher's help, ensures that the school's planned developments are appropriately funded. At the end of the last financial year, a high eleven per cent of the budget was unspent. The school is reducing this by retaining a high level of classroom support. Extra funds allocated to the school are appropriately used for their purpose and the governors apply the basic principles of best value when any major purchases are made. There are appropriate systems in place for financial propriety.
51. Target setting is established and there are targets for the performance of each pupil at the end of each key stage. These are revised at the end of each year following the use of optional tests and the teachers' knowledge of each child. The targets provide appropriate challenge and teachers are prompted to meet them. However, the information about each child is not yet used to provide a challenge for attainment at the end of each year. The current targets are made in terms of the pupils' National Curriculum levels. Teachers are beginning to share learning objectives with pupils at the beginnings of lessons. Target setting has not yet been used to help improve particular weaknesses, for example, the performance of boys or achievement in the non-core subjects.
52. Staff development is regarded with great importance and teachers have attended a good number of training events. Some of these are held in the school run by external specialists and co-ordinators help to train their colleagues as well. The school has identified some subjects where more training is needed and, in the case of physical education and music, is attempting different ways to meet the needs. However, teachers often make the choices of courses to attend. There has been a good acceptance of new national initiatives and this is because of the school's provision of appropriate training. There are

good procedures for staff induction and for the integration of newly qualified teachers. Overall staff development is satisfactory.

53. The school's accommodation has been significantly improved since the last inspection and further improvements are planned. Overall, there are sufficient rooms and space for the number of pupils and the demands of the curriculum. The school provides a pleasant environment for learning with a shared hall and attractive field with sufficient playground space. The school's resources for learning have significantly improved since the last inspection and are now sufficient overall. In some subjects, for example, design and technology the resources are stored well, being easily accessible.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

Items marked * have already been considered by the school or it has started work on them.

54. In order to raise standards and minimise underachievement, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- ❑ monitor, evaluate and take appropriate action to improve:
 - the progress, targets and achievement of different groups of pupils through the school (paragraph 2);
 - the progress and sense of inclusion of pupils with special educational needs, especially boys (paragraph 8);
 - the overall quality of teaching and teachers' medium and short term planning (paragraph.20);*
- ❑ improve the quality of teaching by:
 - using more strategies to provide teachers with a full knowledge and understanding of the subjects and their National Curriculum levels (paragraph 20);*
 - developing a clear policy and procedures for selecting the most appropriate teaching strategies and identifying their effectiveness in promoting learning (paragraph 19);
 - improving the quality of planning by providing clear objectives for learning for pupils of different prior attainment (paragraph 17);*
- ❑ improve:
 - the provision to develop the pupils' skills in information and communication technology (paragraph 105);
 - the writing of reports and curriculum information for parents (paragraph 42);
 - the records of what individual pupils have learnt, understood and can do (paragraph 37).

55. The Governors should also consider the following weaknesses in drawing up their action plan:

- ❑ procedures for registration (paragraph 35);
- ❑ the principles applied to the planning for the Foundation Stage (paragraph 57);
- ❑ what pupils miss when withdrawn from lessons for instrumental tuition or other purposes (paragraph 23).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	42
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	49

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	0	36	62	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	129
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	15

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.5
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	[1998] 1999 (2000)	7	14	21

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	5	5	5
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	19	19	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	[84] 90 (82)	[100] 90 (82)	[100] 90 (89)
	National	[76] 82 (79)	[81] 83 (83)	[84] 87 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	5	5	5
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	19	19	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	[100] 90 (82)	[100] 90 (82)	[100] 90 (82)
	National	[81] 82	[85] 86	[86] 87

Percentages in square brackets refer to 1998 results. Those in round brackets refer to the results for 2000.

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
	[1998] 1999 (2000)	12	12	24

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	11	11
	Girls	7	8	8
	Total	18	19	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	[100] 75 (94)	[89] 79 (94)	[100] 79 (94)
	National	[63] 70	[62] 69	[68] 78

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	11	11
	Girls	8	7	8
	Total	19	18	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	[100] 79 (94)	[89] 75 (94)	[100] 79 (94)
	National	[63] 68	[64] 69	[69] 75

Percentages in square brackets refer to 1998 results. Those in round brackets refer to the results for 2000.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	126
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	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.5
Average class size	26

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	52

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
	£
Total income	237486
Total expenditure	235797
Expenditure per pupil	1827
Balance brought forward from previous year	25661
Balance carried forward to next year	27350

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	129
Number of questionnaires returned	59

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	51	41	5	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	53	39	3	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	44	0	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	47	8	0	7
The teaching is good.	54	43	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	42	12	0	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	66	29	5	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	29	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	53	34	8	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	75	22	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	68	25	0	0	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	46	22	3	7

Other issues raised by parents

Parents are generally very supportive of the school and the education it offers. Most see it as an improving school. However, there were some negative comments about collaboration with parents especially about special educational needs. A few felt that lessons were too aimed at the average child so that, for example, occasionally pupils with special educational needs came home with work that they did not understand how to complete. The school and the headteacher are seen as approachable and responsive to suggestions. A few parents raised concerns about music, physical education and experimentation in science.

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

56. The overall attainment of the vast majority of the children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory with above average attainment in communication, language and literacy and in personal, social and emotional development. At the time of the last inspection nothing was written about the reception children so no comparisons of their standards can be made. The children's good attainment in speaking and listening increases their progress in the other areas. The main factor in the children's steady, rather than good, rate of progress is that they are in the same class as the youngest Year 1 children and much of their curriculum is influenced by the needs of the older children. Over the past three years the children have come into the school with fluctuating levels of attainment. In 1997 and 1999 their attainment was above average and in 1998 it was below. At the time of the inspection, baseline assessment of the current reception children had not taken place. In previous years the reception children have made satisfactory progress and left reception with average attainment in mathematics, creative development, physical development, early reading and aspects of knowledge and understanding of the world.

57. At the time of the inspection the reception children were finishing their first half term in school. They all enter school in the September after their fourth birthday and join Year 1 children in their class. The induction procedures are satisfactory overall. The children make several visits to the class during the summer term but the parents of the children are not invited to stay with them during the induction visits. The reception children make up about 60 per cent of the class. The curriculum is planned for Key Stage 1 and then a lower level is identified for the reception children rather than starting with the recommended goals for children of this age. The curriculum includes a good balance of directed activities and opportunities for play. There are few planned opportunities for investigation and exploration based on the suggested national goals. There is no Foundation Stage policy to give guidance and clearly identify the way the curriculum will be planned or how the children will learn. There is insufficient information about how the younger or lower attaining children will work through the foundation stages towards the National Curriculum during the year. No pupils have been identified as having special educational needs in the current reception group.

58. There are satisfactory resources in the reception class and the children have appropriate choice of play equipment. There is little use made of natural or everyday objects, which would be familiar to the children and would usefully increase the range of resources. The teaching and learning in the outside area includes a range of play opportunities and the playground area is used appropriately for physical development.

Personal and social and emotional development

59. This area of learning is given appropriate attention and many of the children are already achieving the early learning goals. In the reception class the children are interested in each other and play together happily. They co-operate in some of their games and talk readily to each other about their play. They look after their own needs but also consider those of others. For example, they share resources and wait for each other to finish before taking toys. They are aware of the classroom rules and routines and respond well to instructions and questions. They very youngest show natural, immature behaviour, not being used to sitting still for the length of a lesson. The teaching in this area is satisfactory overall with some good teaching. The staff respond appropriately to most situations and show the children how to behave. They are expected to sit together and share. The teacher and the support assistant insist that the children listen and encourage them to contribute to lessons. The teacher's questioning is clear and the children respond confidently. The reception children are slow and sometimes helped more than is necessary when getting changed for physical education lessons.

Communication, language and literacy

60. The pupils' attainments in this area are generally good. Their speaking and listening and writing development is above average and some of them are already achieving the expected goals. Their standards are average in reading and they are likely to reach the recommended levels by the time they move into Year 1. Almost all of the children have clear speech and it is easy to understand them. They use a good range of interesting words and structure their sentences grammatically. In play activities, they usually speak confidently to the adults but few are happy to speak at length. When one boy was asked about the model he was making he responded with brief answers. The children write often as part of their lessons but there is not area dedicated for this. Most of the children are beginning to copy their teacher's writing and attempt some of their own. The oldest reception children are able to write a few words of their own and almost all can write their name. They understand the meaning of writing and know that words are different from pictures. They hold their pencils firmly and use them purposefully. The children respond well to books. They enjoy stories and listen to the staff carefully at story time. All of the children have a reading book and the highest attaining children are already able to read well. Many of the children know the letter sounds and are beginning to use them to try and work out new words in their books. During the inspection

none of the children chose to look at books on their own. The teacher shows good skills in using stories in class literacy lessons. The books are interesting and the children are encouraged to contribute. The children look at the words and learn to follow a story-line and join in with repeated parts. They are given opportunities to speak and listen but often the staff accept brief answers. The staff use good activities to help the children listen closely, for example identifying percussion instruments by the sound they make. Writing is taught systematically and the teachers provide work for the children to copy and attempt by themselves.

Mathematical development

61. The children's overall attainment is average and they are likely to meet the nationally expected goals. They make satisfactory progress overall during the Foundation Stage. The children are able to count to five and some can go beyond this. The teaching is satisfactory. The staff provide interesting resources, for example using geometric shapes and then linking them to shapes within the classroom. There are appropriate activities provided that challenge the children's thinking through play, for example in matching and sorting games. The staff question the children and show what is to be done. Good teaching was seen when the children played a shape game with the teacher. This captured everyone's interest and good learning ensued.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

62. The children's attainment in this area is average. Most of the children arrive in the class with an appropriate awareness of the world around them, they are familiar with paint, crayons and construction toys and have an early awareness of their own neighbourhood. They use a range of musical instruments to make and repeat sounds and find this interesting and exciting. They show an average understanding when using the computer and are able to control the mouse properly when controlling the images on the screen. They use construction toys confidently and are able to make models of houses and vehicles. They showed appropriate understanding of routes and direction in a geography lesson based on a favourite story book. The teaching in this area is satisfactory overall. Much of the learning comes from the discussions with the teacher and support assistant. The staff draw information from the children through careful questioning and remind them about what has already been said. When the children work in smaller groups the learning is sometimes less successful as the tasks are not always planned to meet the needs of the children. The staff show sensitivity in encouraging the children and helping them to recall discussions. The play activities support this area appropriately and the children use the resources confidently but when there is unsupported play the children's learning is not always extended and the children repeat earlier activities.

Creative development

63. The children's attainment is in line with the expected standards for their age but the programme of activities is limited in the scope it gives them for individual expression. Much of the work is directed by the staff and the children sometimes follow earlier designs so that all their work looks very similar, for example in their wildlife collages. During the inspection there were no opportunities for the children to paint freely and there were few examples of earlier work displayed in the room. In their printing activity the children showed an interest in the colours and pleasure in using the resources. They show a satisfactory control of the resources as they select and print with a range of equipment. They concentrate well on this task but do not talk much about their work when the staff join them. The staff support the creative tasks appropriately but do not ask questions that enable the children to increase the detail of their work.

Physical development

64. The children have a satisfactory level of physical skills. They are active and use appropriate control when running and playing outside and when moving around the classroom. In their outside play they move with awareness of space and avoid collisions well. They move with care and precision. The children can throw and kick balls and are beginning to learn how to catch them. When using small tools, the children show typical levels of skill; they use the resources confidently and control them carefully. The staff provide frequent opportunities for the development of physical skills and offer a range of resources. There are regular outside sessions, which support physical development, but greater staff intervention is needed to increase the standards in some activities like throwing and catching accurately and with greater control.

ENGLISH

65. At the end of Key Stage 2, the 1999 National Curriculum figures showed national average attainments in the English tests, with high standards for boys. However, when compared with similar schools, the overall results were well below the average. The 1999 figures showed a steep drop when compared with the previous two years and the 2000 figures indicated considerable improvement upon 1999, particularly in the percentage of children who reached the higher level. At the time of the inspection, the national comparative data was not available.

66. As measured by the National Curriculum tests and supported by the evidence of this inspection, Key Stage 2 builds strongly upon Key Stage 1, especially in the standards attained by the boys. The test results at the time of the previous inspection were lower in reading and similar to those reported now for Key Stage 1. They were much lower for Key Stage 2. The national trend is of annual improvement in the test scores and the school's results in both key stages have, overall, kept pace with those improvements, although the boys have lagged behind the girls.

67. By the end of Key Stage 1, as measured by the 1999 National Curriculum tests, the pupils made good progress in writing. They entered the school with above average attainment and at the end of Year 2 reached standards well above the national averages. In reading, they entered the school with above average attainment, made unsatisfactory progress and only reached average standards by the end of the Key Stage. When compared with similar schools, as distinct from the whole of the national picture, the 1999 figures show pupils' attainments in reading were well below the average and writing to be above that average. The results in reading are improving over time. At the time of the inspection, comparative data was not available for the 2000 tests but the indications are that the standards in Key Stage 1 have continued to improve slightly in reading but have fallen in writing. The overall trend for Key Stage 1 is upwards although the percentage of pupils reaching the higher level 3 in reading is below the national figure due to the low attainment of some of the boys. Whilst the percentage of pupils reaching level 3 in writing was well above average, this was not so for the boys. In 2000, the percentage of pupils reaching the higher level 3 in reading considerably increased for girls, but has fallen for boys. In 2000 none of the pupils reached level 3 in writing although when they entered the school their baseline tests showed that they had achieved above average standards.

68. The listening skills of the current pupils are good in both key stages. They pay close attention to their teachers. The teachers ask most of the questions and the responses are directed at them, rather than the rest of the class but when pupils do speak, for example, in assemblies, they listen well to each other. Their speaking skills are good in both key stages. They often give extended answers and are able to develop accurate or extended speech although these skills are not always encouraged well by their teachers. When reading aloud, some children are developing an expressive tone to enliven the text. The children are confident and are happy to participate in whole class lessons and in group work and to volunteer ideas and answers. There are no significant differences between girls and boys.

69. Most children make steady progress in their reading through both key stages and their standards are satisfactory. Reading skills are successfully promoted during the daily literacy lessons and through the guided reading sessions, supported by collections of group and individual reading books that are appropriately graded. The children's knowledge of phonics is sound and they have good levels of confidence and interest. The overall picture is of many children reading at about the expected levels for their ages but of few exceeding those levels.

70. The reading programme encourages children to read at home and most parents give good support. There are support structures for children who are reading at below average levels and need extra help. They receive extra reading opportunities with the support staff and some parents. Some of the lower attaining children in both key stages have books that are too difficult and do not prepare them enough for the next stage. The special needs coordinator is not called upon to advise the other teachers in matching the books to the individual children and this missed opportunity sometimes results in slower progress than is appropriate. Records of the children's progress in reading are sparse and the teachers are not well enough informed about the levels the pupils have attained in previous classes. The school's higher attaining, older readers also sometimes have books they are unable to read properly. As a result, there are children who have above or below average standards who do not gain sufficient understanding from the books they are reading. The fiction collections in the classes are of good quality and condition. They do not always support the children fully, as there is sometimes limited access to the best books that are used during class reading time rather than for homework.

71. The school's library is a pleasant and appropriate room. It is appropriately furnished with accessible bookcases and tables for the children to work and contains the non-fiction collection and this is organised according to the standard Dewey system. The collection is adequate for a school of this size and it is augmented for some subjects by books in topic collections from the school library service. The library is not timetabled for use by classes in the school and, as a result, is rarely visited by pupils. The teaching of library skills is planned for later in the school year and the library is currently underused. The library is properly organised and there is no reason for any delay in its full use.

72. The standard of children's writing in Key Stage 1 is now satisfactory. Writing is developed well in Key Stage 2 and the standard reached by current Year 6 pupils is good. Many of the current Year 6 pupils are on course for at least average and often above levels of attainment in the National Curriculum tests in the summer of 2001.

73. In both key stages, the school has appropriately built into its timetables extra sessions for the children to develop their skills in extended writing. These are generally successful in both key stages although some of these sessions are merely extensions to the literacy lessons, with longer than necessary instruction from the teacher and without the opportunities to write at greater length than can be provided in the daily literacy lessons. Samples of extended writing from last year show some good examples. During the inspection, many of the pupils, when unaided, demonstrated good skills of spelling, grammar and punctuation. Their handwriting is often good and the older boys and girls use a neat, joined-up script and work quickly and neatly. However, opportunities for extended writing in other subjects are limited. There are good examples from religious education lessons but the work in history, geography and science from last year, reveals few examples of sustained argument, description, analysis or word processing.

74. The pupils work hard and behave very well in lessons and the teachers maintain a reasonable pace. Some good lessons were observed during the inspection but the overall quality of teaching in literacy is satisfactory. In the average lessons, the teachers are effectively implementing the strategies of the National Literacy Strategy. There are some weaknesses in some of these lessons which include inappropriate tasks for some of the lower attaining children and a tendency for some teachers to talk too much in the opening sections which reduces the time available for the pupils to do their work. The need for more accurately matching the work to the range of pupils' prior attainments is not always recognised. The best lessons were in Key Stage 2 and these were characterised by high expectations of what the children should be able to do and good demonstrations by the teacher showing how to organise the work properly. As a result the pupils responded by working hard and meeting their teachers' expectations. Homework, including spelling and reading is set regularly and it effectively supports the children's learning.

75. The teachers' day-to-day planning does not include specific learning objectives that are used to guide the lessons and match the work to the children's knowledge and understanding. As a result assessments are not sharply focused on what the children have learned. Assessments generally do not use National Curriculum levels so the extent of the children's learning needs, as measured by national expectations, is not well enough known. The marking of children's work is done regularly but varies in quality. It rarely helps the children to see what they need to do to improve their work. Usually the marking gives praise but without the reasons. Records are adequate but not sufficiently used to inform the planning of lessons. During the inspection, the teachers had little information on the prior attainments of individual children in their classes. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because of the targets set in their individual education plans. Their teachers give appropriate support for their work, but often in lessons the tasks set are not sufficiently different. However, in gaining skills, the work by withdrawal is helpful.

76. The coordinator is an informed teacher and a good model for her colleagues. She is keen to promote improvements but has few ways to evaluate standards in the subject and does not, for example, monitor the teachers' planning. There is a useful collection of children's written work that has been examined by all the teachers and has been arranged in National Curriculum levels. This has enabled the staff to recognise the standards of writing reached by the children in their classes and to speed the rate of progress.

77. Resources include a sound range of books for learning to read and an adequate collection of dictionaries and text books. There is an appropriate non-fiction collection and a good provision of fiction. The subject is enhanced by theatre trips and trips to meet authors visiting the local library.

MATHEMATICS

78. Standards are average overall but vary considerably from year to year, especially in Key Stage 2. The results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests for eleven-year-olds showed that standards were above the national average, but below the average for schools having similar pupils. This was because of the low proportion of pupils with high attainment. Nevertheless, this represented an improvement since the last inspection. However, the results for 2000 showed a much greater improvement, with nearly all the pupils achieving the expected standard and nearly two thirds having high attainment. This is considerably better and indicates high performance by these children as well as an increase in the number of pupils achieving high attainment during the key stage. The targets for, and the attainment of, the present Year 6 pupils are much lower and this is indicated by the optional tests taken when these pupils were in Year 5. The number of high attainers in this year group has reduced since they were seven as some of these pupils have left the school.

79. The results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests for seven-year-olds were well above the national average and above the average for similar schools. This indicates some improvement since the last inspection, but the number of children achieving highly was little above the national average. The girls did significantly better than the boys. The results for 2000 showed nearly three times as many pupils achieving highly and were a considerable improvement. The difference between the girls and the boys was even more marked. However, the work of pupils presently in Year 2, is little better than average although this has yet to be formally assessed.

80. The attainment of the pupils in the present year groups is satisfactory throughout the school. Within this picture there are variations. Reception pupils have average attainment for the time of the year, with some higher attainers close to achieving the appropriate Early Learning Goals. In Year 1, one girl was able to explain the criteria by which to identify a square from a rectangle, while another was uncertain about the names of simple two-dimensional shapes. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards are only just satisfactory for the time of the year and few pupils have yet reached the expected level for seven-year-olds. The pupils know something of the four operations of number and of tens and units and are learning about numbers over one hundred. However, few Year 2 pupils know the pairs of numbers that make ten well, although they can count in tens. They have a limited number of strategies to help them calculate, finding it hard to explain these. Once the pupils understand their task, they work at a good rate but as yet there are aspects of the subject that they have not learnt yet, such as handling data.

81. Overall, attainment in Key Stage 2 is lower than in 2000. During the early stages of Key Stage 2, the pupils continue to make satisfactory progress and about a quarter quickly achieve the appropriate level for Year 4. However, work is not always built on their previous learning and this limits the progress of lower attainers particularly. Sometimes, the tasks set do not help the pupils to gain a better understanding of the main ideas taught in the lesson. Pupils have few opportunities to learn about number patterns and the arithmetic principles that support algebra. Consequently, many find it hard to explain their mathematical thinking despite their good levels of spoken English and the appropriate mathematical words that they are taught. They do not always understand the relevance of the tasks to the direct teaching that precedes them. By the end of the key stage, attainment is satisfactory and a majority of pupils are progressing towards achieving the appropriate level in the National Curriculum tests. The targets set for 2001 are significantly lower than those for 2000 and this reflects the school's previous assessments. The current Year 6 pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the multiplication tables and higher attainers are quick at calculating numbers mentally, but find it hard to explain their methods. Presently their knowledge of aspects of the curriculum is not complete and a number of pupils are uncertain about mathematical concepts such as decimals, categories of numbers, patterns and problem solving.

82. Most pupils have satisfactory attitudes to the subject and are conscious of their weaker areas. They are keen to gain skills and usually work hard concentrating for appropriate periods for their age. The work in pupils' books is neatly completed and standards of presentation are good. Despite their good skills of communication, many pupils are not used to explaining how they calculate and the principles that lie behind their work. In lessons, the pupils' behaviour is usually good and they make good efforts to understand how to complete tasks. This is equally so for boys and girls and for higher and lower attainers. However, in both key stages the attainment and progress of girls is better than that of the boys and by more than the national trend.

83. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in both key stages. Expectations of the pupils' standards of presentation and of their behaviour are high and the pupils respond well. Teachers manage the pupils well and in most lessons the teaching moves on from one point to another quickly. The range of tests used has improved and pupils in Key Stage 2 are assessed each year. The National Curriculum levels achieved are identified using these and pupils' work. Teacher assessments for 2000 were accurate for Year 6 but underestimated Year 2 pupils' attainment. Teachers are concerned to follow the framework of the National Numeracy Strategy and sometimes they take insufficient account of their pupils' National Curriculum attainment levels. In lessons, teachers' explanations are sometimes overlong and pupils have too little time to carry out the tasks. While teachers have adequate knowledge of the key objectives outlined in the National Numeracy Strategy, their knowledge of common errors in pupils' understanding of key ideas is less clear. Consequently, some explanations insufficiently help the lower attaining pupils. There is also a degree of under-expectation of the higher attainers. A good proportion of lesson time is spent in direct instruction, but often there is too little time spent on activities that will help pupils to visualise and understand new ideas. Although each class has pupils of mixed age and ability, lessons are often planned for the learning of one objective with insufficient attention paid to the pupils' different prior knowledge. Until recently, a record was kept of what each pupil had been taught. Some teachers helpfully extended this practice to record what the pupils had learnt. However, these records are presently suspended due to new curricular requirements and consequently teachers cannot easily plan lessons in the full knowledge of what pupils need to learn next.

84. The National Numeracy Strategy has been adopted soundly and there is a governor with oversight of its implementation. Lessons have the recommended elements and there is plenty of direct instruction. Medium term planning follows the key objectives. Occasionally, teachers correctly identify weaknesses in pupils' prior learning and appropriately

amend plans. The co-ordinator has effectively introduced the National Numeracy Strategy and helped train teachers in staff meetings. Some monitoring of lessons and of pupils' work has taken place and the co-ordinator is correctly keen to improve the pupils' progress and learning. The monitoring has not identified the reasons for variation in the school's results, apart from the differences in groups of pupils on entry. This was identified in the last inspection and there has been some improvement, for example, as evidenced by the relative improvement of pupils' achievement shown in National Curriculum test results for 2000.

SCIENCE

85. Standards are average at the end of each key stage and have been maintained since the last inspection. The results of the National Curriculum tests for 2000 were very good for eleven-year-olds, with an exceptionally high, four-fifths, of pupils achieving above the expected level. In 1999 there had been a fall in standards since the good results of the two previous years. The test results were close to the national average, but below the average for schools having pupils from similar backgrounds. The performance of boys was slightly better than that of the girls. Teachers assess seven-year-olds and in 1999, these showed average standards overall and an average proportion of pupils with high attainment. In 2000 this proportion doubled and results were improved.

86. The test results of 2000 are not reflected in the present attainment of pupils at either seven or eleven. Allowing for the time of the inspection in the school year, there are few pupils with high attainment in either key stage, and for most, attainment is no better than average. Some eleven-year-olds in 2000 achieved better results than their teachers expected. Such inconsistencies and variations in performance from one year to another are due to several factors including: some under-challenging work; a lack teachers' knowledge of what pupils already know; some staff changes and weaknesses in teachers' knowledge of the subject and the levels expected in the National Curriculum by some teachers.

87. The infants know about the five senses and know that food is essential to life and that some foods are healthier than others. They can use simple classifications to sort foods into groups, but these are elementary ones and not used rigorously. In one lesson, for example, Year 2 pupils confused healthy foods with favourite ones. These pupils know that the heart sends blood to parts of the body but had not recognised that all parts of the human body need a supply. Many pupils are able to observe carefully and complete drawings to record their learning well. However, progress is limited by the tasks they are given and, consequently, few pupils are able to show a high level of knowledge and understanding.

88. The junior pupils make progress that is satisfactory overall because they have an appropriately wide range of learning including new words and phrases. For example, pupils of Year 3 know the main types of human teeth and their functions. Their drawing is detailed showing accurate observations. In one lesson, they quickly learnt the names of the main bones of the human body, when the teacher showed them using a model skeleton. When prompted, most Year 4 pupils are able to make good deductions about the functions of these different bones and joints. However, there is little work at a high level. Pupils of Year 5 know that the human pulse rate increases with exercise and have experimented to prove this. In discussion, they make appropriate deductions as to the reasons, when the teacher prompts them with wide-ranging questions. However, pupils of Year 6 are not used to devising their own tests and choosing appropriate methods. They have had little or no opportunity to plan and execute experiments, controlling variables and forming their own conclusions. However, their work shows that they are learning a good range of knowledge across the subject, although with little understanding at a high level.

89. In nearly all lessons the pupils' behaviour is good. Only when they become bored because there is too little to challenge their thinking, is behaviour less than good and here the pupils are still obedient and carry out instructions. In the large majority of cases the pupils present their work well and make good efforts to be neat. In many lessons, the pupils discuss their work together and help each other when appropriate. Few lessons offer opportunities for pupils to collaborate and come to joint conclusions, but pupils from an early age are capable of this. Pupils are inexperienced at working independently and are keen to carry out the teachers' instructions. They usually make accurate observations. Sometimes the pupils of lower attainment have difficulty in understanding the tasks set. Their difficulties are often to do with layout and spelling problems. Despite their good general levels of spoken communication, higher attaining pupils find drawing conclusions and making generalisations difficult.

90. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in both key stages. Lessons are well organised and materials appropriately made available. Teachers often make clear their expectations of the pupils' behaviour. Most lessons also have a good pace in which teachers' instruction is lively and moves on to new points quickly. Teachers offer helpful support by praising good efforts and in group work time they support pupils' problems well. Occasionally, teachers diagnose a common difficulty and give extra instruction appropriately. In some lessons, information technology is used well to reinforce the lesson's objectives. For example, two Year 2 pupils used a graph-making program to create immediately a graph of data collected

during a class discussion about healthy foods. Marking is usually accurate and regular and teachers often set homework appropriately.

91. Teaching, however, is not consistent and there are weaknesses. Cumulatively, the weaknesses lead to too much variation between year groups and this contributes to the fluctuation in National Curriculum test results. In three-quarters of lessons, the teachers' expectations are too low and do not sufficiently reflect higher National Curriculum levels. Here the teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject and levels is weak. The work is not matched well to the pupils' prior attainment and here the records of previous learning are weak or insufficiently used. Consequently, the pupils of higher attainment are not challenged enough and gain insufficient independence in predicting, designing, controlling, recording and concluding from experiments. Here the teachers infrequently use questions that will help the pupils to explain their conclusions, rather than describe what has happened. These features were also noted in the last inspection and have not improved significantly.

92. The subject is a priority for development in the current year. A satisfactory action plan has been formed and this includes an audit throughout the school. However, there is no specific mention of training designed for teachers to gain more knowledge of the subject and its National Curriculum levels or in planning for well matched work at several levels of difficulty in the mixed age classes. The experienced co-ordinator helps to train teachers at staff meetings and informally and the assessments made at the end of topics are used to discuss learning standards. Resources have improved and are mostly stored centrally and are appropriately accessible. There is also a number of enriching activities, such as educational visits and a drama group whose presentation strongly supports the curriculum for science.

ART AND DESIGN

93. The pupils' standards of attainment in both key stages are average. Displays around the school show that the pupils have developed satisfactory skills in a range of techniques and media. Standards overall have been maintained since the previous inspection although there is still insufficient three-dimensional work. Three lessons were observed. Judgements on the children's attainment are also based on teachers' planning, work on display and discussion with teachers and pupils.

94. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with good teaching for the younger junior children. In lessons, the activities are supervised well and timely interventions are usually made when the pupils need advice. The children are beginning to develop a sound understanding of the need to evaluate their work, particularly in Key Stage 2. They are able to identify simple improvements as they mix and blend pastels to achieve new and unusual colours, producing different hues and tones as they create imaginary portraits. The children build well on earlier learning to create bold and imaginative facial features. In one lesson, the children reached above average standards because the teacher questioned the work in a manner that enabled the children to evaluate and improve it. In other lessons there is less effective support. Generally there is too much instruction and the children are not able to make enough suggestions themselves. However, on occasions the children are left to work without any constructive support and then they make slower progress. Effective links are made with other curriculum areas, for example, pupils in Years 6 are working with textiles to create stories linked to their work in religious education. Younger pupils in Year 1 make prints using mathematical shapes. A minority of the pupils shows a keen sense of pattern and design.

95. The coordinator has recently reviewed the school's policy and compared it with the optional national scheme of work. The policy and the scheme of work give support to teachers when planning their work. There is not yet enough checking of the standards achieved by the children to ensure consistent progress across the key stages. The school's method of arranging the work into half-termly blocks will give longer lessons and is already proving successful in helping the children complete more complex pieces of work. There are satisfactory resources with a good range of resources for drawing.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

96. One lesson at each key stage was observed and pupils' work in books as well as photographs of previous products and projects were reviewed. This limited evidence shows satisfactory standards. Most pupils of Year 2 have learnt the need to plan and are beginning to develop their ability to make appropriate choices of techniques and materials. They have adequate skills of cutting and joining. The junior pupils also make plans of intended products and, in one class, Year 4 and 5 pupils showed an ability to identify and record problems they had encountered in making them. There is evidence that the pupils have learnt about a limited range of techniques and materials. Standards have improved since the last inspection, but some of the points made then have not improved sufficiently. For example, there is still some underachievement because pupils have not yet gained independent skills to carry out designing and evaluating original ideas.

97. The pupils' work is usually neat and presented well. They enjoy the subject and co-operate well in lessons. The progress of pupils of different ability is similar, because while they make appropriate decisions about materials for example, they are offered a limited range of choices and their products are consequently similar. Behaviour is good and the pupils work with materials carefully.

98. The co-ordinator has recently introduced a new policy of good quality, which outlines the nature of the subject well. There has been some training for teachers but not all are now certain about the key aspects of the programme of study and how they differ from the programme of study for art and design. However, this policy and the planning processes now provide appropriate procedures to promote the subject. The school's resources are of good quality and are stored well following recent re-organisation.

GEOGRAPHY

99. The pupils' standards of attainment have been maintained since the last inspection. They remain average in both key stages. Only two lessons were observed, one in each key stage. The inspection judgements are made from an analysis of the pupils' work, the teachers' planning and discussion with pupils and teachers. The pupils in Year 1 show a satisfactory knowledge of routes and can indicate the direction taken by a story character in their picture maps. They can use satisfactory geographical terminology like through, under and behind when describing their work. In Key Stage 2 the children extend their knowledge of maps and plans through work about the local area. In Year 4 they can describe how to make a journey across the town of Ross. By the time the pupils are in Year 6 they are able to describe routes in detail and identify the major features of the town. They can extract information from brochures and use a CD-ROM to answer questions set by their teacher. In the lesson observed the children applied their literacy skills to produce posters and leaflets to promote awareness of the need to conserve water linked to a Wateraid project. Links are made with the mathematics for example, when collecting data in the form of graphs. All the children, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress but faster progress could be made if the children of different abilities worked at different levels.

100. In the two lessons observed the teaching was satisfactory. The pupils' responses also were at least satisfactory and in one of the lessons they were good. In that lesson, in Year 6, the pupils were highly motivated, worked quickly and behaved very well. The teacher made high demands of the children to understand how people's lives are affected by such conditions as drought or unclean water. The children responded well and considered the implications carefully and with sympathy. Good relationships contributed to the confident and positive atmosphere established in the class.

101. The school has adopted the optional national scheme of work and this is helpful to teachers in ensuring that each year's work builds on that covered the previous year. The coordinator is new and understands that there is not yet sufficient checking of the standards that pupils attain as they move through the school. Overall, there are sufficient resources to support the teaching. The pupils visit sites of interest, for example, several classes use the immediate neighbourhood to extend their work. From time to time pupils make residential visits as part of their environmental work.

HISTORY

102. In Key Stage 1 and 2, the pupils' attainment and their progress are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, the standards have remained the same. Only two lessons were observed during the inspection, one from each key stage. In addition to lesson observation, judgements are based on a scrutiny of the pupils' work, although none was seen from the end of Key Stage 2; resources; displays of work in classrooms; teachers' planning and on discussion with the teachers and pupils.

103. In the two lessons observed the teaching was satisfactory. The teachers have sound subject knowledge and use resources well to maximise the pupils' interest. For example, in Year 2 the children were very enthusiastic when they saw photographs of the teacher as a small child and of her parents and grandparents. The pupils' learning was developed by questioning, which both consolidated and developed their knowledge and understanding of how people change over time. Pupils in Year 3 and 4 can recognise the clothing and lifestyles of the ancient British people and are becoming aware of how the lives of people in the past are different from their own. Their studies of the Roman invasion of Britain show the development of their knowledge. During the lessons the pupils with special educational needs participated fully in the planned activities and made satisfactory progress overall in both key stages. They enjoyed the class discussions and in Year 2 worked at a level they found challenging but could achieve. Some appropriate application of literacy skills is seen in the work of Year 3 and 4 as they describe why people acted as they did.

104. The coordinator is new to the role. The school has adopted the optional national scheme of work to support the teachers' planning and this gives effective help in ensuring the content is covered appropriately. The plans for each half

term do not have enough detail about exactly what the children will understand and be able to do as a result of the lessons. Currently, the quality of the teaching and learning is not monitored, therefore there are no checks on the standards that the pupils attain as they progress through the school. This is an underdeveloped part of the coordinator's role. History is taught for half of each term, alternating with geography. This gives enough time for the curriculum to be taught properly and is a sensible arrangement. Good use is made of educational visits, for example, to a falconry centre. Resources are adequate overall, with good topic boxes to support the teaching and learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

105. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are average in Key Stage 1 and below national expectations in Key Stage 2. The current work of the Year 2 pupils is of a satisfactory standard, but the pupils' records and previous work show that they have only just learned enough overall to reach satisfactory standards. In Key Stage 2, the pupils' previous work and records show that not enough time is given to the subject, and the full range of the programme of study is not covered. At the time of the last inspection the standards were satisfactory in both key stages. The school has maintained the satisfactory standards found in Key Stage 1 during the last inspection and the children are able to use the resources to present their work and are beginning to create tables to show findings. The standards overall in Key Stage 2 have fallen and in several classes the work the children complete is typical of younger pupils. The subject has not received proper attention but it is now identified as a priority in the school development plan and the coordinator has a clearly developed strategy for raising the standards throughout the school.

106. Only one lesson was seen in Key Stage 2 and none were seen in Key Stage 1. The quality of teaching in the Year 6 lesson was satisfactory. The teacher used the resources to good effect. During the lesson the CD-ROM was used to show the class how to scan for information and how to view the relevant sections. The pupils were then to answer questions by searching for information. The pupils are interested and make gains in their knowledge and understanding but the task is insufficiently challenging for the Year 6 pupils. Information and communications technology is occasionally used to support learning in other subjects, but the skill levels required to manage the resources are not demanding enough. The tasks for which the technology is employed could be more easily completed using paper and pencils on occasions. The lack of lessons on the timetables of most classes does not properly support learning, as the children do not improve their skills and understanding at a satisfactory rate.

107. The school is now in a position to make rapid headway in developing the curriculum. The subject is led appropriately. The coordinator has introduced a new record keeping system for Key Stage 2 that includes all requirements and shows when the staff should teach the children specific skills knowledge and understanding. Classroom based equipment is available to apply those skills in other subjects. The coordinator has good subject knowledge and is developing appropriate computer skills in her class. The school is already connected to the Internet and the staff download material for the children to examine. There are no plans as yet for the children to exchange ideas with others using e-mail.

108. The school has adopted the optional national scheme of work and this will support the teachers in selecting and extending activities suitable for the classes. Extensive training for the staff has already begun and more is planned to develop the use of the subject skills in a range of other curriculum subjects. There are sufficient resources in place to lead to significant improvement.

MUSIC

109. Several lessons were observed during the inspection but these were mainly singing lessons. The full range of the programme of study was not seen.

110. The quality of singing in the school is generally good and, in Key Stage 2, it is very good. The pupils of Year 6 sing with a high quality of sound, well in tune and producing a fine tone. They do this with good attention to musical devices such as sustaining notes, rallentando, staccato and dynamics. The pupils use these features of good musicianship even in songs that are new to them, indicating a good sense of musicality. This is also exhibited through their good ability to sing in two parts with good enthusiasm and collaboration. At the end of Key Stage 1, where one lesson was observed, the standards of singing are generally good and pupils have average knowledge and skills in some other aspects, such as playing untuned percussion instruments and identifying the basic form, for example, in an Irish folk tune.

111. At the last inspection standards were average in Key Stage 1 and below average in Key Stage 2, where class singing often lacked pitch and musical opportunities were limited. There have been significant improvements in the juniors' ability to sing well, keeping in tune with a good sense of time. In other aspects of the programme of study such as rhythm work and

playing instruments pupils make slower progress and learning is restricted because some teachers lack sufficient knowledge of the subject and do not extend the pupils' skills. For example, in a lesson with younger juniors, the pupils consolidated their skills of clapping to the music's pulse, but had no opportunity to extend this to rhythmic patterns. In Key Stage 1, standards are similar to those at the time of the last inspection. Throughout the school there is little evidence of composition and the co-ordinator has identified this as a weakness. For example, when pupils of Year 1 and 2 were asked to play briefly an instrument between a repeated chant, these did not suit the interval well indicating insufficient experience in simple compositional responses.

112. Most pupils enjoy the subject and especially when singing and in instrumental lessons they show a strong sense of involvement and collaboration and a desire to improve, making good efforts. Although their singing is equally good, in some classes the boys feel less well included and are more frequently admonished for minor misdemeanours. However, in all classes girls and boys respond well to instructions and concentrate well. This is encouraged by the teaching, which usually has a good pace, and the pupils are well managed.

113. The policy indicates that a published scheme is used as a basis for the curriculum. This scheme provides much guidance for teaching lessons and is appropriate when teachers lack expertise. The policy also outlines an appropriate range of objectives, only some of which are being met. The co-ordinator has observed some lessons and identified a lack of sufficient emphasis on composing, but as yet this weakness has not been corrected. Although teachers' planning is available, the lack of progression in other aspects of class music, such as rhythm work, have not been identified. The scheme is insufficiently well used to provide progress in skills and understanding of some aspects of the subject such as composing, rhythm and appraisal. Teachers have had some training, largely in the school using the knowledgeable co-ordinator and an external consultant. However, teachers' knowledge of the programme of study is insufficient to ensure it is taught fully and more training is needed.

114. Resources have improved since the last inspection and are now adequate and accessibly stored. The school offers a sound range of enhancing activities, such as performance at concerts and in assemblies, and a number of visitors and visits such as collaborative performances with other schools. In addition, there are appropriate opportunities for instrumental tuition in playing the recorder, the violin and woodwind. All these activities help support the pupils' enjoyment and their growth of musicality, especially in singing.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

115. Standards are satisfactory in both key stages. The pupils' learning is satisfactory and often good, because in lessons the pupils are visibly increasing their skills and performance. Pupils in Year 1 can copy and remember a sequence of movements with appropriate quality for their age. Most remember what they have been taught in previous lessons and can demonstrate, for example, what is meant by a pencil jump or a spiral roll. They often show a good awareness of others around and control their movements accordingly. Year 2 pupils show a growing awareness of the need for practice in order to improve the quality of their movements. Most pupils extend their repertoire of movements and invent new ways to make letter shapes with their bodies. About a quarter show a good quality and perform well to the rest of the class. However, a minority lacks secure body control and find it difficult to maintain balance. This is also so for pupils of Years 3 and 4. For example, some of these pupils find it hard to balance well when moving on a 12-centimetre strip. Most pupils learn well in lessons and increase their skills and the quality of their movement. Pupils of Years 4 and 5 are learning to play football. The skills of girls and boys are generally average but a few boys use better strategies for trapping and dribbling the ball. They learn well in lessons and gain skills of handling the ball and passing. Throughout the school the pupils are learning the value of aerobic exercise and how to improve their abilities.

116. Pupils show a good enjoyment of their lessons. Even when the tasks given are challenging, the pupils try hard with enthusiasm. They respond well to teachers' instructions and make good efforts at energetic activity. They persevere when asked and are willing to perform their movements in front of others despite an awareness of the shortcomings. Behaviour is good and sometimes very good. For example, pupils learning how to play football became excited when competitive activities were introduced, but were quick to respond to the teacher's instructions. In Key Stage 2 the pupils collaborated well when asked to form letter shapes together with their bodies. In football, few use the strategies needed to gain advantage through regular passing. The pupils are aware of appropriate safety issues.

117. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and often good. All the lessons observed were taught by external specialist teachers. These teachers have been employed temporarily to teach aspects of the subject to the pupils while the class teachers observe. This is in response to an identified need to improve teachers' confidence in and knowledge of aspects of the programmes of study. This teaching is providing helpful models for the class teachers. On occasions, the teaching is too

directed and pupils are given insufficient time to practise and to explore their own body's capability, especially the youngest pupils. All the lessons are taught with good pace and they often help pupils to make strong progress.

118. A long term plan appropriately allocates aspects of the curriculum to different terms for each class. However, there is little detailed written guidance for teachers who lack confidence in teaching the subject and the help provided by external specialist teachers needs to be summarised by identifying principles of effective teaching of the full programmes of study for the subject. The school has an adequate set of resources and is presently reviewing any further needs. There is a good number of activities that support and enrich pupils' learning. For example there are a number of extra-curricular clubs offering sports such as football, netball and athletics and parents now help run a sports club for pupils under seven. There are also activities such as cricket, swimming and athletics in which pupils take part with other schools.