

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST. THOMAS AQUINAS CATHOLIC COMBINED
SCHOOL**

Bletchley

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110476

Headteacher: Mrs M. Basham

Reporting inspector: Mrs J. Catlin
(OFSTED No: 21685)

Dates of inspection: 27th – 30th November 2000

Inspection number: 224875

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First and Middle
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 – 12 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	St Mary's Avenue Bletchley Milton Keynes
Postcode:	MK3 5DT
Telephone number:	01908 373977
Fax number:	01908 373977
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Father K. O'Driscoll
Date of previous inspection:	January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Jenny Catlin 21685	Registered inspector	Science English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
Robert Folks 19692	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mike Duggan 30075	Team inspector	English Art and design Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Beth Olney 20869	Team inspector	Geography History Equal opportunities	
Aileen King 22113	Team inspector	Children aged under five Information and communication technology Music Physical education	
Robert Green 31376	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology	

The inspection contractor was:

PkR Educational Consultants Ltd
6 Sherman Road
Bromley
Kent
BR1 3JH

Tel: 020 8289 1923/4/5

Fax: 020 8289 1919

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

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Combined School has 257 pupils on roll and is average size for schools of this type. The proportion of pupils claiming entitlement to free school meals is just over 5 per cent, below the national average. One pupil speaks English as an additional language. This is low compared to most schools. There are 27 children aged under five in the reception classes. Children's overall attainment on entry is average. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs, just over 8 per cent, is well below average. There is less than 0.5 per cent of pupils with a statement of special educational need, below the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Thomas Aquinas is an effective and improving school. Standards in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology are above the national average and, overall, have improved. Teaching is good overall and has also improved. Strong leadership and management by the headteacher give a clear direction to the work of the school. The value for money provided, taking account of the good improvement since the previous inspection and its overall effectiveness, is good.

What the school does well

- Above average standards in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology throughout the school
- 73% of the teaching is good or better
- Very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development
- Pupils' personal development and relationships are very good
- Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good
- Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good
- Strong leadership and management by the headteacher

What could be improved

- The role of subject managers in monitoring and evaluating standards, teaching and learning
- Pupils' use of the library to develop research skills

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The previous inspection, in January 1997, found the school provided a satisfactory education. All the key issues for action identified at that time have been dealt with effectively. The quality of teaching has improved considerably; there is now good long term planning for the work of the school which has been clearly communicated to all staff, governors and parents; the leadership issues of subject managers have been satisfactorily addressed and there is more effective planning for school improvement; there is good use of assessment to monitor pupils' progress and ensure that lesson planning is matched to pupils' learning needs; there is a very good approach to the management of pupils' personal development and behaviour and the information provided for parents is good. Therefore, the overall improvement in the school since the last inspection is good and the school's capacity for further improvement is also good.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	A	B	A	A
Mathematics	B	A	C	C
Science	B	A	B	B

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

The above table shows that standards in English were well above the national average at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2000. In science, standards were above the national average and in mathematics they were close to the average. When compared with similar schools, i.e. those schools that have the same proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, standards were maintained.

When the school's end of Key Stage 2 results in earlier years are taken into account they show a consistent pattern of results that are above the national average, and frequently well above, in all three subjects. The school has been very successful in meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs. Current achievement in English, mathematics and science is above average at the end of Key Stage 2. Standards in information and communication technology are above average. Targets set for English and mathematics are appropriately challenging and include an increase in the proportion of pupils expected to achieve both level 4 and the higher level 5. The school is very likely to achieve these targets. Pupils have maintained these above average standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 7. Standards in art and design, design and technology, geography, history, music, and physical education are sound.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The pupils enjoy coming to school and taking part in activities. They enjoy learning and want to gain more knowledge.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils are well behaved. They move in an orderly way around the school. There are no incidents of aggression or bullying.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is of a very high standard and relationships within the school are good.
Attendance	Attendance has improved considerably in the last academic year and is now in line with the national average. This improvement has continued into the current term.

Personal development has improved considerably since the last inspection and is now a significant strength of the school. Relationships within the school are good. Pupils form constructive relationships with each other and their relationships with staff and those between staff create a very effective learning environment. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Opportunities are given in class assemblies and in lessons for pupils to consider the effects of their actions on others. They have respect for other people's views and feelings and for property. A family feeling comes across strongly.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-12 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Very good	Good

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

Across the school, the quality of teaching is good with many very good and excellent features. It is excellent in 3 per cent of lessons, very good in 22 per cent, good in 48 per cent and satisfactory in 27 per cent. There was no unsatisfactory teaching in the 59 lessons observed. This is a considerable improvement since the previous inspection when one third of the teaching was unsatisfactory. The skills of literacy and numeracy are effectively planned for and are taught well and enable pupils to make overall good progress in Key Stage 2. Particular strengths in excellent and very good teaching include high expectations of pupils and the sharing of learning objectives with pupils. This ensures that pupils are very clear about what they are to learn and how successful they have been. These strengths in teaching enable pupils to make good and often very good progress and to have a good knowledge of their own learning. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good because teachers' lesson planning effectively addresses individual needs and therefore enables these pupils to make good progress. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, there are weaknesses in the use of time, which results in a slowing of the pace during the lessons. Therefore, pupils are not always actively engaged in the lesson because they are not concentrating and fail to make the progress of which they are capable.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum provides pupils with a good range of broad, balanced and relevant learning experiences to promote high standards.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs have equality of access to all areas of the curriculum, including extra-curricular activities. Good planning and effective use of resources enable pupils to work successfully towards their identified targets.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language is good and she is included fully in all activities.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school's overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good, which is a significant improvement since the last inspection.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has very good arrangements for ensuring the welfare of its pupils. This is a significant strength. The school provides a safe, secure environment for its pupils.

Parents have a positive view of the school and a close partnership exists. They are much involved in the work of the school and make a considerable contribution towards their children's learning. They receive good information about school events and the school's curriculum.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher has made a significant impact on the strategic work of the school since her appointment. Subject managers are now taking a greater lead in developing their subject areas.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are now much more involved in the life and work of the school and play a strategic role in its development. All statutory responsibilities are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Appropriate priorities for improvement have been identified effectively. There is a shared commitment by all to improving standards.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are satisfactory overall. There is effective formal evaluation of the cost effectiveness of spending decisions against standards of work.

The match of teaching and support staff to meet the needs of the National Curriculum is satisfactory overall. Support staff receive training to enable them to give good assistance to the pupils. Most resources are suitable and of good quality, although larger equipment and apparatus for the younger children are not particularly suitable for them to develop confidence in their abilities. The school's accommodation is good and used effectively to promote the pupils' learning. The very good leadership of the headteacher gives a clear and positive direction to the work of the school. The delegation of subject responsibilities ensures that all teachers are encouraged to make an effective contribution to the curriculum. The school is effective in ensuring best value for money.

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's progress and achievements • Behaviour in school • Welfare of the children • Management of the school • Approachability of staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework • Information about children's progress • Links with parents • Extra-curricular activities

Sixty-one parents attended the meeting for parents and over half the questionnaires were returned. Inspection judgements support parents' positive views of the school. Inspectors agree that there is slight variation in the amount of homework from class to class but it is considered to be satisfactory overall. Inspectors judge that parents are well informed about their children's progress. Annual reports are of a high standard and so are the more recent news bulletins. Links with parents are generally good. Extra-curricular activities have improved since the current headteacher arrived and the range is now satisfactory for the size of the school and the age range of pupils. Therefore, inspection judgements do not support parents' concerns.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The attainment of children aged under five, when they enter the reception classes is average. By the time children enter Key Stage 1, the majority are likely to achieve the nationally expected early learning goals in the six areas of learning known as communications, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development, creative development and personal, social and emotional development.
2. At the end of Key Stage 1, the average National Curriculum points scores for 2000, show that in comparison with all schools nationally, the school's performance in reading is below the national average, in writing it is above the national average and in mathematics it is close to the national average. There are considerable variations in results from year to year so no overall trend is discernible. However, 2000 results are a significant improvement on those for 1999 in writing. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. There was no evidence during the week of inspection to support below average test results in reading for this cohort of pupils.
3. At the end of Key Stage 2, the average National Curriculum points figures for 2000, show that in comparison with all schools nationally, the school's performance in English was well above the national average, in science it was above and in mathematics it was close to the national average. The trend in the school's average National Curriculum points scores in recent years is broadly in line with the national trend. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
4. The proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is not an accurate reflection of the socio-economic background of pupils at the school. The school admits pupils from a wide area and many pupils come from less favourable socio-economic backgrounds. Grades for similar schools have therefore been adjusted to show comparisons with schools in a similar context. Results show that compared with these schools standards were maintained.
5. The school's targets, set in conjunction with the local authority, were exceeded last year. Targets have been set for the next two years and represent a challenging but realistic increase in the number of pupils attaining national standards. The school is confident that, with the existing implementation of the literacy hour and numeracy strategy, they will achieve these targets and inspection evidence supports this view.
6. Inspection evidence shows that by the ages of seven, eleven and twelve, pupils will attain above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Standards in information and communication technology are good. Standards in art and design, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education are satisfactory.
7. Pupils, including those with English as an additional language, make good progress overall in both key stages and satisfactory progress in Year 7, both in the lessons observed and as seen in previously recorded work. In almost all lessons observed, progress was at least satisfactory and often good and very good.
8. Pupils with special educational needs make overall good progress in relation to their targets. These targets include the development of their literacy and numeracy skills and

also address behavioural difficulties when appropriate. This good progress reflects the findings of the previous inspection. Pupils' progress is effectively monitored and assessed against the targets on their individual education plans. Their self-esteem and confidence also improve as they move through the school. A few achieve or nearly achieve the national standard in English, mathematics and science at the age of seven and eleven.

9. Higher attaining pupils in the school make good progress overall. This is a considerable improvement since the previous inspection, when it was judged that these pupils were not being sufficiently challenged to enable them to make good progress and achieve their full potential.
10. Literacy skills are developed effectively in all subjects, for example, in mathematics and history. There are good strategies for the teaching of numeracy skills across the school and across subjects, for example, in design and technology.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. The pupils have good attitudes to learning and are well behaved. Their personal development is of a very high standard and relationships within the school are good. Attendance is in line with the national average.
12. The pupils enjoy coming to school and taking part in the activities of the school. They enjoy learning and want to gain more knowledge. They are friendly, self-assured and courteous and make visitors to the school feel welcome. They socialise well and work co-operatively in groups as well as individually. Under-fives make a good start and their attitudes and behaviour and early examples of independence are good.
13. In lessons, attitudes are good overall. The pupils expect to work hard and show enthusiasm for their lessons and respond well to the teachers. Outside lessons, the pupils are well behaved. They move in an orderly way around the school and although enthusiastic at playtimes and lunchtimes, there are no incidents of aggression or bullying. The air of enthusiasm is present in whatever they are doing. Parents feel that the school has high expectations of behaviour and this was confirmed during the inspection. There have been no exclusions. This has improved since the last inspection and there was no instance of a significant minority of poor behaviour as identified in the last inspection.
14. There are many examples of pupils showing initiative and taking responsibility in the school. Year 7 pupils have a list of responsibilities, which range from looking after the computer room, overhead projector and screen to being responsible for the hippo bins in the playground. There is an impressive list of activities to give a very wide range of opportunities for personal and social development. These include organising and running an Old Tyme Music Hall and Tea Dance for senior citizens in the area, developing the courtyard, running a high standard school newspaper and planning, auditioning and organising the School Talent Show. Personal development has improved considerably since the last inspection and is now a significant strength of the school. Relationships within the school are good and the pupils form constructive relationships with each other. Relationships with staff and between staff create a very effective learning environment. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Opportunities are given in class assemblies and in lessons for pupils to consider the effects of their actions on others and it is evident from their actions that they have respect for other people's views and feelings and for property. The family feeling comes across strongly. The school's approach to pupils with special educational needs is inclusive to ensure that they are an integral part of the school community.

15. Attendance has improved considerably in the last academic year and is now in line with the national average. This improvement has continued into the current term. Registration is efficiently undertaken and procedures comply with statutory requirements. There is very little evidence of lateness.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. Across the school, the quality of teaching is good, with many very good and excellent features. It is excellent in 3 per cent of lessons, very good in 22 per cent, good in 48 per cent and satisfactory in 27 per cent. The quality of teaching in literacy across the school is good and in numeracy, it is very good in Key Stage 1, good in Key Stage 2 and satisfactory in Year 7.
17. The quality of teaching for children under five is good. Weaknesses identified at the time of the previous inspection have been resolved and consequently teaching has improved considerably since then. Teachers have a clear understanding of how children learn; they plan work carefully to meet the needs of each child. Teachers' expectations are high for all children and their management of children's behaviour is very good, which results in positive attitudes to learning. They develop children's understanding of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour very well and pupils are actively encouraged to share their work and successes. Children are continuously assessed and this, together with their baseline assessment results and ongoing testing forms the basis of a good range of information which is used well to set individual targets and inform future teaching plans. Good use is made of the classroom assistants and they have regular involvement in assessing and recording children's progress.
18. At Key Stage 1, 6 per cent of the teaching is excellent, 53 per cent is very good and a further 41 per cent is good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have a secure command of the subjects to be taught and the planning for lessons specifies the content to be taught to the whole class, to specified groups and to individual pupils. Lessons incorporate appropriately high expectations and challenge for pupils with different levels of attainment. There are effective links with what pupils have already achieved and new learning makes progressive demands on them. Relationships are good and pupils are expected to have high standards of behaviour. Pupils demonstrate good attitudes to their work and are keen to complete work to an acceptable standard within set time limits. Pupils are on occasions given choices about how the work is to be done and this makes a positive contribution to their independent learning skills. Most lessons have a brisk pace and resources, pupil groupings and adult assistance are all well managed and used to promote the learning of specific knowledge or skills and to keep pupils on task. Teachers know their pupils well and their lesson planning identifies how particular aspects of the work will be assessed and the evidence that will be gathered in order to measure pupils' attainment and progress. Homework is set and caters appropriately for pupils of differing abilities.

19. Teaching has improved in Key Stage 2 and Year 7 since the previous inspection as the proportion of very good and excellent teaching has increased noticeably and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Four per cent of the teaching is excellent, 15 per cent is very good, 38 per cent is good and the remaining 42 per cent is satisfactory. In the best lessons, the planning includes details of how the class will be organised for particular purposes, which resources will be needed and which tasks allocated to other adults. The method of recording outcomes of each activity is planned for, so that pupils can present their results in different ways and thus demonstrate a variety of skills. Resources are tidily stored, clearly labelled and offer easy access for the teacher and pupils alike. Care is taken to ensure that the equipment is cared for and that pupils take responsibility for obtaining and clearing away resources. This contributes well to pupils' independent learning skills and to their moral development. Sometimes, other adults are used in an instructional capacity with particular groups or individuals; they are usually well briefed and supported by the class teacher. Teachers are aware of the need to obtain and use accurate assessment information in order to provide appropriately challenging work. There is some very good practice in evaluating the success of lessons by teachers. Best practice includes identifying what progress individual pupils have made and how the methods and content for the next lesson need to be adjusted. Overall, this is done well across the school.
20. The weaknesses in teaching identified at the time of the previous inspection are no longer evident: the school has effectively dealt with the issues relating to low expectations, the slow pace of lessons and the poor match of work to pupils' capabilities. Teachers now contribute well to helping pupils review and evaluate their work in order to recognise their strengths and weaknesses and improve their performance. This development has had a positive effect on pupils' learning and has enabled pupils to improve their attainment. There is now good use of assessment information to ensure that the work pupils are asked to complete is well matched to their capabilities and gives teachers the information they need to plan further learning. Learning objectives are now shared clearly with pupils in most lessons which results in pupils being very clear about what they are to learn and how successful they have been. This makes a good contribution to pupils' interest and involvement in their own learning. A particular strength of the teaching across the school is teachers' lesson planning and the use of assessments.
21. Overall, teachers have a good understanding of the National Curriculum in English, mathematics and science and a satisfactory knowledge of all other subjects. Teachers throughout the school encourage pupils to take reading books home and, where homework is set, it is often used appropriately to support pupils' learning. A very positive aspect of teaching across the school is the very good classroom management and discipline, which most teachers maintain. There is a consistent approach to behaviour, which enhances the quality of pupils' learning. When marking pupils' work, teachers assess the work thoroughly and constructively and their comments are usually sufficiently diagnostic to help pupils know what they have done well and what they need to work on to improve. There are good quality, long-term written curriculum plans to provide a framework for teachers' lesson planning, and ensure that work becomes more demanding across and through year groups. Across the school, there is good development of literacy skills and these are taught effectively, with a specific emphasis on phonic skills. The numeracy sessions are usually well taught, particularly in Key Stage 1 and Year 6, and teachers question pupils very carefully to check their understanding of the work covered. Overall, the use of classroom assistants to support pupils in their learning is good. However, best use is not always made of their skills; this is particularly noticeable in the introductory sessions of literacy and numeracy lessons.

22. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, there are weaknesses in the use of time, which results in a slow pace to the lessons. Therefore, pupils are not always actively engaged in the lesson and they fail to make the progress of which they are capable. On occasions, this slowing of the pace leads to a lack of concentration which is not always picked up by the teachers.
23. There is a good working partnership between class teachers and the special educational needs co-ordinator, which facilitates the prompt identification of pupils with learning difficulties or behaviour problems. Their needs are efficiently assessed and an appropriate level of support is provided. The individual education plans, which are drawn up for all pupils on the special educational needs register, are used effectively by class teachers to guide lesson planning. Targets are clearly defined and regularly reviewed. Work is set at an appropriate level across the curriculum and pupils receive good in-class support from classroom assistants. The special educational needs co-ordinator and class teachers provide well-planned and clearly focussed teaching for pupils who are withdrawn for additional work in literacy and mathematics. Progress is carefully monitored against the targets set on the individual education plans.
24. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers are skilful at briefing education assistants. The good support provided by these dedicated assistants makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning. Teachers are involved fully with the special educational needs co-ordinator in writing individual educational plans, which clearly outline the way the curriculum is to be adapted to meet identified needs.

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

25. The curriculum provides pupils with a good range of broad, balanced and relevant learning experiences to promote high standards. Part of the school's aim, 'to promote a positive and stimulating environment in which children learn', is supported well by its work. Its mission statement, 'I have called you by your name, you are mine' (Isaiah 43) is lived out actively and provides a good basis for pupils to become life-long learners and useful and caring members of society. Pupils with special educational needs have equality of access to all areas of the curriculum, including extra-curricular activities. Good planning and effective use of resources enable pupils to work successfully towards their identified targets.
26. Judgements in the previous inspection identified a number of areas for improvement, including limited provision for design and technology and information and communication technology. All these issues have been addressed thoroughly and successfully. A rigorous review of the curriculum led to the preparation of a framework, which contains guidance and structure and has helped to raise the aspirations and expectations of the school community. Extensive staff training in literacy and numeracy has ensured the effective implementation of these strategies. The curriculum for children who are under five is good and planned well within the areas of learning for this age.

27. Personal, social and health education is promoted throughout the school and is a considerable strength. Circle time is used effectively to promote the pupils' self-esteem. Sex education and drugs awareness are dealt with in Key Stages 2 and 3 during science and specific health lessons and on a regular basis by the school nurse and police respectively. Prior to some specific programmes, parental approval is sought. Statutory requirements are met in all subjects and all pupils have equal access to all areas of the curriculum.
28. There are policies and schemes of work for all subjects and the school follows the Catholic Diocesan Syllabus for religious education. It has adopted the planning frameworks in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, and this supports the planning in other subjects. The schemes of work for each subject set out clearly the achievements pupils need to make at each stage of their learning in order to reach the expected levels by the ages of seven and eleven. Year 7 pupils follow the programmes of study in the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum. The school is effective in fostering pupils' intellectual, spiritual and physical development, preparing them well for secondary education. Very good links have been established with the local post-primary school, which ensures a smooth transition into secondary education.
29. The school has an appropriate policy statement for equal opportunities, which is known and accepted by parents and staff. The aims of the policy are reflected in the school's curriculum and in the grouping of pupils in class. Staff take care to ensure all pupils have equal access to the curriculum and the full range of the school's activities. Ethnic minority pupils fit in well and there is no evidence of racial discrimination. Teachers give girls and boys equal opportunities to respond in discussions. They are watchful that none are disadvantaged for any reason. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and helps to ensure effective learning. The teaching for these pupils is closely linked to their individual education plans. They receive good quality support from teachers and classroom assistants. A register is kept of the more able pupils, which records their strengths and abilities. The headteacher works with these pupils on a regular basis, ensuring that their needs are met. There is good provision for a pupil for whom English is an additional language and this ensures she is included fully in all activities. The school effectively monitors pupils' achievements by gender, attainment, background and ethnicity.
30. Some parents consider the range of extra-curricular activities to be limited. However, the recent introduction of the summer games sessions and the formation of a football club have increased the activities. There is now a satisfactory range of extra-curricular events, which enhance pupils' learning, especially in physical, personal and social education. These activities include football, netball, water sports, baseball, athletics, cookery, music and a sign language club. In the summer term, a pupil from the school became national baseball champion in the primary sector. Educational visits include trips to Courtyard Arts Centre, Milton Keynes Theatre, Lunt Fort in Coventry, Kingswood Centre in Cromer, and Caldecotte Water Sports Centre, all of which enhance the curriculum.
31. The school places great emphasis on community involvement and has formed strong links within the parish, which contribute well to pupils' learning. Large numbers of parents, grandparents and local residents attend school assemblies on a regular basis. A project, based on an 'Old Time Music Hall' style function, has benefited the integration of the local community. Other organised events such as quiz nights, talent competitions and fashion shows also contribute to community involvement, as do the regular planned visits of the local police into the school.

32. The school's overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good, which is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The life of the school reflects all aspects of Christian values well, and these are reinforced strongly through the effective balance of daily teacher-directed and free-choice activities.
33. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. From entry into school, the pupils are given a very good range of opportunities to develop insights into the needs and feelings of others. They are encouraged to reflect sensitively, are taught about the beauty of art, music and the natural world and have many opportunities to express their thoughts and feelings. Such an example was observed in a Year 5 science lesson on life cycles in flowers when pupils opened a sepal to reveal seeds. Other examples included reflection and meditation times before morning and afternoon lessons and during whole school assemblies. Opportunities for spiritual development are also planned into circle time, and the courtyard and rainbow room are used effectively as areas where older pupils can sit and ponder during break-times. Assemblies include prayers and quiet moments in which pupils can reflect on their own lives and those of others.
34. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. It pervades all aspects of the daily life of the school, fully reflects its aims and is supported by all members of the school community. All adults and pupils work hard at achieving the high standard of behaviour seen throughout the school. A strong sense of morality underpins the aims and ethos of the school, which ensures that pupils distinguish readily between right and wrong. They are well aware of the responsibility which they have for their own actions and show concern for the well-being of others. Older pupils were involved in drawing up the 'anti-bullying' and 'respect time' policy. Effective opportunities are provided in lessons and circle time to discuss moral issues such as caring for younger members in a family, the importance of collecting money to help people in developing countries, or supporting the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Pupils have a strong sense of protection for the environment and are aware of the importance of recycling used materials. They are taught from an early age the value of honesty, fair play and truth, and to respect the belongings of others.
35. The provision for pupils' social development is very good, which is a significant improvement from the last inspection. All adults provide very good role models and pupils are treated with unfailing courtesy. Regular achievement assemblies celebrate both individual and school successes and build up a positive community spirit. The team point system recognises and rewards hard work and good behaviour. It develops the pupils' positive and enthusiastic attitudes to each other and to their learning successfully. Many older pupils are given opportunities to take an active part in school life. Pupils in Years 6 and 7, for example, assume responsibilities for developing the courtyard, organising fund-raising events for needy children in Mozambique and Jamaica and for selling cards at parents' evenings. They also read to and write stories for younger pupils in Key Stage 1.
36. Many other planned activities support the development of social skills, for example, the annual residential week in Kingswood, Cromer, for Years 5, 6 and 7 pupils and numerous visits to such places as Sulgrave Manor and the Lunt Fort in Coventry supporting the studies of the Victorians and Romans respectively. Specific Year 7 responsibilities include publishing and distributing the school's termly news bulletin, ensuring a litter-free school environment and involvement in planning sports days.
37. The school's provision for cultural development is good. Many lessons give pupils a good sense of their own heritage as well as that of other cultures from around the world. In geography pupils learn about other lands and the ways of life and types of

industry associated with them. In religious education pupils learn about other major world faiths and their festivals and ceremonies. Art provides good opportunities for pupils to enjoy the work of famous artists such as Monet, Degas and Cezanne. Music from different eras is played at the beginning and end of assemblies. In two physical education lessons observed, pupils executed Asian dance sequences as they interpreted Bengali music. Outside visits, which further promote cultural experiences, include regular trips to the local parish church, to a Hindu Temple in London, and to local museums and theatres. The most significant impact this term has been the organised workshops by an African artist-in-residence which gave the pupils an immediate insight into his country's way of life, while creating a range of clay masks. An array of displays around the school, mainly containing multi-cultural artefacts, promotes an interest in and an understanding of other cultures.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

38. The school has very good arrangements for ensuring the welfare of its pupils and for child protection and this is a significant strength of the school.
39. The school provides a safe, secure environment for its pupils. The school and governors make regular inspections of the grounds and premises. Health and safety procedures are very good and satisfy all statutory requirements. The pupils are well known to the staff and they are well looked after at all times, including lunchtimes when the supervisor's role is very well developed. Good support is provided by outside visiting specialists. Procedures for dealing with accidents are very good. There are two fully qualified first aiders and five staff have taken the Emergency at Work course and there is a well-equipped medical room next to the office. The procedures work very effectively.
40. The last inspection criticised the implementation of procedures for management of behaviour. Since the new headteacher arrived in January, new procedures have been introduced which are working very well and are consistently applied. There is no evidence of any bullying at any time. The procedures for promoting and monitoring attendance have been tightened up, are now closely monitored, and are well promoted with a resultant and continuing improvement in attendance. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good and have improved considerably since the last inspection.
41. The high level of personal support and care for pupils has a positive impact on their learning and personal development and is a significant strength of the school. The school's provision enables the pupils to feel secure, valued and to grow in confidence and self-esteem.
42. The school's procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. This shows considerable improvement since the last inspection when arrangements for assessing attainment and progress were unsatisfactory. All of the inconsistencies have been removed and assessment now has a high priority in the school.

43. The school has effective systems to identify, assess, support and monitor the needs of pupils with special educational needs, whether they are physical, behavioural or learning difficulties. Timely and appropriate help is given to all pupils, including the highest attainers. The school responds to requirements, as outlined in pupils' statements of special educational needs, and fully implements the Code of Practice.
44. Good use of assessment is made to guide the pupils' learning. All medium-term plans and daily lesson plans highlight opportunities for assessing learning. The school has good arrangements for assessing pupils from entry to the school. It uses baseline assessments in the reception year, end of Key Stage 1 National Curriculum tasks and tests in Year 2, optional tests in English and mathematics at the end of Years 3, 4, and 5, and end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests in Year 6. The school uses this detailed information to track and monitor the pupils' attainment and to set targets for year groups and individual pupils. The quality and use of assessment in daily lessons is good. The headteacher is the assessment co-ordinator and she has had a significant impact on the good development of rigorous assessment and marking policies and in establishing good quality practice.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

45. Parents have a positive view of the school and a close partnership exists. They are much involved with the work of the school and make a considerable contribution towards their children's learning. They receive good information about school events and the school's curriculum.
46. The parents support the school and are happy with the way it is performing. This was made clear at the pre-inspection parents' meeting, which had a high turnout, and by the numerous questionnaires returned.
47. The school provides good information to keep the parents informed of their children's progress. Annual reports are very detailed and identify individual targets for improvement. There are also further targets for each pupil on their individual rainbow targets cards. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are informed regularly about their child's progress and are involved fully in reviews, where appropriate.
48. The school's prospectus is informative and is supplemented by the annual governors' report to parents. A high quality newspaper is sent out and meetings are held from time to time to help the parents understand aspects of the curriculum. Parents have the opportunity to attend a meeting three times a year to discuss their child's progress and to examine their child's work. There is a very good home/school agreement which is signed by the school, pupil and parents.
49. A number of parents help in the school and with outside trips. The Parent Teacher Association has helped to raise considerable amounts of money for the school and this has been used to fund the very attractive courtyard.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

50. The headteacher was appointed in January 2000 and since then has made a significant impact on the strategic work of the school. At the last inspection, the report stated that a mixture of staffing difficulties and the heavy workload of senior staff had led to weaknesses in the management of the school and had held up progress. Tasks and responsibilities were not allocated equitably and the headteacher held too many co-ordinating responsibilities. Subject managers are now taking a greater lead in

developing their subject areas and much of the day-to-day administrative work has now been devolved to the secretarial staff who are competent and efficient. However, although some staff are developing their role in managing their subjects this is not always a pro-active role. Many now monitor teachers' termly and weekly planning to ensure that pupils build on earlier learning and make progress. However, many subject managers have only recently begun to evaluate standards and identify necessary developments needed in order to raise standards further in their subject.

51. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and very well managed. Liaison and relationships between the special needs co-ordinator, class teachers and classroom assistants are very good. Identification, support and monitoring procedures are organised effectively. Support for pupils is provided within class and by withdrawal to a designated special educational needs room. This system works well. Resources are good and are always close at hand during all lessons.
52. The headteacher is very clear about the school's core purpose of achieving high standards of attainment and discipline through good teaching and good care of pupils. She has introduced effective systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers are observed in class by the headteacher and this is of benefit to staff, helping them to evaluate their effectiveness in the classroom and thereby raise standards. Subject managers support the headteacher in examining pupils' work and scrutinising lesson planning. The headteacher interviews teachers regularly to discuss their subject area and to set targets for achievement. She analyses test results and uses them to inform further planning and action. She consults widely and seeks the views of staff, governors and parents. While the leadership and management of the headteacher are very good, her workload is very heavy without the active support of subject managers. The first cycle of appraisal has taken place but the next stage has been delayed by the school awaiting further national guidance. The planning for staff development within the school is good and the available grant has been used well. Training for teachers has been a priority and all teachers have had the opportunity for training, both for the benefit of the pupils and for their own development. There is effective induction for new staff assisted by an experienced mentor.
53. The school development plan is a useful tool for managing improvement. At the time of the previous inspection it was judged as having limited value because it did not define the targets and the criteria for judging their achievement precisely enough. Priorities for improvement have now been identified effectively and there are very appropriate areas for development, including raising standards in pupils' writing, the development of information and communication technology, the implementation of the new Foundation Stage for reception age pupils and the continuing development of subject managers' roles. There are good systems to judge how successful these developments have been.
54. At the time of the previous inspection, there was a lack of a long-term plan and a clear strategic focus for the work of the school. Governors are now much more involved in the life and work of the school and play a strategic role in its development. The chair of governors gives a good lead and he is well supported by the rest of the governing body in their understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are now effective in fulfilling all statutory requirements and there is a shared commitment to improving standards.
55. The financial planning is thorough although the school in the last financial year operated with an increasing budget deficit. The local education authority provided support because the situation arose through a depleted and unexpected drop in numbers of the previous year's Year 7 pupils and long-term teacher sickness. By the end of the

current financial year there will be a small budget surplus and the school is confident that future financial planning will allow for unforeseen shortfalls in the number of pupils. The school makes appropriate efforts to seek best value when purchasing goods and services. The school office makes good use of information and communication technology in managing the school's financial records and has Internet and e-mail access to local education authority services. There is effective formal evaluation of the cost effectiveness of spending decisions against standards of work produced by the pupils. A good example of this is the considerable improvement in pupils' information and communication technology skills as a result of the setting up of the computer suite.

56. The match of teaching and support staff to the needs of the National Curriculum is satisfactory overall. There is a range of expertise amongst the staff. They have specific skills, for example in mathematics, music and religious education. Support staff have received training to enable them to give good assistance to the pupils, for example, in information and communication technology. At present, there is no deputy headteacher, although it is intended to appoint a senior member of staff on two terms' secondment with specific responsibility for information and communication technology. There are plans to increase subject expertise in the teaching of Year 7.
57. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall; they are adequate in English, mathematics but in science, some aspects are not well catered for, such as magnetism. Equipment for physical education is sufficient; some resources have been purchased recently and are used effectively to promote the pupils' learning. Most resources are suitable and of good quality, although larger equipment and apparatus for the younger children are not suitable for them to develop confidence in their abilities. Musical instruments are sufficient and of good quality; they are looked after properly, but are of limited range. With the computer suite and other resources for information and communication technology, this subject is now very well resourced.
58. Subject managers conduct regular reviews and keep a close watch on the adequacy, access and use of resources. They are responsible for maintaining a good balance between classes and subject areas, and for ordering new equipment as necessary. The library is not so well managed and there are few systems in place to develop the necessary library skills and to support pupils with their research. Overall, the resources are used efficiently to raise achievement and to ensure best value for money; for example, the school makes effective use of the money allocated to support pupils with special educational needs and, as a result, these pupils make good progress. All other available grants are managed well and linked to the priorities identified within the school development plan.
59. The school's accommodation is good and well cared for, and is used effectively to promote the pupils' learning. Various projects, for example the courtyard, have enhanced the environment. Many areas indoors have been revamped and made comfortable and useful. The grounds around the school are of good size and offer plenty of space.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

60. In order to build on the existing standards in the school, the governors, headteacher and staff should:
- (1) Develop the roles of subject managers to enable them to evaluate teaching and learning and thereby assist the headteacher in her drive to raise standards throughout the school; (paragraphs 50, 85, 95,103, 109, 113, 140 and 146)
 - (2) Improve library facilities in order to:
 - Enable pupils to develop their library and reference skills;
 - Increase opportunities for pupils to develop independence in learning and personal study. (paragraphs 58 and 78)

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

- I. Ensure that resources for the physical development of children aged under five are suitable for this age range. (paragraph 61)
- II. Provide pupils with more opportunities for problem solving in mathematics. (paragraph 89)
- III. Improve the range of resources in science. (paragraph 103)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	59
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	19

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	22	48	27	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y7
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/A	257
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	N/A	14

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y7
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/A	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/A	23

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	15

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.8
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	14	18	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	14	13
	Girls	16	16	16
	Total	27	30	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (76)	94 (73)	94 (94)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	13	13
	Girls	17	18	16
	Total	29	31	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (79)	94 (94)	88 (94)
	National	84 (82)	82 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	12	15	27

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	8	11
	Girls	14	12	15
	Total	22	20	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81 (84)	74 (91)	96 (88)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	8	9
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	21	21	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	78 (84)	78 (91)	85 (88)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	7
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	0
Indian	4
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	197
Any other minority ethnic group	5

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 – Y7

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.7
Average class size	28.6

Education support staff: YR – Y7

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	97

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	N/A
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	N/A

Total number of education support staff	N/A
Total aggregate hours worked per week	N/A

Number of pupils per FTE adult	N/A
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	384,597
Total expenditure	403,150
Expenditure per pupil	1,613
Balance brought forward from previous year	-3,309
Balance carried forward to next year	-21,862

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	257
Number of questionnaires returned	126

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	71	27	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	48	46	5	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	45	0	1	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	50	10	2	4
The teaching is good.	46	49	3	1	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	39	42	12	6	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67	29	2	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	24	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	40	44	13	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	59	35	0	0	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	45	1	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	16	33	22	16	14

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

61. Provision by the school for children aged under five is good. At the time of the inspection there were 27 children aged under five in the two reception classes. These classes provide them with a secure and caring environment, with daily routines firmly established. The programme of activities is very well planned on the basis of the recommended areas of learning for this age and fully supports the children's intellectual, physical and social development. Baseline assessments are completed when the children first start school and these show average attainment with a broad spectrum of abilities within this. Some children are very able and have good skills in communication, language and literacy, whilst others need support in their learning. The children are working well overall towards the early learning goals and generally, they make good progress because of the good teaching they receive. In physical development, progress is satisfactory, although teaching remains good, some resources are not specifically for young children, and this restricts some of the opportunities provided for them.

Personal, social and emotional development

62. Most children come into school with average skills in personal, social and emotional development. They are working very well and by the end of the reception year most children will achieve the early learning goals in this area. They are quickly given encouragement to help them develop their confidence and social skills. The children are secure in the school environment and have good attitudes towards their learning and each other; they show respect and consideration for others and behave well. They are responsive to their teachers and keen to be helpful. In both of the reception classes the children work and play well together, they are learning to co-operate and negotiate, sharing fairly and taking turns, for example when playing with dough and a range of appropriate implements. They are developing an awareness of both their own and other people's feelings and are keen to participate in the range of activities provided. There are very secure relationships in both classes and the support staff work well with the children to enhance this atmosphere of co-operation and respect. The children are developing an awareness of both their own beliefs and those of others and there are regular opportunities for them to be involved in reflection and careful thought. The children are learning to be independent, for example, they help to tidy up at the end of sessions, sweeping up sand, and they take turns to return the register to the office each morning. Resources and activities are made accessible to the children and they can choose from this selection in their play.

Communications, language and literacy

63. The children are working well towards the early learning goals and will achieve them by the time they leave the reception class. They listen attentively to stories and to instructions about what they are going to do and listen politely to others' contributions. The staff show that they are interested in what the children say and encourage them to participate. The children use the role-play areas well, for instance to develop their ideas about the story of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears', or in the 'bears' cave'. They are aware of the spoken sounds letters make in words and many can identify letters correctly. They are beginning to use this knowledge to assist their reading, for example, identifying the initial sounds in a word. They recognise their own names and show an interest in books. They are well aware that books carry meaning and convey a message and even those who have not developed their skills in reading use pictures

and other clues to re-tell their favourite stories, such as 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar'. There are good examples of the children's attempts at writing and making marks and symbols. Most children can write their own name accurately and they are learning to realise that writing has a purpose, for example using shopping lists in role-play situations. The children take home books regularly to share with their parents; this is effective in helping them to develop good habits in reading.

Mathematical development

64. The children work well towards the early learning goals and by the end of the reception year most will have achieved them in this area of their learning. They are learning to count to ten and use language to describe what they are doing. For example, they are able to count the number of children who are absent and then adjust the figure when another child arrives, saying 'now there are two missing'. The children are developing an awareness of shapes in the environment and practical tasks are used well to illustrate the idea of capacity and volume. They are able to put objects in the correct order of size, for instance 'daddy bear, mummy bear and baby bear'. The children's work on making patterns, using different colours are displayed proudly and the children are developing their ideas about solving practical problems, for instance when cutting dough to make a specific number of 'cakes'. They know a variety of number songs and rhymes, for example they sing 'There were ten in the bed'. They are developing ideas about adding on and taking objects away, for example one child held up one then two fingers and then all of his fingers to indicate the number of books he had at home.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

65. In knowledge and understanding of the world, the children are making good progress and will achieve the early learning goals in this area of their development. They are learning about their environment and its characteristics, and patterns and changes within it. They use information and communication technology. They are learning to explore how things work, for example, when using equipment to blow bubbles when playing with water and they observe change through looking at leaves in autumn. They are developing an awareness of natural objects, for example distinguishing the difference between types of fruit, such as lemons and bananas; they explore these and decide which flavours they prefer. They are developing a good awareness of healthy eating, for instance discussing the benefits of fruit.

Physical development

66. The children make satisfactory progress in their physical development. By the end of the reception year most will have achieved the early learning goals in this area. They use equipment to balance and jump, but some of the large pieces of apparatus are not suitable for young children especially in developing confidence in climbing. However, the children explore space and move imaginatively, for instance when in the hall the children are learning to move confidently, with co-ordination and control, pretending to be 'bears' from the story of 'Goldilocks'; they develop their skills in these aspects very well during these sessions. There is a range of small equipment within the school, which the children can use to develop their skills in throwing, catching and aiming. There are many good instances of the children developing their hand control. For example, when using scissors to cut straight lines in paper, using appropriate tools at dough, sand and water play and using brushes to paint and create effects.

Creative development

67. The children's creative development is well promoted, they make good progress and

most will achieve the learning goals in this area by the end of the reception year. There is good evidence of the children's efforts when using paint, for example, in their pictures of bears; many of these show good attention to detail and a bold use of colour. The children are developing an awareness of using their senses. They are able to use musical instruments in their creative work and are developing musical ideas; for instance, they can keep a regular beat in time to their singing. They make up their own stories in the imaginative play areas provided in both reception classes. For example, they pretend to be shoppers and using dressing-up clothes to develop their ideas.

68. The provision in the reception classes has been maintained since the last inspection, when it was judged good overall. The arrangements for teaching the children with special educational needs were judged as unsatisfactory but this has been improved considerably and is now good. A new reception class has been opened, a policy for the early year's curriculum has been devised and implemented successfully and resources purchased to ensure effective delivery of the Foundation Stage. Teaching overall in the children's first year in St Thomas Aquinas School has improved and is now good.
69. The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is good overall. The staff have a very secure understanding of the appropriate curriculum for young children and are very aware of the early learning goals and how they can be incorporated into planning. The plans for lessons are generally detailed and informative, with clear ideas about what the children will learn and the next steps for their learning. The staff plan to offer all children equal access to the range of activities provided and support staff are very well briefed, especially in supporting those children who have special or specific needs. Expectations for behaviour are high and made clear to the children who respond positively and behave well. The staff use questioning techniques to offer the children good challenge and to encourage them to think. Resources are used well, especially in developing personal and social skills. The accommodation is used effectively to promote learning and the areas are well organised. The staff assess the children's learning regularly and brief discussions with support staff, immediately after the children have finished their tasks, keep everyone well-informed as to what the children have gained and need to do next in their work and play.
70. There is an effective partnership with the parents and carers, they are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning, for example books are sent home regularly for them to share with their children, and they are invited to make comments in the reading diary.

ENGLISH

71. In the 2000 tests at the end of Key Stage 1 pupils' attainment in writing was above both the national average and that in similar schools. In reading, pupils' attainment in reading was below both the national average and that in similar schools. The overall trend since 1996 has been downward. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
72. The results of the 2000 Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests show that pupils' attainment in English was well above the national average and that of similar schools. The overall trend since 1996 has been broadly in line with the national trend. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
73. The school is determined to continue to raise standards and has set challenging but realistic targets for each year group in all three key stages. A thorough analysis of strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning has enabled the school to target

appropriate resources and training. A good start has been made on improving the quality of extended writing by helping pupils to broaden the range of expressive vocabulary and to use techniques, such as description and biography, which engage the reader. The school's introduction of the National Literacy Strategy has been effective and has brought added rigour to teaching and learning. It has raised teachers' expectations, increased the pace of lessons and the rate of pupils' learning. Consequently, the percentage of pupils gaining higher levels has increased since last year in both key stages.

74. Inspection findings confirm an improving picture in Key Stages 1 and 2 and especially at the end of Key Stage 1. Evidence, which includes an analysis of pupils' past and present work, lesson observations and discussion with pupils, indicates that standards in speaking, listening, reading and writing are above the national average at the end of Key Stage 1. The standard of work observed also indicates above average attainment by the end of the year in Key Stage 2. Attainment in Year 7 is above average.
75. Pupils' attainment in language and literacy at the age of five is average. Most pupils develop well as confident communicators. By the age of seven, for example, higher-attaining pupils demonstrate good listening skills when responding quickly and knowledgeably to the teacher's questions about the importance of instructions. Average and lower-attaining pupils explain their work well, give reasons why they like school and describe a favourite character. They can re-tell stories and take part in imaginative play. For instance, pupils in Year 2 can recall accurately the main events and characters in 'Cyclops and the Green Beans'. They read aloud and enact a story as well as sharing ideas about characters and places, as Year 1 pupils did while portraying invitation scenes, including the Biblical account of the Annunciation during an assembly. Throughout the key stage, pupils listen attentively to their teachers and to each other, and they explain their ideas confidently, especially at the beginning and end of lessons.
76. In Key Stage 2, pupils (including those with special educational needs) continue to learn well, especially in the later years, and by the end of the key stage standards in speaking and listening are good. The pupils are attentive in most classes and eager to contribute to classroom discussions. A large majority of pupils are articulate and will venture opinions about the topic they are studying, for example in expressing their views and challenging the opinions of others politely, while discussing transport issues in the Bletchley area. In some classes, pupils' listening skills are not so finely tuned. They are usually eager to contribute their ideas but the rule about signalling their intention to speak is not always established firmly and pupils do not consistently listen well to each other.
77. Reading is promoted strongly within the school. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are particularly well supported by the high quality system for encouraging reading at home. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils read a selection of literature, express their opinions about stories they have read, and use a range of strategies when reading independently, such as knowledge of letter sounds, pictures and the context of the story. Most pupils are enthusiastic about books and enjoy reading simple narratives such as 'The Little Red Hen' and 'Little Monkey'. In lessons they show curiosity about features of non-fiction texts such as a glossary and are keen to explore the definition of words such as 'phoneme' and 'fleece' with their teacher.
78. By the age of 11 pupils read fluently, using expression that reflects the meaning of the text. Standards are above average. All use their knowledge of letter sounds and blends to tackle unfamiliar words. Whilst higher attaining pupils derive meaning from textual clues, lower-attaining pupils find this more difficult. While some pupils can

locate information and access the books they need in the library, they are not confident in library skills and this limits the possibility of independent research, particularly in geography and history. Skills of skimming and scanning and note taking were not in evidence during inspection week. Higher order research skills are not well developed. During many lessons pupils use a thesaurus and dictionary well to enhance vocabulary skills. The majority of pupils at this stage understand how increasing vocabulary adds to one's enjoyment of reading and writing. They read a wide range of literature including modern poets such as Michael Rosen, and classical works that include Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'. Many pupils select challenging books such as 'Oliver Twist' for independent reading. They benefit from independent reading sessions and discuss plot and characterisation sensibly. In Year 6 higher-attaining pupils understand the use of figurative language, recognising for instance that 'there's daggers in men's smiles' is a reference to treachery.

79. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are beginning to write in different forms, such as recipes for menus, lists of instructions and clothes they wear, and accounts of stories and poems. Year 1 pupils write descriptions of bears in Australia, accounts of religious stories and their own feelings about neglected children. Pupils in Year 2 use some imaginative vocabulary when re-telling the story of the Great Fire of London. The focused and systematic teaching of literacy is evident in many examples of extended writing for example history, geography and religious education. Spelling skills are developed progressively. Pupils' writing is usually neat and well formed, and the majority uses joined script in everyday writing. By the end of the key stage, punctuation is becoming more accurate and words are often chosen carefully, especially by higher-attaining pupils. Pupils' learning including those with special educational needs is good.
80. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils write for a range of purposes and readers including fictitious, persuasive letters to the government, play scripts, poems, newspaper reports, biographies and interview formats, as well as creative and descriptive stories. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 understand the use of tenses, adjectives and synonyms. The skills of dialogue and paragraphing are steadily developed in Years 5 and 6. Pupils have opportunities to improve their work by drafting, editing, proof reading and then presenting the final form. This skill is accomplished well in Year 7. The quality of creative writing is high, especially towards the end of Key Stage 2 and in Year 7, and reflects a good depth of reading experience. Some imaginative choices are illustrated in Years 6 and 7 studying plot, characterisation, description and resolution in story-writing using phrases such as 'brandishing a sword he shrieked in the eerie darkness' and 'faithful, loyal friend' respectively. Such writing helps to reinforce the importance of language as a means of communication. Some higher attaining pupils in Years 3 and 4 use similes and metaphors to enhance their descriptions. In Year 5, writing based on 'The Railway Children' includes colourful analyses of characters and sensitive and thoughtful paragraphs from another viewpoint. Pupils learn banks of words to spell correctly and many have developed legible handwriting in a cursive style using ink. Overall, learning for all pupils throughout Key Stage 2 and early Key Stage 3 is good with no significant difference between boys and girls.
81. Overall, there is an appreciable improvement since the previous inspection, which reported standards as close to the national average for both key stages. Standards in Year 7 were judged to be good. Teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection.
82. Literacy is developed effectively using the National Literacy Strategy. Throughout all the key stages pupils' literacy skills are improved through other subjects, examples include the importance of listening to instructions in physical education, in writing up a science investigation correctly and in composing play scripts for the story of 'The Three Little

Pigs'.

83. Pupils' attitudes are good overall and in many classes very good. This, combined with effective teaching, ensures that learning is good in all three key stages. This applies to the more able and lower-attaining pupils, and those for whom English is an additional language. Pupils are generally well motivated, enthusiastic and eager to learn. Most enjoy the activities. They display interest in what they are doing, usually sustain concentration well and take pride in their work. Resources are handled with care and pupils develop a capacity for personal study, as in a Year 4 lesson about writing styles in newspaper reports. Pupils are well behaved and courteous, relating very well to adults, working well collaboratively and independently when required.
84. The teaching is mostly good with some very good and excellent lessons. Key skills are taught well making a major contribution to pupils' learning. Teachers generally make the most of spontaneity to develop language from pupils' own interest as in a Year 7 class on characterisation and description, pupils had opportunities to identify and attribute powerful verbs and adverbs to a variety of their own experiences. Teachers systematically introduce pupils to a wide range of writing. Appropriate strategies for reading are promoted and suitable texts to emphasise aspects of literacy, as in Year 3 when 'Bird Nesting' was used to illustrate descriptive narrative, are available. Where teaching is best lessons are well planned, time is used well and expectations are high. Instructions are clear and questioning is used effectively to review pupils' previous knowledge and to challenge their thinking about a new topic. This was illustrated in a Year 6 class concentrating on the use of appropriate vocabulary to instil intensity in horror fiction writing. Further good examples were observed in Years 1 and 2 working on the recognition of familiar words in a text and writing instructions to a specific format. Teachers' close liaison with support assistants has a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning, and especially for lower-attaining pupils. More able pupils are also well supported with regular tuition by the headteacher. Assessment opportunities are always taken at the end of lessons to reinforce learning objectives. The quality of marking varies. At best it is positive, evaluative, sets clear targets and helps pupils to improve.
85. The subject manager is an enthusiastic advocate and with the help of the Headteacher provides solid support for staff. She ensures that the curriculum is planned well and that good coverage, balance and continuity ensue. She has carried out an extensive review of provision and in conjunction with other staff has drawn up a policy and scheme of work, which reflect the recommendations of the National Literacy Strategy. Medium term planning is thorough. Assessment includes annual reading tests, regular spelling tests, National Curriculum and standardised comprehension and reading tests, together with the moderation and levelling of pupils' work. Throughout the school, all pupils are set individual targets, which are reviewed on a regular basis. The subject manager has a clear idea of pupils' attainment and learning over time and monitors teachers' plans regularly. Resources are sound and easily accessible. All classes are adequately supplied with books and the central library, which is not used to full advantage to develop pupils' independent learning skills, is stocked satisfactorily. Overall, the subject is well managed and there is a commitment to raising standards throughout the school.

MATHEMATICS

86. In the year 2000 national tests at the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils' attainment was in line with the national average and with that in similar schools. In Key Stage 3, standards of attainment are broadly in line with national expectations. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Above average standards

have been maintained since the previous inspection.

87. The present Year 2 and Year 6 pupils demonstrate above average attainment in all aspects of mathematics. They are well on course to exceed national averages in end of Key Stage 1 and 2 tests at the end of the current year and attain the challenging targets set for them by the school and the local education authority. The current Year 6 pupils achieved above average levels of attainment in their 1997 national tests at the end of Key Stage 1.
88. The pupils in Key Stage 1 are developing good mathematical vocabulary which reflects the care taken by the teachers to use appropriate terminology. Year 1 pupils measure accurately and confidently use terms such as longer, shorter and same as. In Year 2, pupils confidently use the language of multiplication as they double and add on numbers. Most pupils are confident at rounding up or down to the nearest ten, can halve and double numbers up to fifty and are able to identify the multiples of three, five and ten. The language and understanding of shape and pattern are well taught throughout the key stage and, by Year 2, pupils are familiar with the basic properties of a square, rectangle, triangle, circle, pentagon and hexagon. They learn to measure length using centimetres and metres and, through using halves and quarters, begin to understand the concept of time.
89. Understanding of place value continues to be extended throughout Key Stage 2 as pupils become more confident with adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing increasingly large numbers. They continue to build on work already covered in shape, space and measures and learn to construct triangles, rectangles and circles with increasing accuracy during the oral and mental part of numeracy lessons. The pupils are given the opportunity to explain the methods by which they arrive at their answers and explore how to solve problems using mathematical skills. While problem solving is beginning to feature in the planned work for many classes there is a lack of sufficient opportunities for all pupils to work independently in this area.
90. In Key Stage 3 the pupils are using co-ordinates to draw common and more complex shapes such as a car in all four quadrants, using an x and y-axis, with positive and negative numbers.
91. The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better, in all lessons. In Years 3 and 5, it is good and in Years 1,2 and 6, it is very good. This is the reason why pupils are making very good progress with their learning at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. The impact of teaching on learning is considerable; where the teaching is very good so is the learning. In the best lessons, teachers explicitly communicate the learning intentions and constantly refer to them at regular intervals during the lesson to assess what the pupils have done and learnt. During high quality plenary parts of the lesson the teachers check what the pupils have done and learnt in the lesson and elicit from them what they need to do to extend further their mathematical knowledge, understanding and skills. The quality of teaching in these lessons is very good because the teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge. The lessons build progressively on the objectives introduced earlier in the week. In a high quality Year 6 lesson the teacher has the learning objectives for previous lessons in the week written on the rolling blackboard and makes constant reference to them in order to consolidate a challenging idea in data handling. Very high expectations challenge the pupils appropriately. Teacher questioning requires them to draw on their experiences and apply their mathematics to solve problems. Recording enables pupils to use a variety of methods that do not totally rely on writing skills. This approach supports pupils with special educational needs well. Mathematics is brought to the pupils' attention in subjects such as design and technology, art, science and geography and also makes a good

contribution to pupils' developing literacy skills

92. The children's attitudes towards mathematics are good or better throughout the school. Throughout Key Stage 1 and at the end of Key Stage 2, they are very good. The pupils show a positive interest and enthusiasm towards mathematics, behave well in lessons, demonstrating good relationships with peers, the teachers and classroom assistants. They show initiative and take responsibility for their work and learning. The good relationship between staff and pupils helps to create a stimulating working environment and a growing interest and enjoyment in the subject.
93. In many lessons teachers give pupils interesting homework challenges, often relating to the lesson or next mathematics lesson. There are some good examples of marking which enable pupils to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Oral marking of work is also good.
94. The effective implementation of the national numeracy strategy, with its emphasis on developing pupils' mental calculation skills and understanding of the processes of mathematics, is having an impact on standards at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. The strategy is helping to raise levels of attainment and improve learning as seen in lessons and in the pupils' work. A numeracy hour is planned daily, based on the four key principles of teaching mathematics: a dedicated mathematics lesson each day; direct teaching and interactive oral work with the whole class and groups; emphasis on mental calculation; and matching the level of work to groups of pupils.
95. The subject manager demonstrates good subject knowledge. Teachers' planning and children's work are monitored on a regular basis. In order to raise standards of attainment test results are analysed to help the school focus on areas of underachievement and to provide future targets for year groups and individual pupils. Currently, the monitoring role of the subject manager does not incorporate the systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning across all year groups in order to raise standards further.

SCIENCE

96. Attainment in science is good, in that it exceeds national expectations, at the end of both key stages and by the end of Year 7. In 2000, attainment at the end of Key Stage 1, based on teacher assessment, was below the national average. However, inspection evidence, based on the current pupils in Year 2, shows that pupils are now achieving standards in science which are above the national average. The results of the 2000 national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 show pupils' attainment was above the national average and that in similar schools. A comparison of the attainment levels of those pupils at age seven in 1997 with the levels they achieved in 2000 shows pupils' progress to have been good. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is also good, the majority having improved by two National Curriculum levels since the end of Key Stage 1.
97. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils sort materials correctly into two groups, waterproof and non-waterproof and recognise and name common types of materials. While investigating materials, pupils make generally accurate predictions as to absorbency, recognising that results will vary according to the type of material or liquid used. They also understand that materials can change and can predict what is likely to happen to a material if it is heated or cooled. They are able to build on previous learning of how materials can be grouped into a variety of categories, for example natural and manufactured.
98. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils continue to demonstrate improvement in their scientific skills. They understand fair testing and explain confidently the outcomes of varying factors such as the effect of air, water, temperature and dirt on the growth of micro-organisms on bread and cheese. They use magnifiers skilfully to study plant parts closely and record accurately and carefully what they observe. Pupils name correctly the parts and know their functions. They have a good understanding of the relationship between a healthy and an unhealthy diet and recognise why a diet that is high in fat is unhealthy. Many can use keys to identify plants and insects and understand the importance of caring for all forms of life.
99. In Year 7, pupils can use previous knowledge to pose questions and plan an experiment to discover for example whether a magnetic field changes depending on the shape and size of a magnet.
100. There has been a significant improvement in all aspects of science teaching. This, in turn, has enabled pupils to make good progress in all areas of study, in marked contrast to the unsatisfactory progress reported after the last inspection. Consequently, pupils are now attaining above average standards across the school. The weakness in pupils' ability to conduct a fair test, observed in Year 7, has been effectively addressed in both Key Stage 1 and 2. The new scheme of work has effectively met the shortcomings identified in the previous inspection. Clear learning objectives that can be taught within each lesson have been established and are now linked to measurable means of assessment. Therefore, teachers can now evaluate lessons effectively in terms of pupils' knowledge and understanding.
101. Pupils enjoy science lessons and participate with enthusiasm. They listen carefully to teachers and to each other and respond well to challenging questions. Many learn effectively and extend their knowledge and understanding. Pupils work well independently and within groups, sensibly sharing resources and ideas. Their interest in this subject and sustained concentration throughout lessons contribute significantly to the good progress made by the majority.

102. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is very good in Years 1 and 6 and excellent in Year 2. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and high expectations. Lessons are well planned, stimulating and challenging. This is reflected in the pupils' good progress in lessons and over time. Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject and their ability to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Good examples of this are in Year 5 on cutting through the sepal of a flower to find the seeds and in Year 6 pupils viewing much enlarged pictures of bacteria. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, are well supported. Teachers know their pupils well and tasks are carefully organised to enable pupils to develop their knowledge and skills at appropriate levels. Teachers question their pupils carefully to assess understanding and ensure that pupils know exactly what to do and what is expected of them. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and this helps to create a secure and purposeful working environment which provides well for their personal development. Pupils' attainment and progress in each topic are regularly assessed and this information is used to inform future planning of work. A significant strength of teaching is the very good links made with other subjects, particularly in Year 1, which make a significant contribution to pupils' learning in all areas of the curriculum, including literacy and numeracy.
103. The subject manager has a satisfactory subject knowledge. Currently she does not effectively monitor and evaluate standards across the school. There has been no analysis of the outcomes of formal assessment from the 2000 national tests in order to identify areas that may need further development. A comprehensive understanding about areas of difficulty could then be addressed by modifications to the scheme of work and lead to higher standards. She has, jointly with the previous subject manager, introduced a new scheme of work, based on recommended national guidance. Teaching is currently monitored by the headteacher and, consequently, good support is provided that enables teachers to help pupils to develop their investigative skills and ensure that higher attaining pupils are appropriately stimulated and challenged. The subject manager is responsible for monitoring both the work in pupils' books and the quality of teachers' lesson planning. Resources, although satisfactory overall, are not as good as reported at the time of the previous inspection. There is a particular shortage of good quality magnets. There is no portfolio of assessed, levelled and moderated work to assist teachers to make consistent judgements relating to levels of attainment.

ART AND DESIGN

104. Although lessons were not observed in all classes, evidence from pupils' past work and displays indicates that learning is sound throughout the school. Pupils in all three key stages are working to standards broadly typical of this age range nationally. They use a range of materials and represent their ideas in pastel, paint, pencil, charcoal, ink and various textiles and fabrics. They learn about artists such as Degas, Monet, Cezanne and Van Gogh. A satisfactory amount of work based on other cultures is represented in collage and clay models depicting African masks and clothing.
105. In Year 1, pupils copy successfully paintings of the Lily Pond and Poppy Field in the style of Monet. They use leaf prints to portray patterns of autumn colours and scrunching, tufting and pleating techniques are applied effectively to tissue-paper modelling. Pupils in Year 2 use poster paint to illustrate seaside scenes on wooden plaques and construct a three-dimensional frieze about the Great Fire of London from a variety of materials. In Year 3 pupils produce colourful and lively patterns in fabric using tie and dye methods, and create Roman-style mosaics in relation to their history studies. String printing skills are used by pupils in Year 4 to design patterns for African

clothes and they produce African animal head masks from a selection of paper textures. In Year 5 pupils paint their own still life pastel pictures in the style of Cezanne. Pupils working in groups in Year 6 design large montage and collage productions. Pupils in Year 7 execute sound observational drawings of everyday objects. In a collection of self-portraits after the style of Monet, they use their sketching skills well, including dots, cross-hatching and smudges to effect light, shadow, tone and line. Three-dimensional work covered includes human models in different poses, sculptured from wire, wood and paper.

106. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. Teaching has improved since then, when much of the teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory.
107. The pupils enjoy art and design and have positive attitudes towards the subject. They work with sustained concentration and describe techniques they are using in sound detail. Good collaboration takes place where pupils discuss their work and are confident to make improvements. Such an example was observed in a Year 6 lesson where pupils spoke knowledgeably about methods to depict movement while building up a montage of a ballerina.
108. In the lessons observed, the quality of teaching is sound overall, with some good features. Teachers demonstrate sound subject knowledge and expertise. Good support and praise are offered during lessons and pupils are encouraged to try out new ideas. Such an example was observed in a Year 2 lesson where pupils combined their efforts to create collage patterns from a large selection of materials and adhesives.
109. The subject manager is enthusiastic and keen to develop the subject further. She has devised a scheme of work which ensures that pupils are taught a variety of skills and learn about different artists and cultures. Linking art with other subjects is a good feature of planning and makes a good contribution to pupils' cross-curricular skills, particularly those of literacy. Pupils' work is promoted well through displays around the school. Opportunities to visit galleries and museums, for example Milton Keynes Art Gallery, enhance pupils' learning and enjoyment of art.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

110. It was only possible to observe one lesson in design and technology during the inspection. Evidence from this lesson, discussion with the subject manager, pupils, the inspection of teachers' planning and photographs of pupils' work in each year group, indicate that standards of attainment are broadly in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1, 2 and in Key Stage 3.
111. This shows an improvement since the last inspection when attainment was described as below national expectations in Key Stages 1 and 2. Standards, which were in line with national expectations in Key Stage 3, have been maintained.

112. In the one lesson observed in Year 3, teaching was satisfactory and the level of interest high. The pupils had previously designed a 'free standing' photograph frame in their design book and suitably annotated their diagrams to assist with the making process. Further annotation is added as the frame is made, decorated and evaluated regarding fitness for purpose. Pupils are given the opportunity to describe and explain what they have done, how successful it has been and what they need to do in the next design and technology lesson. Support from the classroom assistants has a positive impact on the learning taking place.
113. Design and technology is planned in "blocks", which means that at times there is very little teaching of the subject. However, teachers' planning shows that all aspects of the subject are covered and, where possible, cross-curricular links are established. These are particularly noticeable in literacy and numeracy. Planning follows the nationally recommended scheme of work which has been linked to the national guidelines for design and technology. The subject manager has developed a policy for design and technology, an action plan which describes the priorities for development and is establishing a portfolio of work through photographic evidence, for each year group.

GEOGRAPHY

114. By the end of Key Stage 1 standards of attainment are in line with national expectations. Pupils identify the directions, north, south, east and west on a world map and point out several countries such as Australia, the United States of America, China and Greece. Teaching is good and stimulating and well-focussed lessons keep the pupils interested and ensure that they remember what they have learned. Year 1 pupils follow a bear's world travels and their achievements are good because the teacher encourages them to use their imagination and find out for themselves. They look at an impressive display, which includes the bear's passport, and search through the books provided, to find the answers they need. In an introduction to the world of Roger Rabbit, the Year 2 teacher motivates pupils to want to learn more about places on the world map. Pupils from the same class talk eagerly about the plans they have drawn of a seaside town and of their own locality and how they can make and use a key for them.
115. Attainment in Key Stage 2 is also around the national expectation with good standards in some lessons. Teaching is good and the input from a resident artist has enhanced geography lessons, especially in Year 4, where pupils now have a good understanding of Ghana and life in an African village. In Year 5, the teacher's careful questioning leads pupils to think about the complexities of town planning and how numbers of people, as well as physical features can affect developments. The teaching on fieldwork trips furthers pupils' understanding of the effects of weather. At Caldecotte, Year 6 practical work includes using a measuring pole to find the depth of a river. They see the evidence of recent flooding. This stimulates their interest and results in good work in their further studies of river systems. The teacher has good subject knowledge and gives clear explanations. Her direct questioning and insistence on precise answers bring a sharp focus to follow-up work so that pupils build up and retain the knowledge gained.

116. In Year 7, satisfactory teaching is based on sound preparation and enables pupils to consolidate their previous knowledge and understanding of the importance of location and they give reasons for choosing specific sites for development. They present their work neatly, with careful drawings and the correct geographical terminology.
117. The profile of geography has been raised considerably since the previous inspection and there is now good evidence that sound standards are being attained throughout the school. Resources are now adequate, which was not the case at the time of the previous inspection.
118. Teachers are making good use of the school grounds and the local area for geographical studies. The subject is well managed by the headteacher, who provides support and guidance for the staff and curriculum plans are fully detailed. The assessment, which is taking place alongside the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, is helping to raise standards. The subject makes an effective contribution to pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.

HISTORY

119. Across the school, pupils achieve standards in line with national expectations.
120. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have built up their factual knowledge and demonstrate their understanding of events in the past. They describe life in London at the time of the Great Fire, and enjoy retelling relevant stories they have heard. Pupils are developing a sense of chronology and can sequence events, using a time-line to illustrate their work. Teaching is good and she sets challenging work and makes good use of resources, leading to pupils gaining a sound understanding of the cause of the Great Fire, the way it spread and its effects. The teacher's use of different strategies, including games, dramatic activities and the use of a programmable robot, develop both pupils' historical and literacy skills and consolidates their understanding.
121. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 have developed their historical skills of enquiry and interpretation. Teaching is satisfactory and enables pupils to find and use information from different sources and describe characteristics of people and places in times past. Whilst studying Ancient Greece, pupils are introduced to politics and the beginning of democracy. In their writing, they show empathy with the children and slaves of those times. In Year 3, the teacher's good use of photocopied pictures fire pupils' imagination, and generates discussion about children's lives in a Celtic village. In Year 5, pupils describe how it must have felt to be a child in the Victorian age. Again, good explanations and use of resources by the teacher leads pupils to talk clearly and logically and empathise with the plight of poor children at that time. Direct teaching about famous people in the past, for example Dr Barnado, adds to pupils' factual knowledge. Interest and learning in this topic are further developed through a model Victorian house built whilst visiting Great Linford Arts centre.
122. In Year 7, pupils gain knowledge and a sound understanding of law and order in Medieval times through sound teaching which results in satisfactory control and direction during role-play. Links made by the teacher in science when studying magnetism, the discovery and use of lodestones in the past, adds to pupils' historical knowledge.

123. Resources are satisfactory and a good programme of visits supports the well-documented curriculum. The headteacher, as subject manager, provides strong support and leadership as well as monitoring and evaluating standards in the subject. This is having a favourable effect on standards being achieved in history.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

124. Standards in information and communication technology are above the national expectation. The school is preparing the pupils well to be active participants in their learning about technology, and to have good access to the high quality resources that are provided. The pupils use their skills and the tools for technology to develop their imagination, explore and analyse, and use the equipment properly, within the bounds of safety. They learn to work co-operatively, collaborate well and are aware of how to use their skills to improve and enhance their work. Pupils have good attitudes to their work overall, behave well generally and are well-motivated.
125. In Key Stage 1, standards are above those expected nationally. This is because they receive good and sometimes very good teaching. The staff have developed, and are continuing to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject and therefore the pupils' learning benefits. They have high expectations of what pupils can do and achieve, and impart their skills well, for example, in how to use different effects to create pictures to represent photographs and to use the roamer effectively, dealing with problems as they arise. In Year 2, the pupils can create images using techniques such as 'flood fill, paint tin, airbrush and pencil'. They are learning how to save and print their work. They use different types of technology, for example, using the roamer to plot a path through London at the time of the Great Fire in 1666. In Year 1, the pupils are learning to use their skills in word processing to make contributions to the school newspaper and to write their letters to Father Christmas this year.
126. In Key Stage 2, the pupils also achieve above that expected nationally. The pupils in Years 3 and 4 have good opportunities to use and develop their skills using word processing techniques. Higher attaining pupils in Year 3 have very good encouragement to progress quickly, for instance when creating their own weather maps with the appropriate symbols. In Year 4, the pupils use different types of headlines and styles of font and they are learning to use technology to refine their skills in other areas, for example when editing creative writing in English. In Years 5 and 6, the pupils are achieving a good level overall. Some pupils, because of their very secure skills in using the keyboard are achieving at an even higher level. Most pupils, although less confident in keyboard skills, make good progress and achieve good standards. For, example, the pupils in Year 5 are learning to automate amendment of text, using a 'find and replace' technique and to use the appropriate function keys.
127. Progress since the last inspection is very good, when the standards were judged unsatisfactory overall in all key stages. Much work has been accomplished in information and communication technology; resources have been improved and are very good overall.
128. Teaching overall in Key Stage 2 is good and the pupils are making progress at a good pace as a result. The staff frequently check for understanding and make clear connections between what they are describing and what the pupils actually have to do on the keyboard. In Year 6, the pupils are learning to 'copy, cut and paste' from specific web sites on 'River Flooding'. There is good use of support staff to help the children learn and to offer them good interaction and development when they are using the computers. This results in an effective use of time and of the resources available in the

computer suite.

129. In Key Stage 3, the standards achieved by the pupils are good. Several pupils already have quite sophisticated skills in technology and some are very competent using the keyboard and mouse. Their level of achievement enables them to make progress at a good and sometimes very good rate. Teaching is good and, yet again, the support staff and additional help available are used effectively.
130. Overall, teaching and support staff have good skills and expertise and even the less confident have been given good guidance on how to deliver the subject. Planning for information and communication technology is very detailed and comprehensive, with clear links in all key stages as to what the pupils are to learn in relation to nationally recommended subject guidance and programmes of study.
131. The addition of the computer suite is a real boost to the school and it is being used very effectively. The school, and in particular the headteacher, have made good use of the funding received and this has had a very good impact on the pupils' learning in information and communication technology and has had a beneficial effect on other subjects, for example literacy and numeracy. The budgets for the improvement of the subject are well organised and represent good value for money; decisions are carefully considered, for example to ensure that equipment is suitable for the pupils' learning. There is a very clear vision and commitment to keep developing information and communication technology in the school. Plans exist for further development, for example, although monitoring of planning is already in place, observations of lessons are still to be developed. There is a clear policy for Internet access for the pupils which is to be formally adopted as from January 2001.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

132. Standards of attainment in French are broadly in line with national expectations. In Year 7, French is taught by a specialist teacher from the nearby secondary school.
133. After only a few weeks, basic vocabulary has been learnt and pupils know a range of words and simple phrases with which they can respond to the teacher's questions and instructions. In the one Year 7 lesson observed, pupils acquired knowledge, understanding and improved their French speaking and listening skills in response to good interactive teaching.
134. Standards are not as high as they were at the time of the last inspection when they were above the national expectation and when French was taught in both Years 6 and 7.
135. Pupils' attitudes to their learning are good. They show interest, listen with care, concentrate on the tasks set for them and display good standards of behaviour. They respond well to questions posed by the teacher and are willing to practise their developing skills alongside each other.

136. The quality of teaching is good. The lesson has a clear structure and a collaborative sequence of activities, which helps to consolidate basic French vocabulary, phrasing and pronunciation. Good teacher questioning with modelled responses and animation gains a good level of contribution from all Year 7 pupils.

MUSIC

137. The pupils' standards are around the national expectations in all key stages. This is similar to the findings from the last inspection. However, the main difference is the pupils' behaviour during these lessons, which is now consistently good. Also, the expertise being shared by the co-ordinator is beneficial in this area of the curriculum. Opportunities are provided regularly for the pupils, especially the older ones, to practise their skills, for example in singing in assembly when the other pupils leave.
138. Pupils in Key Stage 1 sing tunefully and are developing a good awareness of the dynamics of music, such as 'loud' and 'soft'. In Year 1, they are learning to recognise different moods in music, for example that a lullaby has a 'smooth' and 'gentle' tone. Teaching is very good and the staff remind pupils frequently about musical terms such as 'verse' and 'chorus'. In Year 2, the teaching expertise is good, which means the pupils learn at a good pace. They are very well behaved during these lessons and co-operate very well. They handle instruments properly, explore sound, create different effects, and achieve appropriately. For example, they recognise repetition in tunes, keep a regular beat and are beginning to compose their own music.
139. In Key Stages 2 and 3, pupils engage in different musical activities, for instance at regular hymn practice, productions and when involved with other schools. In all key stages music from other cultures is introduced and used in a variety of different musical activities, for example moving imaginatively to music in dance. The teaching of music is sound overall, with good teaching in Key Stage 1 and some examples of very good teaching. There were few examples of teaching in Key Stage 2 during the inspection.
140. The subject manager co-ordinates the subject satisfactorily. Resources for music are sufficient, of good quality and well cared for, but the selection is uninspiring. The commercially published music scheme of work supports the staff in planning music lessons, and is of particular use to the non-specialist. Pupils are encouraged to join the choir.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

141. Standards in physical education are at the expected level; this is similar to the last inspection findings. However, the pupils' attitude to their learning in physical education is now sound, with examples of positive input and responsiveness, they are able to work together co-operatively either in pairs, for example during a dance session in Year 3, or in larger groups in Year 6.
142. The pupils in Key Stage 1 achieve at an appropriate level. They participate in their lessons and work well together. They can change speed and direction when expressing their ideas in movement, for example to represent the 'Fire of London', and express their feelings through dance.

143. Teaching is good overall, with instances of sound to very good teaching in Key Stage 2. When teaching is sound the staff maintain the pupils' behaviour appropriately and keep firm control. When teaching is very good the pace of lessons is also very good and the staff make very clear their expectations for improvement and for refining skills.
144. In Key Stages 2 and 3 the pupils achieve at an acceptable level and make good progress in their lessons due to the good teaching they receive. In dance lessons they can form a sequence of movements, working in pairs. The pupils gain good experience from these dance sessions and the use of music from Bangladesh, for example in Year 3, inspired the pupils to develop their imaginative movements. In Year 6, the pupils are learning to move with control and co-ordination, for example when moving creatively to simulate the process of evaporation. The pupils here make good progress in their lessons overall and at times work very well to develop and refine their control.
145. The pupils in Years 5 and 6 have opportunities to learn to swim: for two terms in Year 5 and one term in Year 6. Most pupils are able to swim competently i.e. a minimum of 25 metres by the time they leave Key Stage 2, and many gain badges, indicating their degree of skill.
146. The subject manager has attended relevant courses, and training has been provided for the staff in the teaching of dance. This has been very successful in developing skills for both the staff and the pupils. There is a policy for physical education and plans for the subject are clear.