

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. JOSEPH'S RC FIRST SCHOOL

Headington, Oxford

LEA area: Oxfordshire

Unique reference number: 123216

Headteacher: Mrs B McCormack

Reporting inspector: Hugh Protherough
8339

Dates of inspection: 9th – 12th October 2000

Inspection number: 224990

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Voluntary aided

School category: First School

Age range of pupils: 5 – 9 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Headley Way
Headington
Oxford

Postcode: OX3 7SX

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Nick Dollard

Date of previous inspection: 11th - 14th November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Hugh Protherough, 8339	Registered inspector	English Information technology Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
Christine Murray- Watson, 9501	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
John Collins, 27541	Team Inspector	Mathematics Science Geography History Physical education Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Julia Elsley, 16892	Team Inspector	Under fives Art and design Design and technology Music	How well does the school care for its pupils?

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The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is an average sized first school with 185 pupils on roll comprising of 99 girls and 86 boys. The pupils are of predominantly white ethnic origin with about a tenth of the children coming from other ethnic backgrounds. The majority speaks English as its first language. The numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals and the proportion of pupils with special educational needs are both below average. There are four pupils with statements of special educational needs. The pupils' attainment on entry covers the full range. The results of the assessments for the current new intake are broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St. Joseph's is a friendly and hard working community that takes great care of its pupils. The very good teaching and extremely positive relationships help the children to develop as mature, self-disciplined individuals who, as they get older, show an increasing ability to act responsibly and work independently. The headteacher inspires the confidence and trust of the pupils, parents, governors and staff. They work together effectively to fulfil the school's mission of achieving high standards and developing enthusiastic learners. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school's mission statement is reflected in an outstanding ethos that values individuals and helps them to do their best in every aspect of their lives at school.
- Standards are high; especially in literacy, numeracy, science, design and information and communication technologies and art.
- Teaching is lively and interesting. As a result pupils of all abilities respond positively to the good range of exciting challenges presented in lessons.
- The headteacher continues to provide a strong, purposeful and charismatic leadership for the school that keeps it moving from strength to strength.
- The entire staff team works together effectively because each individual has a very good understanding of their role and responsibilities and an appreciation of what they contribute to the day to day running of the school.
- A well-considered curriculum ensures that all the pupils have access to a breadth of valuable experiences. The provision for design and information and communication technologies is particularly strong.

What could be improved

The range of opportunities for the pupils to write at greater length and to review and re-draft their own work.

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

The school is aware of this issue and has already identified appropriate time for review within the school development plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school continues to move forward at a brisk pace and has built successfully on the findings of the last report. For instance, standards have risen steadily and are higher than those previously described, especially in English, mathematics, science, design and information and communications technologies. The quality of the pupils' work in geography now clearly reaches the expected levels. Teachers are increasingly effective because they are more aware of the significance of their roles as managers. For instance, the regular evaluation and review of teaching has led to a large increase in the amount of good, very good and outstanding teaching observed during the course of the inspection. The new school development plan is much more useful because the headteacher, staff and governing body have thrashed out a simple but effective approach that sets out precisely the priorities for improvement for the next three years.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
reading	B	A	A	A
writing	A	A	A	B
mathematics	D	B	B	C

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

The table shows that standards in reading and writing have been well above the national average for the past two years. When compared with the results achieved by pupils in similar schools, standards in reading continue to be well above average and in writing are above average. Standards in mathematics have been above the national average and broadly in line with the results in similar schools. The results of the national tests for 2000 show that the high standards in reading and writing have been sustained with almost every pupil reaching the expected levels and many exceeding them. The biggest improvement came in mathematics where once again, almost every pupil reached the expected level and more than a third exceeded it.

The school makes extensive and effective use of the voluntary national tests for Years 3 and 4. The results for 2000 reveal steady improvement in the standards achieved by pupils as they move through the school, so that by the time they transfer to middle school their achievements remain above average in reading, writing and mathematics.

Although it is early in the school year, the inspection findings confirm that standards of literacy and numeracy at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Year 4 remain well above average. Analysis of the pupils' work reveals particular strength in the way that boys and girls of all abilities make good progress over the course of a school year. This is because the teachers track progress assiduously and set challenging targets for each individual. As a result, in both key stages the higher attaining pupils are reaching levels that exceed the national expectation and many pupils of average ability are achieving marks towards the top of the range expected of seven and nine year-olds. The standard of the pupils' work in science, art, design, and information and communications technologies also exceeds the expected levels at the end of Key Stage 1 and Year 4. Pupils of lower ability and those with special educational needs receive good support in class from the highly effective learning support assistants. This helps them make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The children enjoy school. They work hard in lessons showing a strong commitment to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The pupils behave in exemplary fashion both in and out of class. They treat each other with consideration and provide a polite and friendly welcome to visitors.
Personal development and relationships	The pupils are eager to assume responsibility and take an active role within the school community. The reason they do this is because they enjoy very good relationships with their teachers, who treat them with sensitivity and respect.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Since the last inspection the headteacher and subject co-ordinators have developed a more systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching in lessons. This is paying dividends because during the course of the inspection 30 per cent of lessons seen were judged as very good or outstanding, 87 per cent as good or better and the remaining 13 per cent [6 lessons] were satisfactory.

The teachers are highly skilled practitioners. Their classrooms are well organised so that a wide range of resources is at hand to support the children's learning. There are clear rules and expectations about discipline and behaviour. As a result, relationships between the teachers and their pupils are very good. Even at this early stage of the school year, the teachers have already developed a very good knowledge of the pupils they teach. This is because there are comprehensive records of the pupils' progress to help them plan appropriate work. There is a particular strength in the thorough way that the skills of literacy and numeracy are taught. The teachers have good subject knowledge and are well prepared to teach these basic skills. They plan their lessons in detail and set precise objectives so that it is clear what the pupils are going to learn. As a result the pace of work is frequently brisk.

Many lessons benefit from the extremely effective work of the learning support assistants who provide valuable additional adult support for small groups of pupils across the entire curriculum. One assistant with particular knowledge and expertise in design and technology takes responsibility for the teaching of this subject across the school. The quality of her teaching is outstanding and the work produced by the pupils clearly exceeds the expected levels.

The teachers have benefited from recent training in information and communication technology and their confidence in teaching this subject is growing. The school's well-equipped computer suite is in continual use and thus the standard of the pupils' work high. The teachers' knowledge of geography has improved since the last inspection so that these lessons now move along at a brisker pace.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum that is enhanced by a good range of educational visits and after school clubs and activities. The provision for the teaching of design, and information and communications technologies is very strong.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Teachers are careful to set appropriate work and with the help of the learning support assistants, provide good support that helps these pupils make good progress towards the targets within their individual education plans.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school's strong provision for personal and social education is reflected in the mature outlook of many of its pupils. The regular opportunities for prayer and reflection within the class support the pupils' growing ability to reflect on life's important questions.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The arrangements for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pupils are thorough and effective.

The school works closely with the parents. It provides a good range of useful information including regular meetings about the curriculum and regular opportunities to discuss individual pupil progress. The Parents and Teachers Association raises significant additional funds to provide valuable additional resources.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher successfully combines vision with shrewd management and continues to move the school forward. She receives strong support from a committed staff team who are increasingly effective in developing the curriculum, improving teaching, checking standards and managing resources.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body works assiduously on behalf of the school. Governors have a very good oversight of the school's curriculum and the resources at their disposal.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. There is careful evaluation of performance based upon the thorough analysis of assessment data and other important evidence collected at first hand from around the school. This is used extremely effectively in planning for future improvement.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes full and extremely effective use of all available resources in accordance with the priorities of the school development plan. The headteacher and governors check carefully to see that what is spent is improving the quality of education.

Levels of staffing are very good with a high proportion of experienced and effective learning support assistants who play a major role in supporting the very good quality of education provided. The school grounds and buildings are spacious, attractive and very well maintained. They make a significant contribution to the quality of education offered by the school. Levels of educational resources are very good because the governors use their budget wisely and the staff and children take care of equipment. The provision of books, computers and a designated space for design and technology is very good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's distinctively Catholic ethos and values permeate all of its work. • Their children enjoy coming to school because they feel secure and are motivated by the exciting teaching. • The headteacher is a strong and charismatic leader who inspires confidence and trust. • Standards are high and most children quickly become literate and numerate. • The school values individuals and provides very good support for lower attaining pupils as well as trying to stretch the brighter ones. • Teachers are friendly and make themselves easily accessible to discuss any problems. • They get plenty of information about the life of the school, what is taught and how well their children are doing. 	

The inspection team agrees with the extremely positive views expressed by the overwhelming majority of parents at the pre-inspection meeting, in the questionnaires and during informal conversations over the inspection period.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. At the end of Key Stage 1 standards in reading and writing have been well above the national average for the past two years. When compared with the results achieved by pupils in similar schools, standards in reading continue to be well above average and in writing are above average. Standards in mathematics have been above the national average and broadly in line with the results in similar schools. The results of the national tests for 2000 show that the high standards in reading and writing have been sustained with almost every pupil reaching the expected levels and many exceeding them. The biggest improvement came in mathematics where once again, almost every pupil reached the expected level and more than a third exceeded it.
2. The school makes extensive and effective use of the voluntary national tests for Years 3 and 4. The results for 2000 reveal steady improvement in the standards achieved by pupils as they move through the school, so that by the time they transfer to middle school their achievements remain above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
3. Although it is early in the school year, the inspection findings confirm that standards of literacy and numeracy at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Year 4 remain well above average. Analysis of the pupils' work reveals particular strength in the way that boys and girls of all abilities make good progress over the course of a school year. This is because the teachers track progress assiduously and set challenging targets for each individual. As a result, in both key stages the higher attaining pupils are reaching levels that exceed the national expectation and many pupils of average ability are achieving marks towards the top of the range expected of seven and nine year-olds. Pupils of lower ability and those with special educational needs receive good support in class from the highly effective learning support assistants. This helps them make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans.
4. The pupils coming into school, as four-year-olds are assessed around five weeks after the start of their first term. The results of this term's assessments indicate that the children's ability levels are broadly average. They receive a good start to their time in school and benefit from lively and interesting teaching. As a result they make good progress so that the vast majority is on course to meet the early learning goals set out in the Foundation curriculum. They achieve particularly well in their creative, physical and personal, social and emotional development.
5. The strength of the pupils' literacy skills supports their work in many other subjects of the curriculum. Pupils are articulate, thoughtful and discuss sensibly. Most learn quickly to read and write with accuracy and, in Key Stage 2, with increasing fluency. They turn readily to pen and paper to record their thoughts and ideas. However, although virtually all of the pupils are writing neatly and forming their letters correctly by the end of Key Stage 1, few are being encouraged to join their writing to add speed and fluency to their work. **This is an area of improvement the governors should consider for inclusion in their action plan that will raise standards still further.**
6. As a result of the early development of literacy skills and the high standards achieved in the use of information and communications technology, the pupils quickly learn how to use the library, the Internet and CD-ROM encyclopaedia to locate information. Thus by the end of Key Stage 1 and at the end of Year 4 the pupils' achievements in geography and history are in line with the expected levels.
7. Mathematics is taught effectively and the school has made a successful start to the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy. Teachers have a secure grasp of the subject and expect the pupils to master basic number skills at an early age. This is achieved through frequent practise and quick fire mental mathematic sessions within lessons. Teachers expect the pupils to make use of their mathematical knowledge in other subjects such as science that helps to reinforce learning. As a result pupils enjoy mathematics, are confident in handling numbers so that standards in mathematics continue to remain high throughout the school.

8. In science, by the end of Key Stage 1 standards are well above average. This is because the teachers encourage the development of investigative work from an early age. The pupils learn about the growth of chickens because they have hatched some in an incubator in their classroom. They understand what lives in a pond because they go pond dipping. By the end of Year 4 progress continues to be good because pupils are thinking scientifically and using their knowledge and experience to good effect.
9. Throughout the school the quality of the pupils' work in art and design technology exceeds the expected levels. There is a particular strength in the pupils' work in design technology where the knowledge and skills of the learning assistant responsible for teaching the subject has helped many pupils to produce work of a very high standard. The pupils' work in class music is in line with the expected levels although the achievements of the pupils' learning an instrument are often much higher.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Throughout the school, the pupils have very positive attitudes towards their work in class and to the wide range of experiences the school offers. Many lessons are characterised by a sense of enjoyment as the pupils show an eagerness to learn and a willingness to work hard. In response to the high quality of teaching and support the pupils receive, they are developing maturity and confidence in the way they apply themselves to the tasks they are set. One example of this is the way that all pupils, even the youngest, are able to take advantage of the school's computers, showing commendable care and independence in making good use of the programs and hardware available to them.
11. Standards of behaviour both in class and around the school are very high. The pupils are polite and friendly, very prompt in responding to any instructions from staff, and show themselves willing and helpful when faced with routine tasks, such as tidying the classroom at the end of a lesson. They are similarly well behaved at breaks and mealtimes even, as during the inspection, when they are kept indoors by wet weather.
12. The strong caring ethos within the school bears fruit in the quality of relationships between pupils and with adults. It is very evident that all the staff value highly the children in their care, both as individuals and for what each one can contribute to the life of the school. As a result, the pupils have a clear sense of their own worth and the confidence to be attentive to other's needs that comes from this. The very good provision the school makes for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils has a positive impact on how the pupils relate to each other and on their developing sensitivity to the way their actions can affect others.
13. The level of attendance by the pupils is below that found in primary schools nationally. Much of the authorised absence relates to extended holidays taken during term time. Pupils who have been abroad are encouraged to share their experiences on their return and this helps to broaden the opportunities for cultural development offered by the school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14. Since the last inspection the headteacher and subject co-ordinators have developed a more systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating of the quality of teaching in lessons. As a result teachers are far clearer about what they expect the pupils to learn in each lesson, the brighter pupils are being stretched and the lower attainers properly supported. These improvements are paying dividends because during the course of the inspection 30 per cent of lessons seen were judged as very good or outstanding, 87 per cent as good or better and the remaining 13 per cent [6 lessons] were satisfactory.
15. The teachers are highly skilled practitioners. Throughout the school their classrooms are well organised so that a wide range of resources is at hand to support the children's learning. There are clear rules and expectations about discipline and behaviour. As a result, relationships between the teachers and their pupils are very good. Even at this early stage of the school year, the teachers have already developed a very good knowledge of the pupils they teach. This is because there are

comprehensive records of the pupils' progress to help them plan appropriate work. The pupils feel secure and valued. As a result they work hard and make good progress.

16. The teaching of the pupils in the Foundation Stage is very effective because the teacher has a good understanding of how young children learn. She knows the critical importance of using the right sorts of language and is skilled at explaining the activities in different ways so that all the children understand what she wants them to do. She is similarly skilled in questioning the children to check what they have learned, and she listens carefully to the way that they respond. In every activity she takes care to extend the children's language by introducing new words and technical vocabulary. For example, as a result of the regular use of computers the children already know how to, 'use the mouse to click on the icon.'
17. The classroom is well organised and facilitates a sensible mix of activities that cover all aspects of the Foundation curriculum. The teacher's planning is detailed and thorough, setting out clearly what is to be achieved. The sessions start and finish with all of the class together. This is important because it helps the children to get to grips with being part of a larger group and to learn to take turns and listen to each other.
18. The group activities are productive because they are interesting and frequently linked to a central theme. For example, much of the current work in class is taken up with work related to the story of 'The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch.' The teacher works hard in order to deepen the children's understanding and to improve their basic skills. For instance, she organises activities where the pupils write simple lists of the contents of sandwiches. They act out part of the story using a pulley to transfer cooking ingredients to the light-house they have constructed in their role-play area. With the help of parents and a learning assistant they make and eat a range of exotic sandwiches. All these activities help to bring the children's learning alive. Furthermore, the effective deployment of the learning assistant and volunteer parents means that not only are there good levels of adult assistance available to the children, but that the teacher receives plenty of information about how each child is progressing. This helps her plan for the next steps in learning.
19. In Key Stages 1 and 2, the teachers have a secure knowledge of the subjects they teach. This is one of the main reasons that so many lessons are successful in pushing forward the children's learning. It is particularly the case in English and mathematics where the teachers are making effective use of the guidance provided by the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. In these lessons, the teachers set out clearly in their planning what they expect the pupils to learn. The most effective teachers make the objectives clear to their pupils at the start of the lesson, and then refer back to them at regular intervals, especially during the concluding whole class session when they check what has been learnt. The pace of these lessons is almost always brisk. In the literacy hour, the chosen texts are varied and interesting and the teachers probe the pupils' understanding with shrewd questioning. In mathematics, each numeracy lesson starts with plenty of quick-fire mental calculation. A notable feature here is the way that the teachers always take care to ensure that besides extending the brightest pupils, they always find time to offer simpler questions for those who find mental calculations difficult in this setting. This clearly demonstrates the teachers' very good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of individual pupils.
20. The school has given considerable thought to the teaching of mixed age classes. The current strategy in Key Stage 2 of arranging for English and mathematics to be taught in sets based on ability is working well. The tasks are closely matched to the needs and abilities of the pupils, and it is clear from talking to the children and analysing their work that each set is making rapid progress. Similarly, extra support is effectively organised for the pupils with special educational needs, so that the learning assistants know exactly what to do to help. All these pupils have a programme of activities related to the targets in their individual education plans, and with the guidance and support of the learning assistants they are making good progress towards them.
21. Many lessons benefit from the extremely effective work of the learning support assistants who provide valuable additional adult support for small groups of pupils across the entire curriculum. One assistant with particular knowledge and expertise in design and technology takes responsibility for the

teaching of this subject across the school. The quality of her teaching is outstanding and the work produced by the pupils clearly exceeds the expected levels.

22. The staff has benefited from recent training in information and communications technology and the teachers' confidence in this subject is growing. The school's well-equipped computer suite is in continual use and the quality of teaching is frequently very good. In particular the teachers are making very effective use of the newly acquired 'electronic whiteboard' in order to demonstrate to the pupils new programs, skills and techniques. Thus when the time comes for the pupils to start work on their own machines they have a good grasp of what they are going to do. Once again, the learning support assistants often play a significant role. For instance, one group of lower attaining pupils in Years 3 and 4 made rapid gains in their understanding of how to enter instructions into a programmable toy because the learning assistant watched what they were doing and asked pertinent questions. Thus by the end of the lesson the pupils managed to program the toy, named Theseus on this occasion, to manoeuvre through a maze and reach the Minotaur. The teachers' knowledge of geography has improved since the last inspection so that these lessons now move along at a brisker pace.

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

23. The overall curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. The curriculum for the under-fives in the reception class incorporates all the new requirements of the Foundation curriculum. The curriculum caters for the academic needs of all groups of pupils and provides a wide range of physical and creative opportunities. There is an appropriate emphasis on the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy and these are now firmly embedded in the school curriculum. Sex education, drugs awareness and the personal, social and health education (PSHE) of pupils are well provided for in the new PSHE curriculum.
24. The curriculum meets the needs of all groups of pupils including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language (EAL). The school meets the requirements of the Code of Practice for special educational needs pupils, and pupils with English as an additional language receive very good support in classes. Effective measures are taken to protect the curricular entitlement of these groups of pupils when they are withdrawn from class for extra help and support.
25. The curriculum is taught through a mixture of subject and topic work. All subjects now have a policy and scheme of work, which is an improvement from the time of the last inspection. Overall planning is good and sensible use is being made of the recently published national guidance. A particular strength of the school's curriculum is the highly effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) within many subjects such as mathematics, English, history and geography.
26. The school provides a good range of extracurricular activities and clubs, which are open to all but the very youngest pupils. The 'Pre-school and After-school' clubs are well attended and effectively supported by staff. There are sports clubs and musical activities that are held at lunchtimes and after school. All activities are well attended by both boys and girls and are much appreciated by both pupils and parents. The school has good links with the local Middle Schools which take their pupils, and visits are made to promote a smooth transfer when pupils leave school. There are strong links with the church and the pupils have been involved in charity work with a local hospice. Additionally, pupils from local secondary schools come and help staff during the week in sport and science lessons. There have been visiting artists and theatre groups who have enhanced the curriculum for many pupils at the school.
27. The provision for the spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of pupils is a strength of the school and makes a significant contribution to its wonderful ethos. Spiritual development is enhanced through the acts of worship and the class prayers at the start and end of each day that relate directly to pupils' own lives and experiences. Additional experiences in the broader curriculum are well used by staff to raise the self-esteem of all pupils of all ages. The children under-five in the reception class, for example had an opportunity to feel real wonder at their discoveries during a walk in the school grounds in search of mini-beasts.

28. The school is very successful in promoting the pupils' moral development. Its behaviour and discipline policies are implemented effectively. All adults are consistent in their approach and are very good role models. Pupils are taught from the outset the difference between right and wrong and all opportunities are taken to help pupils make informed choices. Pupils are trusted to undertake duties and responsibilities in the classroom and around school and all do so with reliability.
29. Opportunities for social development are very good. In many lessons seen, pupils were encouraged to work co-operatively with one another in small groups. They do this most successfully, sharing resources fairly and taking turns when appropriate. In games lessons they learn to act as a team and are quick to encourage others. Many pupils are also able to work independently without direct teacher supervision and show good levels of perseverance and concentration when they do so. Pupils are aware of the needs of others and take part in successful fund-raising for a number of charities. At Christmas they sing in the local hospital and were most successful in a recent 'shoe-box' appeal for children less fortunate than themselves.
30. The school makes very good provision for many aspects of cultural education. For example, in art and music pupils experience the richness and variety of the traditions of other cultures. In worship, they are made aware of the festivals of other religions such as the Jewish celebration of Hanukah. In a recent topic on the Ancient Greeks, a 'Greek' day proved to be most successful. Pupils were in costume and watched the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games, ate Greek food and listened to Greek music. The library is well stocked with books on different cultures and beliefs and these are used effectively in classes to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. Pupils' awareness of the richness of their own culture has recently been enhanced when the school took part in the 'Portrait 2000' topic as part of the Oxfordshire Millennium Project.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

31. The high quality of the care provided for children within the school continues to be a major strength. The school has very effective systems to ensure the pupils' welfare, health and safety. As a result the children feel valued, secure and safe. Appropriate child protection procedures are in place and liaison with outside agencies occurs as required. The teachers know individual pupils extremely well and are genuinely concerned about their progress. The pupils are made aware of safe practices during lessons, for example in design and technology, physical education, art and practical science, and whilst moving around the school. The school carries out comprehensive risk assessments and holds regular fire drills. Key members of staff hold appropriate first-aid qualifications.
32. During her time at the school the headteacher has successfully introduced rigorous systems for the monitoring, evaluation and review of many aspects of school life. As a direct result, the procedures for both the monitoring and the support of the pupils' academic performance and personal development are very good. The teachers track the pupils' progress conscientiously and are increasingly using a good range of information to guide their planning. This results in the teachers having a clear picture of what each pupil knows and can do and leads to the setting of work that challenges the pupils appropriately. This is particularly the case concerning literacy and numeracy and has a beneficial effect on improving the pupils' literacy skills and their abilities to carry out mental calculations. Consistent, clear and high expectations throughout the school for good behaviour and a positive approach to learning characterise the life of the school. The evident commitment of all the staff to the wellbeing, care and personal development of the pupils helps to provide a secure and happy community in which pupils of all abilities make good progress.
33. The school makes very good use of the information gained from national test results and other test and assessment data in order to produce appropriate targets for every pupil at the school. Careful attention is given to raising the self-esteem of pupils with special educational needs. Thorough and detailed notes are maintained about each pupil's strengths and weaknesses and these are then used to set appropriate targets for improvement. These are regularly reviewed with the child and the parent and it is clear that most pupils are making good progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

34. The parents have a very positive view of the school, to the extent that many chose the school for their children despite having to travel a considerable distance from home. They are especially pleased with the level of individual care and support their children receive and the high standards that are achieved. The ethos of the school, and the assembly that parents are invited to attend each week also attract favourable comment, as well as the broad range of interesting experiences the pupils are offered. The great majority of parents finds staff easy to approach and feel that a good level of information is provided about their children's progress. Whilst a very small number of parents expressed concern about the use of homework, most felt that the use the school makes of such work is helpful. The team agrees with this view.
35. The school provides a good measure of information for parents. This includes regular letters home, attractive notice boards in school with information relating both to the school day and events within the local community, lesson plans displayed on classroom doors, and regular opportunities to meet staff. Evening meetings are arranged to bring parents up to date on developments in the curriculum. The written annual report on each pupil provides a good measure of information on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science which includes individual targets for improvement. However, the information given on the gains being made in knowledge and understanding of the other subjects of the curriculum is brief and does not always make clear what the pupil has learnt over the year. The parents have an opportunity to discuss their child's progress more fully with the teaching staff at the consultation evenings.
36. The parents show considerable support for the school in a number of ways, for example many parents help in class and with craft activities such as cookery. Good numbers enjoy attending the weekly assembly to which they are invited. They endorse the caring ethos of the school by supporting its different charity fund-raising activities. Of particular note, however, is the very generous support given to the work of the Parent Teacher Association. Considerable funds are raised each year, which play a major part in enabling the school to enhance the resources it is able to buy and the attractive environment provided within the school. The mutual trust and support achieved between the school and its parent body is a major element in the successful life of the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

37. The previous report correctly identified the leadership of the school as a strength but pointed to a couple of aspects of school management that might be improved. There has been a comprehensive and highly successful response to extending the scope of the school development plan and a significant increase in the influence of the subject co-ordinators as managers. As a result all aspects of the leadership and management of the school are highly effective in supporting an outstanding ethos and sustained high standards.
38. Much of the success of this school is a direct result of the astute leadership of its long serving and experienced headteacher. She holds strong views about education, but listens hard to the opinions of others. Although there have been several recent changes to the staff team the headteacher already knows the newcomers well. She delegates wisely and strives to ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of their role and their individual importance in ensuring the success of the school. As a result, she enjoys the full support of the staff and the governing body as the school continues to evolve to reflect the changing needs of education in a new millennium.
39. The school aims are cogent and concise, and contain a strong commitment to the provision of educational breadth and excellence that is reflected in its day to day running. This is achieved through rigorous, ongoing self-evaluation. For instance, the headteacher maintains a very good overview of standards based on the thorough analysis of a wide range of test and assessment data. The progress of every child at the school in acquiring the key skills of literacy and numeracy is diligently recorded, and this information used to set realistic, but challenging targets for both individual pupils and year groups. Following appropriate training, the senior management team is now

involved in checking the quality of teaching in lessons. The results of these are recorded and used as a basis for discussions with the teachers.

40. The school sets about evaluating its progress in a systematic fashion. The school development plan is much more useful than before because it sets out what might be achieved over a three-year period in a brief and logical format. This is supported by more detailed plans for each year that are then broken down into individual tasks. These individual task sheets set out in good detail what each teacher is responsible for in relation to the main plan. They include the jobs to be carried out, costs and details of how success will be measured. As a result, each subject co-ordinator knows exactly what is expected of them each year. In order to keep a check on the progress of the plan the headteacher holds regular discussions with her staff and keeps a monthly diary that records what has been achieved.
41. The subject co-ordinators do a very good job. They check the quality of work in their subjects by analysing samples of pupils' work from around the school. They go on courses to keep up to date and share their learning with colleagues at staff meetings. They provide guidance on planning and increasingly are starting to monitor the quality of the teaching, especially in English and mathematics. From time to time, they carry out reviews into particular issues that are either raised by the headteacher and governors or emerge from discussion in staff meetings. This has most recently been the case in the introduction of the national numeracy project and the adoption of a new published scheme for mathematics. The co-ordinators' records reveal a wealth of information is gathered each year through their regular and systematic subject audits. These are also used sensibly to inform the development of school policy. For example, there is a good awareness of the need to increase the opportunities for pupils to write at greater length, so the school's approaches to teaching literacy have been modified. It is this sort of attention to detail that leads to continuing school improvement because decisions are firmly based on the thorough evaluation of all available evidence.
42. The governors are strongly supportive of the school and work closely with the headteacher and staff. The governing body has a sensible committee structure that reflects individual strengths and interests of its members and allows work to be shared equitably amongst them. Many are involved with the school on a regular basis as both parents and governors. A 'governor of the month' visits lessons and provides a written report for each governors' meeting. The headteacher's reports and the regular curriculum reviews also help to keep them well informed. They use this knowledge to check that things are in order. Acting as 'a critical friend', they ask tough questions and expect answers to be backed up with evidence. A good example of this partnership is the way that the governors worked with the headteacher to improve the format of the school development plan and the current discussions about the introduction of performance management.
43. The school's finances are managed with rigour because the headteacher and governors are fully conversant in all aspects of budget management. Prudent management and careful forward planning means that the school carries forward a healthy balance at the end of each financial year. As a result it remains in a position to sustain favourable staffing, improve its buildings and resources. Decisions about spending are linked closely to the school development plan and the principles of best value are sensibly applied. For instance, parental concerns about mathematics homework resulted in the purchase of a new published scheme that is viewed much more positively.
44. Every subject co-ordinator manages a budget. This is useful because it strengthens their management role and encourages them to consult with colleagues before prioritising what needs to be bought. It is further facilitated by the good quality information provided by the finance officer who makes extremely efficient use of information technology to produce regular budget reviews. Funds are used wisely and relate clearly to the school development plan. As a result, the teachers have amassed a very good level of educational resources for the benefit of the pupils. Books are plentiful and there are excellent resources to support both design and information and communications technologies.
45. The staffing levels are very good with a sensible balance of experienced teachers and those more recently trained. The school's commitment to staff training and development is evident in the careful induction of new teachers to their chosen profession. These teachers settle in quickly and develop their teaching skills rapidly because they receive clear guidance and effective support. A further

significant strength lies in the large number of well-qualified learning support assistants. All attend training courses and one, with particular skills in design and technology, takes responsibility for the teaching of this subject throughout the school. Thus, together, the staff team provides a broad range of subject and phase expertise that lies at the heart of the very good teaching and high standards seen during the inspection.

46. The school makes maximum use of its spacious and attractive accommodation. These offer a wide range of facilities including a library, an excellently equipped computer suite, a dedicated studio for teaching design and technology, a thoughtfully designed playground and sports field. The school's learning environment continues to be well maintained, clean and attractive.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

47. In order to improve still further the high quality of education offered by the school, the headteacher, governors and staff should now;
- Increase the opportunities for all pupils to write at greater length by supporting them in reviewing and re-drafting their written work. (Paragraph 73)

In addition, the headteacher, staff and governing body might also consider including in their action plan;

- a review of the teaching of handwriting to consider at what point pupils should be encouraged to join their letters. (Paragraphs 5, 71)

The school is aware of these issues and has already identified appropriate time for review within the school development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	46
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	11

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7	24	57	13	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	YRec – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	185
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	20

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YRec – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	26

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	8

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	29

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.3
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	1999	28	19	47

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	28	27	26
	Girls	17	18	17
	Total	45	45	43
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96	96	91
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	27	26	26
	Girls	18	18	17
	Total	45	44	43
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96	94	91
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	1999	[]	[]	[]
National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	[]	[]	[]
	Girls	[]	[]	[]
	Total	[]	[]	[]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	[] ([])	[] ([])	[] ([])
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)
Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	[]	[]	[]
	Girls	[]	[]	[]
	Total	[]	[]	[]
Percentage of pupils	School	[] ([])	[] ([])	[] ([])

at NC level 4 or above	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)
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Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	150
Any other minority ethnic group	15

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YRec – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.5
Average class size	26

Education support staff: YRec – Y4

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	152

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
	£
Total income	373013
Total expenditure	373400
Expenditure per pupil	1849
Balance brought forward from previous year	27373
Balance carried forward to next year	26986

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	185
Number of questionnaires returned	99

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	23	2	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	54	39	2	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	88	9	0	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	41	41	9	3	5
The teaching is good.	67	31	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	53	12	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	28	4	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	65	34	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	46	44	8	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	79	20	0	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	75	19	2	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	49	35	12	1	2

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

48. The school makes good provision for the children in the Foundation Stage. The teaching is consistently good across all areas of learning with a significant proportion that is very good. There are currently 16 children of this age being taught in a class with 9 children from Year 1. Children enter the reception class in the term that they are five and most have had some playgroup or nursery experience. The attainment of the current cohort of children, four weeks into the academic year, is in line with that expected of pupils of this age. There are no children within this small cohort with either specific special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language.
49. The children have settled quickly into school and are making good progress in all areas of learning. As a result, the children are on course to exceed the early learning goals set out in the Foundation curriculum and a significant proportion are already exceeding these levels in their personal and social development, knowledge and understanding, creative and the physical areas of learning.

Personal and social development

50. The children's attainment in personal and social development exceeds that expected of children of this age. They have made a very good start to their life at school. This is because the teacher's major focus has been to foster the children's skills in this area. Through the carefully planned curriculum and daily routines, the teacher demonstrates a strong commitment to developing children's ability to accept responsibility and become independent learners. As a result, the children have developed an awareness of, and sensitivity to, the needs and feelings of others and have learnt to establish relationships with adults outside their family. Most children listen carefully to adults, and value each other's contributions. They share equipment generously. For example, when engaged in role-play they wait patiently for a turn to pull the basket on the pulley across the room to the 'lighthouse', or for a turn on the wheeled toys. Their behaviour is very good and they show respect for those about them. The sharing time at the end of sessions reinforces socially acceptable behaviour because the children have to listen to each other and not shout out. The team of adults who work together in the reception class have established firm routines for both indoor and outdoor work. They provide a clear structure within which the children begin to learn about the world, to co-operate and play well together. When work is finished both boys and girls tidy away before going on to the next task. There are no significant differences in the responses of boys and girls due to the good support provided by the staff.

Language and literacy

51. A major part of the work of the school focuses on supporting spoken English and listening skills, and the teaching is good. The children's discussions with the staff, individually and at group times, are stimulating and enrich their spoken language. Good use is made of spontaneous song at the beginning or end of sessions to develop further the children's language development and their listening skills. The teacher's skilful and sensitive questioning of the children after listening to a story is fostering and encouraging them to begin to respond in extended sentences rather than give one or two word answers. As a result most children are speaking clearly and confidently to each other and to adults.
52. During the course of the *literacy sessions* and a good variety of play experiences, most children are on course to achieve the early learning goals and in some instances exceed them. During the short time they have been in school the adults have stimulated children's interest and love of books and stories. Stories are a source of pleasure and children have a growing understanding of the written word. A significant minority has already begun to read some words or sentences, and most can recall a story fairly competently. They identify the main characters and recall what happens, for example, to Mr and Mrs Grimling.

53. On entry to school, the children have writing skills that are in line with pupils of similar ages, but over the past few weeks they have made good progress. The teacher has paid good attention to handwriting and the formation of letters. Early attempts at writing are good and many pupils are beginning to understand that various marks and letters convey meaning. This is because the children are given good opportunities during their play activities to have access to writing materials. For example, whilst engaged in the role-play area, a child was seen making her own 'list' similar to the one she had heard about in the story of 'The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch.' A significant majority of the children can write their names and can copy or follow the contour of the teacher's writing fairly accurately.

Mathematics

54. The children's achievements are in line with expectations at this early point in the academic year. The children are making good progress in their learning because of the good quality teaching that ensures that the practical activities are well organised and resourced appropriately. Lessons are well paced and involve all the children in counting numbers up to twenty and beyond. They have become familiar with number rhymes and games and show good recognition of numerals 1 to 10. They use the mathematical language appropriately. Good use is made of mathematical language, such as, full, empty, half-full to describe the capacity of containers. The children understand these concepts because the teacher has given them lots of practical experiences and encourages them to record this diagrammatically.
55. Many other activities make useful links with mathematics. For instance, in art where the children were helped to spot a rotating pattern as a result of the effective questioning skills employed by the staff. Most children know the names of shapes such as, circle, triangle, square and rectangle and can recognise these within different objects around the classroom. They are beginning to understand the terms 'more' and 'less.' Most children tackle mathematical tasks confidently, competently and with sustained concentration.

Knowledge and understanding

56. Most children's achievements in this area of learning are above the levels expected of pupils of this age. The activities to develop their scientific understanding are good because the teacher uses skilful and challenging questioning skills to assess and extend the children's appreciation of scientific terminology and fosters effective use of the vocabulary in an appropriate context. For example, the children are developing an awareness of the five senses. During a walk in the school's small wooded copse they had good opportunities to listen to sounds around them. They could describe the sounds using appropriate vocabulary. The teacher had prepared and organised efficient ways of ensuring they heard a range of sounds, including the use of some musical instruments and this helped to keep their attention focussed on the tasks and their enthusiasm for learning high. All children showed the ability to follow directions confidently and competently. They also talked very confidently about the things they saw. As a result, the children are developing their observation skills and a good awareness of the school environment.
57. Food technology activities are thoroughly planned with good detail about the range of language development made possible by this work. For example, when mixing the ingredients at one session pupils spoke confidently about different textures and smells. They used words such as, knead and roll, when mixing dough.
58. The children's information and communication technology skills are very good. They have regular access to the school computer suite. They work together happily when using the computers and follow instructions carefully. They understand the function of the keyboard and the 'mouse,' and know how to use them to carry out simple commands and functions. Even at this early stage of the year the children are using a program such as 'Colour Magic' to produce interesting designs with considerable confidence and independence.

Physical development

59. The children's physical skills are being appropriately developed and their achievements are above those expected of pupils of similar ages for this early point of the academic year. The children are making good progress in their control of both large and fine movements. They are using a good range of apparatus and other equipment with increasing skill. They have good awareness of space when moving around the hall in physical education. The finer physical movements such as the handling of tools, the management of construction equipment or holding a pencil correctly shows increasing co-ordination. The children use malleable materials such as, clay and dough safely and with good control.
60. The provision for the outdoor play activities ensures that the children have good opportunities to be creative and imaginative using a wide range of equipment such as, bicycles, scooters and trucks. The teacher uses the available space and resources well to increase children's levels of enquiry, exploration, and discovery. Most children enjoy setting themselves challenges and show pleasure in their achievements, for example, when climbing on the outdoor apparatus, balancing on bars or steering a bicycle. The children show a high level of concentration and decision-making during their physical activities. In these settings there was occasional very good interaction between the adults and the children. This sort of sustained involvement in the play activities by the adults helps to support and extend the children's learning.

Creative development

61. The children's creative development is good and is being supported in particular by the effective development of the skills and techniques of art and design technology. The children make good progress because the teacher uses all available space imaginatively to allow the children to have the opportunity to experience a wide range of activities that present good opportunities to explore, investigate and discover.
62. The children enjoy drawing and have good opportunity for free painting, finger painting and colour mixing which is beginning to develop their motor skills and enhance their good eye for detail. They use tools and materials confidently and safely. For instance, a significant number of children are competent with scissors when cutting different thickness of card, paper or wool when making their finger puppets. They are able to use malleable materials and roll out and mould dough to make teddy bear cakes. They use small and large construction equipment purposefully, and talk confidently about what they construct.
63. No specific musical activities were observed during the inspection but the teacher's provision of a music table and the music mat outdoors enables children to have the opportunity for music making. Informal opportunities are available for children to use musical instruments or listen to music on a tape during the course of 'free choice' sessions. The children enjoy singing during group activities with the Year 1 and 2 classes.
64. The school has a strong commitment to providing an appropriate curriculum for young children with a strong and appropriate emphasis on using structured play to support learning. The school is currently reviewing its planning to record more consistently the very good practical experiences already being provided. The assessment of the children's personal and social development and their academic achievements is very good. Now that the baseline assessments are complete a clearer picture of individual needs is emerging. Targets are being set and preparations are in hand to inform parents of the ways that they can support their children's learning at home.

ENGLISH

65. Standards in English are much higher than those described in the last inspection report. In the national tests of 1999 the pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 achieved results in reading and writing that were well above the national average. When compared with the results of pupils from similar schools the reading results continued to be well above average and in writing were above average. This high level of performance has been sustained for several years. The results for 2000 also show that almost every pupil reached the expected level in reading and writing and that many exceeded these.

66. The school makes effective use of the voluntary national tests to track the progress of pupils in Key Stage 2. The results of the past two years indicate that these pupils continue to make good progress. The great majority moves on to middle school operating at the expected level and a significant minority leaves with a degree of competence that is usually only evident towards the end of Key Stage 2.
67. Closer analysis of the test data up to 1999 suggests that by the age of seven the boys are performing better in English than the girls. However, in the most recent tests, the girls performed better than the boys. The inspection identified no significant differences in performance, nor any imbalance in the ways that girls and boys are taught. The very few pupils who speak English as an additional language have a high level of competence in spoken and written English.
68. Inspection findings confirm that standards of speaking and listening, reading and writing remain high throughout the school. Lively and imaginative teaching lies at the heart of this success. For instance, in the early part of Key Stage 1 the pupils came back from morning break to find a letter from the father of 'The Sleeping Beauty,' requesting a puppet show to celebrate her marriage to the prince. This led to a lively debate and was followed by a group of lower attaining pupils being deployed to make the puppets. This exercise helped develop their oral confidence no end because the learning support assistant sustained an excellent conversation throughout the manufacturing process asking questions about the story of 'Sleeping Beauty' and the sorts of things each character might have said.
69. By the end of Key Stage 1 most pupils are reading with increasing fluency and expression. They are enjoying a good range of literature at school and at home and demonstrate familiarity with many different types of book. In one Year 2 lesson the teacher introduced an anthology of rhymes 'The Rumble in the Jungle.' This was ambitious for the time of year because much of the material requires good reading skills. Nevertheless the majority of the class could read along with ease and the remainder followed closely. It was evident that even those who found reading unfamiliar text a daunting experience had a good understanding of poems and rhyme because they could predict some line endings and spot repeated lines and phrases. At these points they joined in. The teacher's careful questioning related precisely to her very good lesson plan. She rapidly established the depth of the pupils' knowledge of books as they used technical language to tell her about such things as 'author,' 'illustrator,' 'blurb' and 'dedication.' Later on several pupils remarked on the way that some poems were formatted to reflect the animal described. For instance that the long curved lines of text for the chimpanzee matched the way it might swing through the air. These types of response indicate a maturity of approach to reading far greater than is usually found at the end of Key Stage 1.
70. In Key Stage 2 the pupils build successfully on this very good start. In order to overcome the difficulties of mixed-age classes the teachers teach English in groups based upon the pupils' prior attainment. Good attention is paid to developing expression and fluency when reading aloud. In one lesson the middle set were reading 'Perseus the Gorgon Slayer.' The teacher spent a valuable couple of minutes getting the pupils to try out different ways of emphasising a short piece of dialogue that helped to clarify the relationship of the characters. Analysis of the pupils reading diaries shows that most are reading very widely and often. A class anthology of writings about favourite authors covers a range of styles and tastes. Although this contains the expected popular references to Dahl and Rowling, a few of the classic titles of Bawden, King-Smith and Garner are also prominent. By the time they move onto middle school most pupils possess both an appreciation of the joy of reading and the skills necessary for using dictionaries, locating reference materials and picking out important information.
71. In most respects the pupils' writing reflects the breadth and confidence of their reading. There is particular strength in the way that their writing skills are developed across the subjects of the National Curriculum. For instance, a recent focus upon writing in science has led to some good quality work recording the growth of seeds and the study of snails. The analysis of last year's work also shows that there are regular opportunities to record personal news, re-write famous fables such as 'The Hare and the Tortoise' and attempt simple poems. The neat and tidy books reveal that the pupils take pride in their work. It is also interesting to see that when given the opportunity to write a story of their own they will often write at much greater length. A good example of this is 'The Dinosaur Adventure' where the use of language is often vivid; "She sniffed me and suddenly her mouth and giant teeth

came towards me...” By the end of Key Stage 1 virtually all of the pupils are writing neatly and forming their letters correctly. However, few are being encouraged to join their writing to add speed and fluency to their work. **This is an area of improvement the governors should consider for inclusion in their action plan that will raise standards still further.**

72. By the end of Year 4 pupils have made the successful transition to joined writing and are using their well developed skills to very good effect across the curriculum. Analysis of their books reveals a good volume of work for a range of purposes including accounts of visits, instructions, diaries, letters of thanks and regular examples of the analysis of stories and poems. In addition to this the children’s understanding of the structure of written language is regularly reinforced through lessons about such aspects as punctuation and grammar. Once again it is the very good teaching that ensures the sustained high standards. In one lesson the knowledge and enthusiasm of the teacher helped pupils to rapidly acquire a thorough understanding of how the use of prefixes such as ‘un’ ‘de,’ ‘dis,’ and ‘re’ significantly alter the meanings of any root word to which they are attached. A small, but significant concern is that few pupils appear to be using ink on a regular basis in their day to day writing.
73. On the other hand the increasing use of information and communication technology and the improving keyboard skills of many pupils is a major strength. In particular the way that the pupils are now beginning to compose their writing directly on to the screen using story planners or notes is a major step towards addressing an issue that the school has identified for improvement. Teachers regularly mark the pupils’ work and write encouraging comments. However, there is little evidence of the pupils being encouraged to return to stories, poems and other writing to improve it still further. Conversations with pupils reveal that many are able to discuss their writing and recognise at a simple level where improvements can be made. The teachers know this and have accordingly modified their approaches to the literacy hour to provide greater opportunity for writing at greater length. The next step is to identify the strategies which will help pupils to develop the confidence to re-draft and re-structure their own work. **This is a key issue for action.**

MATHEMATICS

74. Standards in mathematics have improved since the last inspection. The results of the 1999 national tests show that attainment for seven-year-olds was above the national average and in line with that of similar schools. When pupils left school at the end of Year 4 their attainment was above that expected for their age. There has been a further improvement this year with an increase in the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level for seven-year-olds, and an increasing proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels. Year 4 pupils have also maintained their rate of improvement and left school with attainment again above that expected.
75. Inspection evidence indicates that these levels of attainment are being further improved and that pupils’ current achievements are well above the expected levels for seven-year-olds, and that Year 4 pupils are already working above the level expected for their age. There is little difference in attainment between boys and girls. Analysis of the test data collected by the school shows that this increased performance is most evident in numeracy but that performance in other aspects of mathematics have not been quite as strong.
76. The improvement in attainment is the result of the very successful introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy. Lessons move at a brisk pace because the teachers plan thoroughly. They make very good use of resources to support pupils’ learning. The grouping by ability of pupils in Years 3 and 4 helps teachers to be sure that they are planning work that meets the needs of pupils of all abilities.
77. Pupils with special educational needs, including higher attaining pupils, are well supported by their class teachers and support assistants, both in class and when withdrawn in small groups. They are able to make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts.

78. The very youngest children in the reception class are introduced to numbers through their everyday activities. They are encouraged to count and every opportunity is taken to extend their understanding of number. The rate of learning of the majority of pupils in Key Stage 1 is very good. They build their knowledge and understanding of mathematics through challenging practical and mental activities. The younger pupils are able to recognise and match words to numbers up to twenty and can recall number bonds up to ten in mental calculations. By the end of Year 2 the majority are able to recognise patterns in numbers and can name correctly plane and solid shapes. They are able to use their previous knowledge of numbers and apply this to other aspects of mathematics, for example, as was seen in their work on recording analogue and digital clock times. A particular feature of their work is the good use of correct vocabulary when talking about what they are doing. Another feature observed was the increasing ability of pupils to recall and use number bonds quickly in mental calculations and explain clearly how they had done so. All these sessions seen were characterised by the high levels of enjoyment of pupils who respond to the challenge of their teachers willingly and with enthusiasm.
79. This enjoyment of learning is carried on in Years 3 and 4 where pupils were observed handling and recording data in Venn diagrams. They were able to refer this activity to their previous work on data handling on the computer and showed very good understanding of the concepts involved. Other pupils in Year 3 were seen collecting data and then recording it in the form of a bar chart and did so with accuracy. By the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 4 analysis of previous work shows that they understand the rules of addition and subtraction and can recognise simple fractions such as halves, quarters and thirds. They can draw common two-dimensional shapes and recognise lines of symmetry in them. Higher attaining pupils are able to use appropriate measuring units and demonstrate good understanding of place value in numbers up to a thousand.
80. The quality of teaching in mathematics has improved since the last inspection and all teaching seen was either good or very good. Teachers plan their lessons well and demonstrate a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject which is used particularly well in the way they question the pupils and help them to explain and expand their answers. Activities are explained clearly and are well resourced so that all pupils know what they are expected to do and can settle quickly to their tasks. This helps to create and maintain a brisk pace to the lesson and keeps the rate of learning for all groups of pupils moving forward. Effective teaching methods ensure that pupils work productively and with real creative and physical effort.
81. The response of pupils to this very good teaching is one of involvement and enthusiasm. They listen to their teachers and to each other and participate willingly in the plenary sessions at the end of most lessons when they are eager to show what they have learned. Higher attaining pupils demonstrate a good capacity for independent working and persevere in their work when problems arise. The very good level of support given in class by support assistants enables lower attaining pupils to participate fully in all aspects of the lesson. This enables these pupils to feel a real sense of achievement in their work that is shared with the rest of the class.
82. One of the reasons why the pupils' numeracy skills are so good is because the teachers encourage them to apply this knowledge across the curriculum. They use their knowledge of number to good effect in data handling in science, history and geography topics. For example, the older pupils carried out a traffic and housing survey of the local area and good use was made of graphical recording skills. In design and technology they apply their skills of linear measurement. Younger pupils are encouraged to count in music when clapping rhythms.
83. The subject is well managed by a co-ordinator who is monitoring the teaching and learning of the subject most effectively. Her commitment to raising standards is fully supported by all teaching and non-teaching staff in the school.

SCIENCE

84. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 in 1999 indicated that pupils' attainment was above the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels of attainment was well above average which is an improvement since the last inspection when inspectors judged that some

higher attaining pupils weren't being stretched enough. On the basis of the tests carried out with pupils who left school at the end of Year 4 the levels of attainment were generally above that expected for their age.

85. The teaching of science in the school has benefited from the support of the local education authority science team who, with the school, have helped to introduce a new scheme of work for the subject. This has enabled a more systematic and planned approach to the subject that addresses all the requirements of the new Curriculum 2000. The experimental and testing aspect of the subject is particularly well developed across the school and all pupils develop their investigative skills well. Older pupils understand the need for fair testing and can identify what they need to do to make a test fair. Year 1 pupils have been pond dipping in the school pond and have a good knowledge and understanding of life cycles after their work on tadpoles. Older pupils in Year 2 extended this knowledge to include the life cycle of a chick, some of which were reared in school. Pupils have tested materials to see which would be the best to make a quilt and can predict which objects might float or sink before testing. By the end of Key Stage 1 the majority of seven-year-olds are achieving well above the level expected for their age. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 further extend this good work, for example in testing the waterproof qualities of materials. They were seen in lessons testing magnets to find which was the strongest.
86. The teaching of science seen during the inspection was good. Teachers are well prepared and use their own subject knowledge to enthuse their pupils. Work is well matched to the differing ages and abilities of pupils so that they all have the chance to achieve. Consequently, attitudes to science work are good throughout the school. Pupils are interested and enthusiastic in their approach to experiments and work well together when required to do so. They take turns fairly and share resources so that most lessons proceed in a workmanlike and worthwhile manner. They work hard and achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs, and those for whom English is a second language, are always very well supported in class and make good progress in relation to their prior learning.
87. The co-ordinator has worked hard and successfully to raise the profile of the subject across the school. Resources are carefully organised and readily available to support learning. Attainment is monitored for individual and groups of pupils through the non-statutory tests at the end of Years 3 and 4 and through end of topic tests. The co-ordinator and staff have all benefited from recent in-service training and there are plans to extend this further in the near future.

ART AND DESIGN

88. The quality of the pupils' work in art continues to exceed the expected levels at the end of Key Stage 1 and at the time the pupils leave school at the end of Year 4. The pupils' work across both key stages demonstrates a breadth of valuable experiences that are further enhanced by the regular opportunities provided to visit art galleries, exhibitions and museums.
89. Teachers make sure that the pupils' learning experiences include access to a wide range of materials and resources such as, pastel, paint, charcoal and pencil. However, the reason why standards are high is because the pupils are taught a good range of appropriate skills and techniques that they record in their sketchbooks before putting them to use in a range of exciting settings. Similarly, the involvement and support of local artists has been particularly successful in helping both teachers and pupils to develop their own expertise. For example, the pupils designed their own tile shapes in clay, and with the help of a local potter fired and glazed them. These were then incorporated in the large and colourful mini-beasts murals that now have pride of place on the walls of the school surrounding the 'sensory garden.'
90. The use of art to support learning across all subjects is a strong feature of the whole school. Younger pupils have worked on collages based upon stories such as 'The Sleeping Beauty.' These have been successfully incorporated within the model castle that is the current focus of their role-play area. The older pupils working on the theme of 'Gargoyles and grotesques' have researched information on buildings and characters from the works of CS Lewis and Lewis Carroll. This has led to some imaginative work in both two and three-dimensions. Similarly, the large posters based on Harry Potter

books, such as, the 'Chamber of Secrets' also demonstrate a keen awareness of the importance of colour, lettering and lay-out.

91. Teaching is imaginative and engages the pupils' interest and enthusiasm. In one lesson the pupils were presented with half a picture stuck onto paper. They had to complete the image and extend it. They demonstrated great commitment to the task and showed that they had the skill to match closely the shape, and contour. The lesson built carefully upon a previous one where the teacher had shown the pupils how to develop a range of tints and tones that will give a sense of depth to the work. One Year 2 pupil with special educational needs applied this technique confidently and competently by putting colour on colour to achieve the desired effect, which closely matched the colours in the object they were representing. His concentration did not waiver at all during the session. A further strength is the way the teacher emphasises basic techniques when using paint and brushes. Pupils' attention is frequently drawn to how they could improve their work.
92. The pupils are very enthusiastic and enjoy their work. The quality of presentation and display of their finished work shows commitment and pride. The atmosphere in art lessons frequently makes a very valuable contribution to the personal and social development of the pupils. Informal conversations amongst the pupils show that they listen hard to each other value and willingly take on new ideas and suggestions in order to improve their own work.
93. The newly appointed co-ordinator is getting to grips with her role. She is reviewing the guidelines for art and has planned in-service training for staff during this academic year. She is collating samples of pupils' work and noting why each is considered a good example of pupil attainment at a particular level. This will be a further valuable resource for teachers to refer to when assessing the pupils' work.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

94. The quality of work in design technology is well above the expected levels at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time that the pupils leave school at the end of Year 4. The quality of the pupils' work in design technology has improved to even higher levels since the previous inspection. This is because the learning assistant who assumes responsibility for teaching the subject throughout the school has excellent subject knowledge and a high level of personal expertise. Her planning is thorough, detailed and clearly identifies the opportunities both for designing and making, incorporating a variety of appropriate materials such as textiles, food, stiff and flexible materials, clay and construction kits. Her assessments of the individual pupil's achievements and their learning are excellent. These assessments ensure that the tasks tackled by individual pupils provide an appropriate and escalating level of challenge as they move through the school and make a strong contribution to the high standards achieved by many pupils.
95. The pupils have acquired very good skills in designing and making. They know how to use tools confidently and competently with an excellent awareness of the safety issues involved from a very early age.
96. A major strength in Key Stage 1 is the way that the use of research skills is established from an early age. For example, prior to designing a moving structure, the pupils had looked at books about fairground rides, discussed the different types of rides and their movements. Pupils prepared very good drawings in an appropriate size and shape. They had also made a list of the materials they would need (aided by the use of a dictionary to ensure correct spelling), what materials, colours textures and shapes they proposed to use and collected themselves the items they would need in order to start the making process. During the construction, the levels of concentration were extremely high. They demonstrated their ability to join, glue, saw, fix and combine different materials. They listened to advice but the high level of independent working shows a strong ability to resolve problems on their own. This is because they have a lot of experience in making other types of models. The use of mental calculation, measuring and proportion was particularly effective. For example, when the adult asked a Year 1 child how many centimetres do you need to measure in order to ensure that it is half the size of the piece of wood already sawn, there was a spontaneous and accurate response.

97. The evidence of the planning files and well-presented displays of pupils' work demonstrate that a suitable range of experiences is being mastered and built upon effectively in Years 3 and 4. There are high quality pieces of quilting and masks. The pupils use their knowledge of electric circuits to light up models. They also have a good grasp of the use of pneumatics for powering models such as, the crocodile opening his mouth to reveal sharp teeth, or Father Christmas going up and down the chimney or the beetle climbing a leaf. This high quality work also supports the children's work in science.
98. Pupils' attitudes to their work are very good. They concentrate hard. Pupils co-operate in sharing equipment. They help willingly to clear away at the end of lessons. They evaluate their own work and that of others honestly. It is evident from the finished models and food presentations that the pupils enjoy design technology and take a pride in their work.

HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

99. During the course of the inspection only one geography lesson and two history lessons were seen. However, from talking to the co-ordinators and other staff, speaking with, and analysing pupils' previous work, it is clear that standards are broadly in line with those expected nationally. This, in the case of geography, is an improvement from the last report. The issue of teacher subject knowledge has been addressed through in-service training and is now much more secure. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in both subjects as they move through the school and both subjects are well supported by an extensive programme of educational visits.
100. Good use is made of artefacts in history to help to bring the subject alive. The school had a successful 'Greek Day' as part of their work on Ancient Greece. Parents and pupils watched the opening ceremony of the recent Olympic Games. The pupils were in costume and Greek food and music was enjoyed by all. The quality of teaching is good. The lessons observed on the theme of democracy were enlivened by a debate between Year 3 and Year 4 pupils on the issue of parking outside the school. Another group debated the argument of whether a supermarket should be built on the school site. The lessons were led effectively by the teachers whose enthusiasm soon got pupils involved in their roles as interested parties. Both lessons were characterised by the good opportunities taken to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. Good organisation of the activities enabled all to participate and produced lively and interesting lessons that helped the pupils to gain a little insight into the processes of democratic debate. Similar enjoyment of learning was evident in the geography lesson seen on mapping skills. Evidence of these being well developed and used effectively was to be seen in the scrutiny of previous work, where older pupils had used these skills to good effect in their study of the local neighbourhood and surrounding villages.
101. Both subjects are taught through a two-year cycle of topics that have taken full account of the new requirements of Curriculum 2000. Both are identified in the school's development plan for review this year. Current resources are sufficient in quality and quantity and are being used effectively to support teaching and learning in both subjects.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

102. The standard and quality of the pupils' work in this subject is moving forward in leaps and bounds and exceeds even the good standards reported at the last inspection. The levels of pupils' attainment are well above average throughout the school. There are several reasons for this. Strong leadership from the headteacher and subject co-ordinator ensures that the development of the subject is planned carefully. For instance, the school made an early, successful bid for involvement in the National Grid for Learning and consequently accessed the additional funding (New Opportunities Funding) for staff training at an early stage. This has helped develop staff competence and expertise and provided the co-ordinator with a good model for organising the subject. As a result she has an excellent oversight of standards, teaching and the management of resources.
103. A further significant contributory factor to the rise in standards has been the creation of a computer suite with sufficient machines for a class of pupils to work together comfortably in pairs. Most recently the resources have been further enhanced by the purchase of an 'electronic whiteboard' that

enables teachers to demonstrate new programs, skills and techniques in a fashion that is clearly visible to the whole class. The school's prudent financial management allied to the enthusiastic fund raising of the Parent Teacher Association has contributed strongly to the excellent resources available for teaching this subject.

104. The major reason why standards are so high is because lessons are well planned, sharply focussed and imaginative. The teachers have a secure subject knowledge and have clearly benefited from their training. For instance in a Year 1 lesson the teacher made excellent use of the electronic whiteboard to revise the use of the 'Colour Magic' program. Her questioning was effective because it enabled the pupils to demonstrate their depth of knowledge and understanding of how they might use the program. Subsequently the pupils were observed selecting different widths of pen, changing colours and demonstrating very good mouse control as they drew simple maps of their route to school. The pupils work extremely hard and show excellent concentration and commitment to the task. They speak intelligently about what they are doing and show great maturity in their careful use of valuable equipment. As soon as they finish the higher attaining pupils manage to save their work to their own personal floppy disk. A further illustration of the success of the teaching and the excellent attitudes of the pupils is the way that the teacher was able to let the majority of the class work unaided whilst she introduced some simple data analysis with another group.
105. The pupils continue to make rapid progress in Years 3 and 4 because information and communication technology is in regular use across the entire curriculum. The cleaning of the school pond is recorded in word-processed accounts and the pictures taken with a digital camera. During the recent Olympic games the pupils visited a range of web-sites to research information about the athletes representing Great Britain. In information and communication technology lessons helpful links made with other subjects of the National Curriculum often enliven the pupils' learning. For instance, incorporating aspects of their current study of Ancient Greece with the use of the 'Superlogo' program helps the pupils to get to grips with understanding how they can load instructions to control movement. In order to practise this skill the teachers fix an acetate 'maze' on the computer screen and challenge the pupils to command the screen turtle, renamed 'Theseus' to track down the Minotaur located at the heart of the maze. This exercise produced a very positive response from the pupils. Their very good mathematical understanding means that they quickly identified sides of similar length and used this knowledge effectively to speed through the maze. A further strength of the teaching is the way that the teacher prepared additional mazes that incorporated 45-degree turns to test the higher attainers. Once again the use of learning support assistants plays a significant part in the success of many lessons. A very good example of this is the way that a group of lower attaining pupils were supported in carrying out a similar task to their classmates. However, rather than work on screen these pupils had to load instructions into a programmable toy in order to make it move round an obstacle to the Minotaur. The patient questioning of the learning assistant helped the pupils to work out the logic of their commands so that they finally succeeded in completing the task for themselves.
106. A further developing strength of work in Key Stage 2 is the use of word-processing to support the pupils' writing. These oldest pupils are just starting to use their hand-written notes and story planners as a support for composing their writing directly to screen. Many pupils are familiar with the Word program and several pupils were observed customising the spell check so that it did not highlight the new names they had invented for their 'myths.' Once this sort of work becomes more widely established, the use of information and communication technology to support the re-drafting and editing of text will become an important tool in supporting the development of pupils' writing.

MUSIC

107. At this early stage of the school year the standards in class music lessons and community singing are satisfactory. The school's provision for individual instrumental tuition is very good. A quarter of the pupils on roll in Years 2, 3 and 4 play either the flute or the violin. Standards in their individual instrumental achievements are above the expected level. In these cases, pupils are receiving a very good foundation in basic musical skills, notation, knowledge of musical terminology and the mastery of their instrument because of the high quality teaching.

108. Community singing is pleasurable and most pupils sing with evident enjoyment. The teachers pay good attention to the key skills of breathing, diction and basic rhythmic pattern. The melody contour has, in most cases, clear shape and the pitch is accurate although at times the higher notes were somewhat strained. A greater emphasis on body posture would have improved further the pupils' performance level during the course of the sessions.
109. In a class with pupils from Years 1 and 2 the children explored loud and soft sounds. They played confidently at either a fast or slow speed following the instructions given by the teacher. A strength was the wide range of instruments provided for them to choose from. The pupils distinguished the differences between a loud or soft sound. However, there were missed opportunities for the pupils to experiment, in order to improve upon the quality of their initial sounds.
110. In Key Stage 2 the older children had a small piece of film as a stimulus for creating a composition of sounds in the countryside. They were beginning to experiment successfully before selecting the sounds in order to draw together a group performance. The teacher supported the pupils effectively by suggesting ways in which they might develop their sounds and the possible combinations. Although there was insufficient time in this lesson for them to bring about the desired improvement in their performance a good start had been made. A small number of pupils are aware of information computer technology programs to support composition work. A greater focus on the listening of music from other countries and the acquisition of more non-European musical instruments would also strengthen the music curriculum particularly at Key Stage 1.
111. Music has a high priority on the school development plan for this year; it is currently being reviewed to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the new National Curriculum Orders. Teachers' planning and the monitoring of the music curriculum is also scheduled to take place during the current academic year.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

112. The two games lessons observed in Key Stage 2 were satisfactory. The teachers provided an appropriate period for warming-up at the start of lesson and cooling-down at the end. The pupils responded with enthusiasm to the activities and the lessons moved along at a good pace. Both lessons focused on skill development in hockey and all the pupils showed an appropriate level of skill in controlling and passing the ball. The teachers made appropriate demonstration of the techniques to be learnt and gave the pupils time and encouragement to improve their performance. Pupils were made aware of the effects of exercise on the body and showed good understanding of the importance of safety. Evidence is limited to evaluate overall standards or the extent of improvement since the last inspection, but it is clear that standards in ball games are in line with those expected for pupils of a similar age.
113. The school has good facilities for physical education. There is a well-equipped hall and both grass and hard surface areas for outdoor games. Older pupils benefit from a residential visit to a local outdoor centre where they undertake a number of activities including orienteering. The new co-ordinator has already conducted an audit of resources and been on in-service training. Apparatus is both good in quality and quantity and is used well to support the teaching and learning of the subject.
114. The current scheme of work is based on a nationally approved scheme that fully addresses all the requirements of the National Curriculum. In-service training has raised staff awareness and the profile of the subject across the school. Swimming is now undertaken by agreement with the Middle Schools and all other aspects of the subject are planned for.