

# INSPECTION REPORT

## ELMLEA INFANT SCHOOL

Westbury-on-Trym

LEA area: Bristol

Unique reference number: 108991

Head teacher: Mrs Jean Kelly

Reporting inspector: Mrs Barbara Parker  
22261

Dates of inspection: 4<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> December 2000

Inspection number: 225128

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Elmlea Avenue Westbury-on-Trym Bristol
Postcode:	BS9 3UU
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Lin Harrison
Date of previous inspection:	October 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
<p>Mrs Barbara Parker Registered inspector 22261</p>	<p>The provision for children under five Art and design Design and technology Music Equal opportunities English as an additional language</p>	<p>What sort of school it is and what it should do to improve further The school's results and achievements How well the pupils are taught</p>
<p>Mrs Geraldine Osment Lay inspector 96460</p>		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well the school cares for its pupils How well the school works in partnership with parents</p>
<p>Mr David Matthews Team inspector 18505</p>	<p>Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education</p>	<p>How well the school is led and managed</p>
<p>Mrs Heather Toynbee Team inspector 11976</p>	<p>Science History Geography Special educational needs</p>	
<p>Mr John Linstead Team inspector 20948</p>	<p>English Religious education</p>	<p>How good the curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils are</p>

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# REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>12</b>
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>27</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This is an average sized community infant school for pupils aged four to seven. There are 264 pupils at the school. Their attainment on entry is above that normally found in most other schools. Less than one per cent of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. This is well below the national average. Most of the pupils are from white English speaking families, although there are a higher than average number (2.9 per cent) with English as an additional language. There is a below average percentage of pupils with special educational needs (15 per cent) and an average percentage with Statements of Special Educational Need (1.5 per cent). The great majority of pupils come from very advantaged homes.

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

This is a very effective school. Standards are high in English, mathematics and science by the time the pupils leave the school, and pupils achieve well compared with those in similar schools. This is because teaching and learning are good in the reception and infant classes, and very good in Year 2. The school is very well led and managed. The head teacher and deputy head help teachers to identify how they can improve teaching and learning and achieve this through well-focused in-service training. School development planning is very effective in bringing about improvement and because of this, the school knows what needs doing and takes effective action to do it. Consequently, it is well placed to improve further. The school provides good value for money.

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

- By the age of seven, pupils achieve well in English, mathematics and science and standards are high.
- Teaching and learning are very good in Year 2.
- There is a climate of high expectation. Pupils and staff want to do well and work hard to achieve more.
- Pupils behave well; relationships are very good.
- Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language do well because the specialist teaching for these pupils is excellent.
- The school is very well led and managed.

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

- Brighter children in the reception year do not learn as rapidly as they could.
- The organisation of the curriculum in Year 1 means that several subjects are sometimes taught at the same time, causing disruption to teaching and pupils' concentration.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has made very good improvement since its last inspection in 1996. It has implemented a new set of good aims, which are central to its work and reflected in all that it does. All of the key issues have been successfully dealt with. Improvements to curriculum planning, teaching, and learning have led to higher standards. The accommodation and learning environment is much improved; classrooms have been partitioned and pupils' work is celebrated through high quality displays. The governing body's role is satisfactory, but still developing. Good improvement has been made to the teaching and learning of children in the reception classes. However, a few children are not making as rapid progress as they could because teaching does not take sufficient account of what they can already do and there are insufficient opportunities for these children to write independently.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				<i>Key</i>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
Reading	A*	A*	A	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Writing	A*	A*	A	A	
Mathematics	A	A*	A	B	

Pupils enter school with good skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Their knowledge and understanding of the world are very good and they have well-developed personal, social, emotional, physical and creative skills. These standards are maintained during the reception year, so that by the time the children start Year 1, nearly all of them have exceeded the early learning goals in all of the areas of learning. There are a few more able children, however, who could attain even higher standards if they were given more challenging things to do.

By the time the pupils leave the school, standards are well above average because pupils of all abilities achieve well in the infant classes, and particularly well in Year 2. This is reflected in the work pupils do and the high, and often very high, test results over time. In the year 2000, pupils did very well in the national tests for seven year olds compared with pupils in all schools, and well compared with those in similar schools. Standards are higher than could be reasonably expected by the time the pupils leave the school, even given their above average attainment on entry. Pupils are particularly good at adding, subtracting, dividing and multiplying numbers in their heads and explaining what they have done. Speaking skills are very good. Pupils choose words carefully in order to give precise meaning, but do not listen quite so carefully. They show limited patience when having to wait their turn to speak. They read confidently and with good understanding. They show neat, joined up writing and present their work extremely well. Standards are high in science and pupils' scientific investigation and experimentation skills are particularly well developed.

Attainment is above average in art and design, design and technology, music and physical education. In art, Year 2 pupils draw accurately what they see, and in design and technology, they evaluate exceptionally well what they have made. They sing tunefully and perform music confidently. In physical education, they move with good co-ordination and control.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	These are very good. From entering school, pupils want to learn and try hard to improve. They concentrate well and take care with their work. This is shown in the high standards and good presentation of work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Most pupils behave well and are polite and courteous. A few misbehave at times, but these are dealt with effectively by the school.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility, such as giving out equipment and clearing away at the end of lessons. They do not use their own initiative or make their own decisions so well though. This is because they are given limited opportunity to do so.
Attendance	Above average. Pupils want to come to school; they arrive on time and lessons start promptly.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Not applicable

*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.*

Good teaching overall, and very good teaching in Year 2 in particular, leads to very effective learning and high standards in English, mathematics and science by the time the pupils leave the school. In Year 2, much of the teaching is lively and captivates the interest of the pupils well. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 96 per cent of the lessons seen. It was excellent in nine per cent, very good in 12 per cent, and good in 48 per cent. Two unsatisfactory lessons were seen where pupils made insufficient progress in the time available. They were in reception and Year 1. All of the very good and excellent teaching and learning were in Years 1 and 2. English and mathematics are taught well in the infant classes and because of this, pupils learn effectively and acquire good basic skills in reading, writing, and numeracy. Teachers are particularly good at showing pupils how to express their thoughts because they use correct subject language and words that challenge pupils well. Consequently, pupils explain clearly and accurately what they are doing and have done. Teachers throughout the school manage pupils very well and expect them to behave; pupils respond to these demands well. Teachers tell pupils what they expect them to learn from the lessons and because of this, pupils work hard to live up to their teachers' high expectations.

The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language is excellent in the teaching outside the classroom. It is good in ordinary lessons because teachers are aware of what these pupils need to do to improve and set suitably challenging work for them. A few of the children in the reception year do not learn as rapidly as they could because teaching does not take sufficient account of what they can already do and there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to learn to write independently.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Enhanced further by visits and visitors, and very good implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies. Some physical education lessons are too short and sometimes, in Year 1, up to six subjects are taught at the same time. Teaching is often interrupted and high noise levels makes it difficult for some pupils to concentrate.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The curriculum is relevant and challenges these pupils well. They get excellent support from the co-ordinator.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Their needs are met exceptionally well in sessions outside the classroom and very effectively in lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. There are ample opportunities for pupils to reflect on what they see and hear and to think about the impact their actions have on others. Staff act as good role models on which pupils can base their own relationships. Pupils are made aware of the range of cultures and religious faiths represented in Britain.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Very thorough health and safety procedures and monitoring of pupils' behaviour, personal development and attendance. The school works well in partnership with parents. The information it gives parents is good overall, but pupils' progress reports do not say enough about what pupils can do and need to learn next. Assessment is not used as effectively as it could be in the reception classes to set work that challenges the brighter children.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Very good. They work extremely hard, and successfully, to promote high standards and very effective teaching and learning through good teamwork and by sharing a common purpose to do well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governors have a satisfactorily developing role in monitoring the school's performance and influencing the direction of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The head teacher and deputy head monitor and evaluate the school's performance, diagnose its strengths and weaknesses, and take very effective action to ensure improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Good use is made of all available resources so that there are adequate staffing, accommodation and learning resources. Finances are managed well and there are effective procedures in place for ensuring that the school gets good value for money.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like coming to school and make good progress.</li> <li>• The good teaching, and the work their children are given to do at home.</li> <li>• The behaviour of their children in school and the way the school encourages pupils to become mature, responsible, work hard, and do well.</li> <li>• The approachability of staff and the way the school works closely with parents.</li> <li>• The way the school is led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The information they get in written reports about the progress their children make.</li> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

Parents are very happy with the school. The team agrees with all of the things that please the parents the most. There are no after school or lunchtime clubs, but this is not unusual in an infant school. The information in the pupils' written progress reports is sparse and insufficient to give a comprehensive picture of what pupils can already do and what they need to learn next, but these things are discussed during the teacher-parent consultation evenings.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Standards at Elmlea Infant School are high; they are well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. This shows good improvement since the last inspection when they were above average.
2. Children enter school with above average attainment, and their knowledge, skills and understanding are built on effectively in the reception classes. Consequently, good standards are maintained during the children's first year in school. By the time they leave the reception classes to start Year 1, most children have exceeded the early learning goals in all areas of learning and are confidently doing National Curriculum work. Most children are confident readers by the end of the Foundation Stage. They recognise words on sight, name letters, and know letter sounds. Their handwriting is developing well. Many of them already write their own name, which is good for this time of the year. Much of their handwriting is neat, very well formed, and consistent in size. Some of the more able children, however, are capable of achieving even better standards in writing, but there are insufficient opportunities for these children to write independently in English lessons or at other times, such as during role-play. Children achieve well in mathematics. They work confidently with numbers up to 20 and some are capable of working with larger numbers. Many already understand addition and subtraction. Teaching does not always take sufficient account of what the brighter children can already do, however, and so the work does not always challenge them.
3. In relation to their prior attainment, pupils achieve well in the infant classes, and particularly well in Year 2. The results of the 2000 national tests for seven year olds were well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils of all abilities did well. A high percentage of pupils attained the higher level and very few achieved below the expected level. This supports the view that pupils with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress over time. Pupils at this school did very well in the writing tests, and well in reading and mathematics, when compared with other pupils in similar schools. These high standards have been maintained over time and reflect the work seen during the inspection both in lessons and pupils' workbooks.
4. The school has worked hard to ensure that boys and girls perform as well as each other, and, consequently, there are no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls. Pupils with English as an additional language are provided for well. Most of them understand and speak English sufficiently fluently to access the curriculum and are progressing at the same rate as their classmates. Although the school is not given any support for dealing with those pupils who have difficulties speaking and understanding English, the special educational needs co-ordinator managed to secure advice from the local education authority's ethnic support service during the inspection. She found that the school is doing all that it should to support these pupils and consequently, they make relatively good progress given their language difficulties.
5. By the time the pupils leave the school, most express themselves exceptionally well. They listen attentively in lessons, but are not as patient to wait their turns in general conversations with their classmates, often talking over one another in their eagerness to state their views. In more controlled situations, however, these pupils talk sensibly, for example, about what they are doing, using words with precision and accuracy, and when explaining how different characters, in the texts they are reading, might be feeling. They are interested in books and know the difference between those that tell stories and those that give information. Most pupils read with good expression and understanding, adopting different voices for different characters, and make sensible predictions about what might happen next. Although they know

that authors write the words in the books and illustrators draw the pictures, their recollection of different authors is vague. Most pupils achieve above the expected level in writing. They present their work very neatly and use joined script well. Their spelling is usually accurate. Their writing makes sense because they use punctuation accurately. Words are chosen carefully to join short phrases together and to add preciseness to their writing.

6. Pupils' of all ages achieve well in mathematics, and particularly well in Year 2. By the time they leave the school at the age of seven, most of them work confidently with numbers up to 100 and calculate answers in their heads, using addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division competently. The brighter pupils solve problems with numbers up to 1000, explaining clearly and precisely what they are doing. They recognise two- and three-dimensional shapes and their properties, such as how many corners, faces, and edges each one has. They present information on bar or pie charts, effectively using skills learnt in information and communication technology. They recognise fractions of numbers and measure objects using other objects or rulers.
7. Standards in science are above average by the time the pupils leave the school. This is because pupils do well in lessons, particularly in Year 2. Their investigative skills are particularly well developed. Pupils ensure that scientific tests and investigations are conducted in fair conditions so that their predicted outcomes are usually accurate. Pupils have good observation skills. They look closely at things and make comparisons, and because of this, know which materials are best for a particular purpose, such as when mopping up spilt liquid.
8. Pupils' achieve well in art and design, design and technology, music, and physical education and attain good standards in all of these subjects by the end of Year 2. They draw, for example, twigs and leaves accurately, in good proportion, and with good attention to detail. Their evaluation skills are excellent. For example, pupils in Year 2 know what to do to improve their models of the Nativity and how to make the people stand up. Extremely tuneful singing adds to the reverent atmosphere in assemblies and confidence in performing in front of their classmates gives pupils an understanding of what it means to be 'a musician'. Pupils move confidently in physical education lessons, twisting and curling, for example, with good co-ordination. They join together dance movements and remember the sequence well to perform to their classmates. They understand the importance of warming up their muscles before exercise in order to avoid damaging them, and know what effect strenuous exercise has on the heart. Standards in geography, history, information and communication technology, and religious education are broadly as expected for pupils' age.

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

9. The reception children have very positive attitudes to school. They come into the reception classes calmly, and happily leave their parents or carers at the start of the day. They show good levels of independence and respond well to the clear expectations of the staff and procedures for the day. These very positive attitudes remain with the children throughout their time at the school.
10. As reported at the time of the last inspection, pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, have very good attitudes to school and this has a very positive impact on their learning. Ninety-five per cent of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire stated that their children like coming to school. Inspectors found this to be true. Pupils across the school enjoy their work, they settle promptly, and show enthusiasm for their tasks. For example, Year 2 pupils had very good levels of concentration in an information and communication technology lesson when they were designing Christmas cards, and Year 1 pupils worked very hard to find subtraction sums using given digits during a numeracy lesson.
11. Pupils' behaviour, both in and out of class, is good. Pupils respond readily to the requests and instructions of teachers, support assistants, and mid-day supervisors. The pupils are polite

and usually courteous to each other, and always to teachers, other staff, and visitors. They are trustworthy and show respect for property, treating the resources they use with care. There were two fixed-term exclusions from the school during the year prior to the inspection; this is higher than at the time of the last inspection. The school does not use this sanction lightly and operates it using the correct procedures. Inspection findings confirm the views of virtually all parents that behaviour in and around the school is good. However, there is a small number of pupils who are unable to control their behaviour but, due to the very good pupil management procedures in place, any disruption is kept to a minimum.

12. Pupils' personal development is good. The pupils are treated in a positive and mature manner by the staff, and they respond in a similar vein. Most have very good relationships with their schoolmates and adults, built on tolerance and respect for the work, ideas, beliefs, and values of others. The pupils work well individually and in pairs or small groups and are learning to be kind to each other, take turns, and help their classmates. Pupils support charities through fund-raising activities, including The European Children's Trust, The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and a donkey sanctuary in Devon. Pupils have opportunities to develop their independent learning skills through using information and communication technology across the curriculum and devising experiments and investigations in science and mathematics lessons. There are sufficient opportunities provided for pupils to take responsibility as, for example, monitors and helpers in their classrooms, but fewer opportunities for them to use their own initiative in their work.
13. As reported in the last inspection report, attendance at the school is very good and is above the national average. Parents are reminded, in the prospectus and newsletters, of their responsibility for their children's punctuality and attendance.

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

14. Teaching and learning are good overall. They have improved since the last inspection when they were mainly satisfactory. During this inspection, teaching was satisfactory or better in 96 per cent of the lessons seen. It was excellent in nine per cent, very good in 12 per cent, good in 48 per cent, and unsatisfactory in four per cent. Teaching and learning are very good in Year 2, where the teaching is often very good and sometimes excellent because it is lively and snappy and pupils find the work captivating. For example, in a history lesson about the life of the explorer Robert Scott, the teacher acted as a reporter, bringing the subject 'alive'. This fired the pupils' imagination and spurred them on to find out more. Their learning was excellent; pupils showed a wealth of knowledge about Scott's journey to the South Pole. They used a wide range of different things from which to glean knowledge and more information, such as diaries, contemporary newspaper reports, and photographs. In a science lesson, pupils found out which material would be best to mop up some paint that had been spilled. Because they were dealing with a real situation, they were interested in what they were doing and were inspired to solve the problem.
15. The teaching of the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies is very effective, particularly in Year 2. Literacy and numeracy are taught well in other subjects, and because of this, pupils achieve very well in English and mathematics by the age of seven. Literacy and numeracy lessons contain a good balance of teacher explanation, instruction, and pupil activity. Sometimes, though, the discussions at the start of literacy lessons go on too long, leaving less time for pupil activity, and some discussions at the end do not extend learning further. Mathematics lessons usually begin with a mental arithmetic session and because of this, pupils' mental skills are particularly good. There are good opportunities for pupils to explain their thinking and this fosters very good understanding of whether to use addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division when solving number problems.
16. All teachers use very precise language and correct subject words when explaining things to pupils and telling them what they are to do. Teachers have high expectations about what pupils will understand and, therefore, they choose language carefully to explain what they

mean, even with the younger ones. For example, in a literacy lesson in one of the reception classes, the teacher responded to the children's curiosity by replying "It is made from materials taken from the ground", to the question "Where does ink come from?" Because of the teachers' good use of subject vocabulary, pupils of all ages talk accurately about what they are doing and have learnt. For example, in mathematics they explain precisely how they have worked out calculations in their heads, and in English, they use words such as 'phonemes' and 'alliteration' correctly when describing what they are doing.

17. Teachers throughout the school manage pupils very well and have very good relationships with them, showing them respect. Consequently, pupils respond well to teachers' well-focused questions and want to please their teachers and so stay on task. Teachers know what they want pupils to learn and so the work is well focused and usually appropriately challenging. Pupils work productively because teaching makes good demands on them to work hard and do their best. Pupils apply intellectual effort because they are interested in what they do, and want to do well. Because teachers remind them of the time they have left to complete their work, the pupils work at a good pace and produce a good amount of work in the time available. They concentrate well on their work and produce neat, joined script and take a pride in the presentation of their work in general. Teachers' marking of work is very good and a great deal of care and attention is given to this. Teachers write considered comments on pupils' work that enables them to improve their work in the future. Because teachers write perceptive and useful comments on pupils' work, pupils understand what they are doing and what to do to improve. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection when teachers' marking was inconsistent and unhelpful.
18. Teaching and learning of children in the reception year are good for most of the children most of the time. Whilst there are many strengths, there are some aspects of teaching which sometimes slows the learning of the brighter children. Teaching sometimes takes insufficient account of what these children already know and can do to challenge them further. Planning does not identify different learning for these children and they often do the same things as the others. For example, in one lesson, it was intended that all children would 'make paintings'. Some children, however, could already paint accurate and well-proportioned pictures and needed to go on to more detailed and structured work. Although handwriting skills and techniques are taught well and this contributes very well to standards in writing by the end of key stage, there are insufficient opportunities for children to write independently in lessons. Consequently, the brighter children copy the teacher's writing when they are clearly capable of having a go at writing their own words and sentences. There are too few opportunities for children to develop writing in a relaxed and secure way, such as during role-play activities. This means that the brighter children's learning is not as rapid as it could be. Although this is redressed later on in the infant classes, where pupils experience a good number and wide variety of writing opportunities in other subjects such as science and religious education, some children in their first year at school could make greater gains earlier.
19. There are several afternoons in Year 1, when up to six subjects are taught at the same time. Focused teaching with one group is sometimes interrupted because pupils need help with other subjects. The high noise level makes it difficult for pupils working at quiet activities to concentrate. Nevertheless, the teaching meets the needs of all pupils well in the infant classes. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs in their class groups is good. It is excellent in withdrawal sessions when the work these pupils do meets their needs exceptionally well. Because of this, the pupils achieve the targets set in their Individual Education Plans and make good progress over time. This is reflected in very few pupils attaining below the expected level by the age of seven. Pupils with English as an additional language make similar progress to their classmates because teachers support these pupils effectively. Pupils who do not speak fluent English are supported well in lessons and exceptionally well in withdrawal sessions and are making very good progress in their ability to speak English.

20. Teaching and learning in information and communication technology are satisfactory and are good in science, art and design, design and technology, music and physical education. Not enough lessons were seen in geography, history and religious education to make a judgement about the overall quality of teaching in these subjects. However, from what was seen, including past and current work, talking with pupils and staff, and the scrutiny of subject plans, it is evident that teaching and learning are at least satisfactory in all three subjects.

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

21. The school provides a satisfactory range of activities, which covers all subjects and is relevant to the age and interest of the pupils. Statutory requirements are met, including the teaching of religious education. There is a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been implemented very well and are very effective in maintaining high standards in reading, writing, and mathematics. There is an appropriate allocation of teaching time to each subject, although some sessions, especially in physical education, are too short to enable new skills to be taught, practised and consolidated. This limits the impact of the teaching, and slows pupils' learning. The school makes very good provision for pupils' personal, social, and health education. This aspect of pupils' development has a high priority in this school, and there is a good policy and scheme of work, clearly setting out the school's aims in this area. There are satisfactory policies and schemes of work for sex education and teaching pupils about the dangers of drug misuse. These are mainly taught through science and personal, social, and health education.
22. The previous inspection found the curriculum for children under five to be inappropriately based on the different areas of learning. This has been successfully addressed through better curriculum planning which links the children's work to the new early learning goals. Weaknesses in subject provision in the infant classes have been dealt with. All subjects now have a policy and an appropriate scheme of work, although still in draft form for physical education and religious education. Higher attaining pupils are now adequately provided for in mathematics and science.
23. There are no after or before school clubs or activities, except for the French club, for which parents pay. However, the curriculum is enhanced by visits to local and other sites of special interest, including, for example, a zoo, castle, museum, and sea life centre. Pupils also benefit from visits from theatre and dance companies. There are regular visits from storytellers and instrumentalists, including a brass quartet. Homework is satisfactory. It is mostly reading, enabling parents to make a significant contribution to the high reading standards in school.
24. The school ensures that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum. Pupils with English as an additional language are supported well in lessons, and exceptionally well in lessons outside the classroom, and this helps them to play a full part in the life of the school.
25. The curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. This is because good use is made of what teachers know about pupils' learning to set these pupils suitably challenging and relevant work. Additional literacy support sessions, taught by the special educational needs co-ordinator, are particularly successful in ensuring that some of the Year 1 pupils reach higher standards in reading and writing by the time they start Year 2. The work these pupils do in withdrawal sessions is followed up back in the classrooms and these pupils make good progress towards meeting their group and individual targets.
26. Overall, the provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and is a strength of the school. The school is very effective in providing opportunities for prayer, reflection, and meditation, both in assemblies and lesson time. Beautiful pieces of music are played at the beginning and end of each assembly and, consequently, the pupils enter and exit assemblies in a calm frame of mind. Candles are lit, and lights are lowered, to give a feeling of reverence. Well-chosen artefacts, such as a glass angel shining in the



candlelight, provide a focus for reflection. Pupils explore values of a Christian nature and the beliefs of others. During the inspection, for example, the emphasis was on the Nativity and what it means for the world. Visitors to the school, such as staff from a mini-planetarium, and visits by pupils to local castles and stately homes, give pupils the opportunity to experience the world around them.

27. The provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. The teachers provide very good role models for pupils to base their own responses and behaviour on, showing them care, kindness, and courtesy. The pupils' response, and their good behaviour around the school, shows that the great majority have a clear sense of right and wrong. The school provides a very strong moral code, which permeates everything it does. For example, the pupils write their own class rules and these are prominently displayed. This encourages pupils to take responsibility and to develop an understanding of living in a community. The very good relationships in the school are a crucial factor in forming pupils' attitudes. Issues are discussed, in personal and social education sessions as well as with individual children, as and when the need arises. Pupils relate comfortably to each other and often work well in pairs and small groups. Most pupils are able to work responsibly and without direct supervision in lessons, such as geography and art, when the teacher is working with another group. On occasion, as in the good investigative science lessons in Year 2, pupils show an ability to think for themselves. However, generally, there are too few opportunities for pupils to show initiative both within classrooms and around the school.
28. The provision for cultural development is very good. The school is good at promoting pupils' awareness of their own rich heritage and cultural traditions through visits and visitors. Examples of this are the celebration of Burns' Night and educational trips to places of historical interest, such as Chepstow Castle. The pupils learn about, and can recognise, the work and style of a wide range of artists and composers from different parts of the world. The traditions of other cultures and countries are celebrated and the school draws upon pupils and their parents who are able to share their experiences with others. For example, a Pakistani mother comes in to show her beautiful saris and some Jewish grandparents have donated to the school an extensive collection of artefacts on Judaism.

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

29. As reported at the time of the last inspection, the school takes very good steps to ensure pupils' welfare, health, and safety. As a result of the school's emphasis on caring for others, and the need to be polite and friendly, a happy environment has been created. This is founded on very good relationships. The pupils feel confident that there are sympathetic adults to whom they can go with any problem. All staff work hard to maintain positive relationships, they know the pupils well and are able to monitor personal development informally and formally through pupils' personal characteristic records.
30. The school has an appropriate health and safety policy. Staff and governors with responsibility for health and safety make regular risk assessments, and fire practices take place regularly and are recorded. There are suitable arrangements for first aid and medical support. The school has good arrangements for child protection. The head teacher is the named responsible person and, together with the deputy head and all other staff, has received training for this role. There is a very good programme for personal, social, and health education, which is taught through assemblies, physical education and science lessons, and times set aside throughout the week for pupils to share ideas and talk about their experiences.
31. The school has very good systems for promoting and monitoring attendance. Registers are marked accurately and reasons for absences are recorded. Teachers ensure an efficient start to the day; pupils are given a friendly welcome and opportunity to discuss any personal issues. The head teacher regularly checks the attendance registers. Instances of unexplained absence are promptly followed up with support from the local authority's education welfare service.

32. There are very good procedures for monitoring and encouraging good behaviour. The school has a consistently implemented behaviour policy, which includes rewards and sanctions and ensures that the pupils behave well. Praise and stickers reward good behaviour and the weekly 'achievers assembly' ensures that the whole school community acknowledges effort and hard work. Parents are happy that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible.
33. The school's procedures for assessing, monitoring and supporting pupils' attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science are good. Reading records are used well by teachers and parents to record progress and highlight strengths and what pupils need to work on to make further progress. Pupils' progress is monitored well in English, mathematics and science through detailed records matched to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. Assessment opportunities are identified in the curriculum plans for religious education, and pupils' progress against specific skills in information and communication technology is assessed and recorded. Assessment in other subjects is satisfactory, but not as well developed and used as in the core subjects, information and communication technology, and religious education.
34. The school makes good use of assessment to inform long-term curriculum planning. For example, last year, a thorough analysis was made of pupils' performance in the national tests at the end of Year 2. This led to the identification of spelling as an area for improvement. The school has since successfully introduced measures that are already having the desired effect of raising standards in this area. Each half term, each pupil completes a written assignment and the results are used to plan the next half term's work. Assessment is satisfactory in the Foundation Stage, but the information is not used effectively to provide work that builds on what the brighter children in particular can already do and know.
35. Good use is made of assessment to identify pupils with special educational needs and to provide appropriate work for them. Individual Education Plans for these pupils identify specific learning targets and pupils' work is matched to these well. Meticulous records are kept of each small step each pupil takes towards successfully meeting their targets. The procedures for monitoring and supporting the personal development of pupils with special educational needs are very good. Whenever necessary, external help and advice is sought and given, for instance by the educational psychologist, the speech therapist, or adviser on autism.

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

36. As reported at the last inspection, the school has a good partnership with parents and the pre-inspection questionnaire and meeting with parents and carers show that they hold the school in high regard. Overall, the quality of information provided for parents is good. There is evidence, however, that supports the views of those parents who are not happy with the quality of the written annual reports. This was also a concern for parents at the last inspection, which has not been successfully dealt with. Although the school has worked hard on developing and improving them each year, the reports do not give a clear picture of the progress pupils are making or inform parents what pupils need to do next to improve their performance in each subject. However, these are reported verbally during the parent and teacher consultations. The teaching staff are very approachable and happy to talk to parents at other times. Ninety-five per cent of parents would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems.
37. Throughout the school, reading and other homework is set and the reading record books show that many pupils are very well supported at home. This good support is a valuable asset to the school. Some parents expressed dissatisfaction with the range of extra curricular activities. Except for the French club, for which parents have to pay, the school does not provide activities outside lessons, but the inspection team considers that this is no different to many

other infant schools and that the school is providing an enriched extended curriculum through visits and visitors.

38. Good newsletters keep parents up to date with the day-to-day life of the school, and the prospectus and information sheets provide detail about what is being taught and when. Regular meetings are held for parents on the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and parents are invited to school productions, Christmas celebrations, and sports day. There are good procedures for introducing the youngest children into the reception classes and to ensure that their parents and carers feel welcome and comfortable in the school. There are many parents who regularly help in the school and good training is provided for them to ensure that both parents and school benefit from this valuable resource. Through the Elmlea Infants' School Association, parents are very supportive of the school. Funds are raised from a variety of events and are currently being used to develop the playground. All of these factors show that the school has a good range of links with parents and carers, which have a positive impact on learning.
39. Parents and carers are kept very well informed during every stage of the identification and support of pupils with special educational needs. They are invited to reviews each term to discuss the progress made by their children, but can contact the special educational needs co-ordinator any time they have particular worries or questions that need an immediate answer. Parents whose children have Statements of Special Educational Need are informed of their children's daily progress through the use of a 'tracking' document. Useful suggestions are made about how parents can help their children at home in partnership with the school. The school supports those parents who have children who speak English as an additional language well by offering them advice and guidance on how to help their children at home.

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

40. The leadership and management of the head teacher, deputy, and other staff with management responsibility are very good. The head teacher and the deputy work in effective partnership, and together they have a clear view of what is happening in the school. They have brought about significant improvements since the last inspection. These include effective team building, developments in curriculum planning, and improvements to teaching and learning. The rigorous addressing of key issues from the last inspection has resulted in very good school improvement, which is reflected in the pupils' high standards of attainment by the age of seven. The co-ordinator for pupils with special educational needs is particularly effective in ensuring very good provision for these pupils, which results in their good progress. The deputy head teacher is an exemplary teacher. She inspires colleagues and she has played a significant part in boosting staff morale since the last inspection.
41. The school's development plan is an improvement on the one at the time of the last inspection, since it represents a vision for its future development over forthcoming years. It focuses clearly on the way the school intends to raise the standards further by improving the quality of education provided. There is a strong focus on national initiatives such as Curriculum 2000, as well as a clear intention to improve teaching, notably in dance, through strategies such as enabling teachers to observe good practice. Targets are effectively shared with the wider community, and they are on display in the school entrance hall. The involvement of a wide range of people in drawing up and reviewing the school's aims has contributed very well to the shared commitment to improvement and the school's strong capacity to succeed. As a result, there is an excellent reflection of the school's aims in all of its work.
42. The school has made good progress in developing the role of subject co-ordinators, particularly those of English, mathematics and science, since the last inspection when their work was not sufficiently effective. Management of these subjects is now good and contributes to effective teaching and learning and high standards in English, mathematics and science. The English co-ordinator has addressed all of the weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection and the mathematics co-ordinator has positively influenced the quality of teaching in the subject through supporting colleagues. The role of the co-ordinators of the foundation

subjects is satisfactory, but is limited in its impact, for example on the quality of teaching and the use of assessed pupils' work. Design and technology is very well managed.

43. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties satisfactorily. Governors are very supportive of, and immensely proud of the school. At the time of the last inspection, the governing body was planning to build a fully effective team. Despite a number of changes in governors, they have kept sight of how best they can develop their role in supporting the school and helping it to improve further. This is reflected in Elmlea Infant School Governors' code of practice that incorporates the governors' aim to become a 'critical friend' to the school. Governors put this into practice by asking questions and requesting information so that they can make well-informed decisions. They are increasingly developing their role in challenging the school to explain how it is doing. The governors have made good progress in addressing the key issue from the last report to increase the part they play in the management and efficiency of the school. There are designated governors for each class and for overseeing numeracy, literacy and the provision for children in the Foundation Stage. Governors with responsibility for health and safety and for pupils with special educational needs are particularly effective. The role of the governing body in some aspects of the school's work, such as the performance management of teaching staff, is satisfactory but under-developed. As at the time of the last inspection, the role of governors, notably in monitoring the school's performance and shaping its direction, is satisfactory but still developing.
44. The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching and learning are good. The head teacher has effectively established a rigorous system of observations, so that teachers are regularly observed, and areas for developing teaching are identified. This results in targets for individual teachers being set, as well as informing the head teacher about what needs to be done to improve teaching throughout the school as a whole. The head teacher and deputy head teacher urge teachers to look at what does and does not work in lessons, and help them to improve their teaching through well-focused and effective training. They further support individual teachers by providing helpful advice and guidance, for example about how to improve class organisation and management.
45. The school makes good use of its money. The targets that the school sets in its development plan are supported well by careful financial planning. It uses grants and specific funding well for their designated purposes, and governors are keen to be further informed about aspects of the spending of specific grants. The governing body seeks the best value for money in its purchase of goods and services. The head teacher's recent training on this aspect of financial management has been helpful to governors in applying these principles. The finance clerk has good levels of expertise in financial management, and is very efficient. At the time of the inspection, she was too recently appointed to have made a significant impact on financial control.
46. Staffing, accommodation, and learning resources for children in the reception and infant classes are adequate to meet the demands of the curriculum. There are sufficient teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum. The very effective support for newly qualified teachers continues into their second year of teaching, enabling them to develop their skills effectively. Support staff are experienced and well qualified, and the school supports their development well, providing them with targets for improvement following observations by the head teacher. As a result, these people make a positive contribution to pupils' learning, particularly those with special educational needs.
47. The experienced and highly expert special educational needs co-ordinator manages the special educational needs team very effectively. She leads by the example of her own very good teaching and ensures that all the children on the special needs register receive their full entitlement and support within the Code of Practice. The parent governor with responsibility for special educational needs is fully involved and supportive of the co-ordinator. Whenever possible, she attends meetings with parents and her regular discussions with the co-ordinator are formally recorded. She writes reports for the full governing body and its annual report to

parents. An expert group of learning assistants is deployed well to support pupils in their classrooms and this allows these pupils to take a full part in lessons at an appropriate level. Others work with individual pupils on a withdrawal basis, providing the special attention that these pupils need. The specific grant provided for supporting special educational needs in the school is used very well to provide a satisfactory level of classroom assistance and to release the co-ordinator from classroom responsibility. The school uses some of its main budget to further improve this provision. It has been possible to provide a room in which withdrawal groups can be taught effectively and adequate learning resources to teach these pupils.

48. Improvements have been made to the school's accommodation since the previous inspection. This has been achieved by the provision of extra walls to divide the teaching spaces. Although this has produced some classrooms that lack space, the impact has been effective in restricting the disruption to lessons that was formerly caused by noise from other classes. Classrooms are bright and stimulating and the school is well cared for as a learning environment.
49. Learning resources are satisfactory. Although there are now sufficient computers, the quality of some printers and the incompatibility of some hardware and software sometimes limit pupils' progress. Although the school is to receive funds to remedy this weakness, the time that this is taking means that current pupils' progress sometimes continues to be restricted. The school makes good use of its grounds for pupils' geography work, but there is a lack of globes, particularly those suitable for the reception children, and some resources such as atlases are old and worn. The good resources for music and physical education contribute well to the high standards in these subjects.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

50. The school should now:

- (1) enable the brighter children in the reception classes to make more rapid progress by:
  - ensuring that teaching takes sufficient account of what children can already do and challenges them to do better and learn more;
  - giving all children more opportunities to practice independent writing;  
(Paragraphs 2, 18, 51, 57, 59-62)
- (2) improve the curriculum arrangements in Year 1 so that teaching and learning are not sometimes interrupted by high noise levels and too many pupils needing the teacher's attention when a number of subjects are being taught at the same time.  
(Paragraphs 19, 88, 93, 100)

In addition, when writing their action plan, the governing body should consider the following areas for further improvement:

1. Some physical education lessons are not long enough to enable pupils to learn new skills, practise them, and consolidate them (paragraphs 21, 120);
2. Some of the pupils' written progress reports do not contain sufficient information about how well pupils are doing and what they need to work on next (paragraph 36);
3. Pupils have limited opportunities to show initiative (paragraphs 12, 27);
4. The governing body's role in analysing standards and influencing the direction of the school is limited (paragraph 43).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	56
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	38

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9	12	48	27	4	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		264
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR– Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		39

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	2.9
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.2
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	2000	38	41	79

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	36	36	34
	Girls	41	41	41
	Total	77	77	75
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	98 (94)	98 (97)	95 (100)
	National	84 (82)	85 (83)	90 (87)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	35	34	36
	Girls	41	41	41
	Total	76	75	77
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (93)	95 (95)	98 (100)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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



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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	5
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	232
Any other minority ethnic group	5

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

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	2	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

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

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y2**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	27.8
Average class size	30

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y2**

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	166

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
	£
Total income	470363
Total expenditure	464005
Expenditure per pupil	1764
Balance brought forward from previous year	12815
Balance carried forward to next year	19173

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

264

Number of questionnaires returned

103

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	62	33	3	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	45	45	3	0	8
Behaviour in the school is good.	50	47	0	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	48	45	6	0	2
The teaching is good.	59	34	0	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23	54	17	0	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	60	35	5	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	28	2	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	37	56	6	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	61	37	1	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	55	39	0	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	11	28	32	5	23

## **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**

51. The children in the foundation stage are taught in three reception classes. Although these children have only been in school one term, and some of them have only attended full-time for half a term, their achievement is good and the children exceed the early learning goals in all areas of learning by the time they start Year 1. Staff have worked hard to improve curriculum planning and provide children with learning experiences which involve them in observation and exploration. This had led to improvements in the provision for children since the last inspection and teaching is now good. This is in contrast to the previous inspection, when a quarter of the lessons seen had weaknesses, all but one of the 15 lessons seen during this inspection were satisfactory or better, and 12 of them were good. Nevertheless, whilst teaching and learning are good overall in all areas of learning and most things work well, some aspects of teaching are under-developed and have been recognised by the school as areas for improvement. Evidence from the inspection shows that staff do not always make sufficient use of what they know about children's previous learning to ask different things of different children according to their ability and level of maturity, and there are insufficient opportunities for children to develop independent writing skills.

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

52. Teaching and learning are good. In the three reception classes, children enjoy their learning activities and sustain good concentration. For example, in one class, they listened attentively to a taped story, and excitedly invited a visiting inspector to join in their fun. The children are very secure and satisfy their natural curiosity by confidently looking, touching, and questioning. A small group of children, for example, asked one inspector her name. They listened carefully to the answer given and then went on to enquire how old she was! In turn, they responded very well to the questions inspectors asked them, eagerly showing their work and talking confidently about what they were doing.

53. There are good opportunities for children to work and play independently, particularly in one class where, for example, children engaged in small-world play with the Nativity characters put out and operated the tape recorder themselves when selecting, playing and listening to different tapes.

54. Relationships are very good. The adults in each class work together well, providing children with good role models on which to base their own relationships with one another. Consequently, the children work effectively with their classmates, for example in pairs on the computer playing number games and when engaged in role-play.

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

55. Children's speaking, listening and reading skills are taught well. Nearly all of the children are confident speakers and listeners and take turns in conversation. They talk fluently in well-formed sentences and make their point forcefully, for example, when talking about visiting relatives living in Wales or abroad. One child 'told off' an inspector when she asked what they were doing. 'Didn't you listen to the teacher?' came the reply.

56. Children in all three classes enjoy books and many know that authors write the stories and illustrators draw the pictures. Some children know most letter names and sounds and recognise some familiar words on sight because they practise them in class and at home. Computers and tape recorders are used well to promote children's listening and reading skills. The book area in one class in particular is bright, stimulating, and inviting, and this encourages children to browse and select books to read independently.

57. Writing is taught satisfactorily; handwriting is taught exceptionally well. Teaching puts good emphasis on developing children's handwriting skills and techniques, and these are taught and learnt very successfully in all three classes. Consequently, most children know that 'we always start a sentence with a capital letter', and some form letters correctly and already write their own names using joined script. These children are ready to have a go at writing independently, although they are asked to copy out sentences written by the teacher, for example when writing the Christmas story, or make up and then copy sentences from word cards. Comments made by the teachers in children's books, such as 'a good attempt at copying and joining', place the emphasis on handwriting, with insufficient regard to improving children's writing skills. Children are reluctant to write independently, even in their play. However, role-play areas do little to promote or encourage writing. There are too few opportunities in these areas for children to write and this means that some children, the brighter ones in particular, do not make the rapid progress in writing that they could.

### **Mathematical development**

58. Mathematics is particularly well taught. There is good promotion of numeracy in all classes through, for example, displays of numbers and objects for children to count. Labels, such as 'How many people are there in the rhyme?', encourage children to think about numbers, and very good use by the teachers of words such as 'addition', 'subtraction' and 'equals' means that children talk confidently and accurately about what they are doing. Excellent resources – some of them teacher-made – are used well to promote, for example, addition and subtraction, such as the cardboard bus which stopped several times along a make-believe route to enable passengers to get on and off. Some of the teaching methods are very effective. For example, when children crouched on the floor and then slowly grew taller, as they counted out loud, to represent numbers getting larger.
59. Most children work confidently with numbers up to 20, when, for example, counting spots on dominoes and attaching the appropriate number card. In one lesson seen, the brighter children took it upon themselves to count several dominoes – going up to 39 in one instance. This was unplanned and totally spontaneous. Although the teacher saw this happen and joined the children, this would not have occurred if the children had not seized the opportunity and taken the initiative themselves to extend the task they were given. This shows that, as in writing, the work these brighter children are given to do does not always challenge them to do better and achieve more.

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

60. Children enter the school with a very good basic general knowledge. Teaching is good and builds well on this when children explore, for example, how they have changed since they were babies and the different forms of transport they use to get to school. This was extended well in one lesson seen when children went on to talk about how they get to foreign countries. Questions from the teacher such as 'Do you have to go on an aeroplane to get to America?' focused the children's thinking well and prompted a discussion about boat travel. The activities the children went on to do following this, however, were not adapted to suit their different abilities, even though some children showed a well-developed understanding of maps, talking about 'A to Z' maps, for example, and knowing that 'H' symbolises a hospital. They were all asked to draw a 'map of their journey to school'. Whilst the majority of children benefited from the freedom of the activity, and progressed at a satisfactory rate of learning, the brighter children were capable of more advanced work, such as identifying a given number of features they might pass along the way. Even so, most children exceed the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. They work on computers with confidence, using the 'mouse' to click on function buttons and move the cursor around the screen. They understand the need for safety, following the rules set down for using the large apparatus in the hall, for example.

## Physical and creative development

61. Teaching and learning in physical and creative development are good. Children have a good awareness of the space they need to work in and move around. They show good co-ordination when undressing for physical education lessons. They control their physical movements well and are given opportunities to use small and large apparatus and equipment confidently. They are asked to spread glue in an outline of the letter 'j' drawn by the teacher for example, and some find this task easy. They colour between lines well and some are now ready for more advanced work.
62. Most children have very good pencil control, reflected in their extremely neat and well-formed handwriting. Their pictures are recognisable and most paint pictures of themselves in good proportion. They trace accurately and many no longer need to practice this skill. They make vehicles out of cardboard boxes and some of these have axles so that the wheels move. They enjoy making music and sing tunefully and with good recollection of the words of the songs.

## ENGLISH

63. Standards are well above average in speaking and listening, reading and writing. The results of the 2000 national tests for seven year olds show that high standards have been sustained over time, with only a slight reduction between 1999 and 2000 in the standards achieved in reading compared with similar schools. Each year, very few pupils fail to reach the expected level in both reading and writing, showing that the less able pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well compared with their earlier attainment. Inspection findings indicate that, once more, many pupils are on course to attain the higher level this year by the time they leave the school, with no significant difference between girls and boys. The school provides well for pupils with English as an additional language through effective support from volunteers during lessons and excellent teaching in withdrawal sessions.
64. Most pupils are confident speakers and articulate their views well, using expressive language and good diction. They are keen to speak and respond well to teachers' questions, especially when discussing shared-reading text. In one Year 1 lesson, for example, pupils gave sound reasons why their classmates should 'buy' the book they were writing. When questioned by the would-be 'buyers', they argued their case confidently using parts of their stories as selling points. Pupils listen well, follow text confidently, and observe the etiquette of discussion. They are interested in what their friends have to say and listen patiently and interestedly whilst waiting their turn to speak. In less structured situations, however, pupils are keener to speak than listen and are often not happy until they have had their say. The previous inspection reported a lack of opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills. This issue has been successfully addressed and the curriculum now provides good opportunities for pupils to express their feelings and views, in particular in religious education lessons and during 'circle time'. This is a period when pupils are free to talk with ease about a wide range of personal and general issues without interruption from others. In addition, the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy has helped the school to provide more opportunities to routinely discuss shared-texts. These discussions add to the pupils' vocabularies, develop their ability to say what they mean, and sharpen their listening skills.
65. Standards in reading are well above the national average, judged by the pupils' performance in national tests and by the evidence from this inspection. Again, the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy, which the school has adapted to suit its own needs, has provided ways of improving the quality of some reading experiences criticised in the last inspection. This has helped the school to stimulate pupils' interest in books and understand something of how authors and illustrators work. When reading shared-texts aloud, pupils do so with good expression and adopt different voices for different characters. Their comprehension skills are good. Pupils can summarise story events, predict what might happen, and talk about the

feelings and actions of the characters concerned. Pupils tackle new words mainly through sounding out the letters, which they are taught to do from their first year in school. Pupils are thus able to decode 'new' words correctly. Having done this, however, they often read on despite being unaware of the meaning of the new word. Pupils have a good understanding of the difference between 'fiction' and 'non-fiction' books. They use their reading skills well to find out about different things in different subjects, such as historical periods and about life in other countries. Few pupils spoken to, however, have a secure knowledge of different types of fiction beyond 'stories'.

66. Pupils' attainments in writing are well above national expectations for seven year olds, with the more able pupils achieving very high standards. Work is very well presented, with all pupils encouraged and able to join letters from the start. Spelling is good with commonly used words invariably spelled correctly. Pupils tackle unfamiliar words by breaking them into letter sounds and syllables, so that the words, if not accurate, are usually 'phonically correct'. Pupils develop an increasing competence in the use of punctuation, and joining and describing words, to convey meaning more effectively. The previous inspection was critical of the amount of story writing pupils did and the few opportunities they had to redraft and plan their work. This has improved because pupils engage in different writing activities in other curriculum subjects and are taught how to construct stories. For example, pupils write at length in religious education, science, and history and in Year 2 are learning how to use 'flow diagrams' to plan their writing. However, word processing facilities are not routinely used to redraft or edit work but rather as a means of producing a polished final draft. A high percentage of pupils' work in writing lessons is in the practice of grammar, phonics, and sentences with 'key' words in them. This is paying off in the high quality of independent writing that they produce in English lessons and other subjects.
67. The quality of teaching is good overall. Half of the lessons seen were either very good or excellent. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when teaching standards were satisfactory. However, some of the shortcomings in the use of time and pace of lessons identified then are apparent in some lessons still. This occurs when lesson introductions and shared-text sessions unfold without sufficient variety to hold pupils' attention and sustain their concentration and participation. In addition, sessions at the end of lessons are not always long enough or focused enough for pupils to benefit from sharing what has taken place and for the teacher to reiterate the lesson objectives and assess the extent of pupils' learning.
68. Teachers use language well. Their instructions are clear, they use the correct terminology, and their choice of words is pitched at a high level. In consequence, pupils soon learn correct terms and apply them in their responses. For example, pupils are familiar with and regular users of 'phoneme', 'alliteration', and 'segmenting', as well as the correct names of parts of speech. With their teachers as good role models, pupils' oral language is of a high standard. In one Year 2 lesson, the teacher skilfully orchestrated the exploration of the composition of a well-known story. All pupils made a valid contribution to the session and a successful conversation developed, which successfully drew out the essential points.
69. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils both in the language they use with them and in the quality of work they expect. In the best lessons, time targets are set for the completion of work and later sessions used to confirm the standard of work produced and the extent of learning having taken place. In another Year 2 class, it was made very clear to pupils what levels of behaviour were required when they carried out their group assignments, how much time they would get, and what they were expected to have done by the end. Pupils responded by confirming they understood and working hard to complete their work in the given time.
70. Pupils respond well, work productively, and make good progress when given a variety of stimulating tasks that demand their careful attention and capture and hold their interest. Pupils in one Year 1 class engaged in an animated discussion over the events in an instalment of the 'Christmas Story', thanks to the lively style of questioning by their teacher. Building on this interest, their teacher then provided a number of different tasks at a brisk pace. She made

very good use of a number of different 'big books' to illustrate various front cover designs. Before carrying out their written assignments, these pupils benefited from a rapid exchange of views with the hand puppet, Sooty, by correcting his phonic 'mistakes' and thus extending their own knowledge of them. In this environment, pupils make rapid progress and are stimulated to try hard.

71. Teachers assess pupils' work very well, especially when reading and marking writing. A lot of care is taken in allocating praise for effort and achievement, in setting the work in context and, above all, making lengthy annotations which help individual pupils to improve next time. Pupils respond well to these comments and, in many instances, a useful dialogue is created which aids progress. Pupils in this way learn what it is they need to work on and these become personal targets for improvement. Assessments are used well to form ability groups within classes and to set group targets that are regularly reviewed and re-set.
72. Teachers manage their pupils very well and enjoy very good relations with them. Pupils are treated with respect and their work valued, which further encourages them to give of their best. Because of this, pupils' attitudes to their work are good and often very good. Pupils of all ages and abilities are conscientious and take care with the presentation of their work. In oral sessions, they are keen to answer and, when stimulated, try hard to respond to their teachers' requests and suggestions. For example, in one Year 2 lesson, the whole class adopted a suitable voice and reading style when reading together out loud, which brought the story to life and gave them much enjoyment. Pupils settle to work quickly, remain on task, and respond eagerly when given time targets within which to finish their work.
73. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator has worked hard to deal with the weaknesses identified in the previous report and bring about the improvements required. The National Literacy Strategy has been successfully implemented and standards in teaching improved through the monitoring of lessons and plans. Deficiencies in the range and quantity of reading material highlighted previously have been addressed, with a good selection of fiction books now available to pupils of all abilities. The school continues to stock the reference library, which is an attractively set out environment for pupils to use. The number and range of books are adequate to cope with the ages and reading abilities of the pupils in the school.

## **MATHEMATICS**

74. Standards in mathematics are well above average because a high number of pupils – nearly half last year – attain above the nationally expected level by the time they leave the school. In the 2000 national tests for seven year olds, pupils at Elmlea Infant School did much better than pupils in other schools nationally and better than those in similar schools.
75. There is an improving trend over time in the results, and standards are better than they were at the time of the last inspection, notably in the way pupils use and apply mathematics to solve problems and carry out mental calculations. Pupils of all abilities are supported well, resulting in a substantial proportion of pupils attaining the higher level by the time they leave the school. This also represents an improvement since the last inspection when the higher attaining pupils were insufficiently challenged.
76. Because teachers frequently enable pupils to articulate their thinking through talking and writing, most pupils by the end of Year 2 have good skills in explaining how they have carried out their calculations. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs show in their writing that they are skilful in this aspect of their mathematics work, and they achieve well. Higher attaining pupils understand the place value of numbers beyond 1000. They use non-standard units such as cubes, and standard units such as centimetres, in their measuring, and they work out whole number problems involving multiplication and division. They know many of the properties of three-dimensional shapes such as the number of

vertices, edges, and surfaces. They organise and classify information, and present their findings in appropriate forms when, for example, investigating the number of pupils' birthdays in each month. Average attaining pupils use their understanding of simple fractions when solving problems such as finding a quarter of twelve, and they recognise that two quarters are equivalent to a half. They successfully record how they work out their answers. Lower attaining pupils use the correct mathematical terms for common two- and three-dimensional shapes.

77. Teaching is good. It has improved since the last inspection when it was unsatisfactory in a significant number of lessons. There was an over-reliance on worksheets and some of the work was undemanding. Some of the teaching did not support pupils effectively beyond the initial instructions. Teaching is now particularly effective in Year 2 where all the lessons seen were good or better. In all of the infant classes, teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and this fosters pupils' good behaviour and very good response to questions and instructions. Teachers in both year groups generally maintain a brisk lesson pace. They usually target questions accurately at pupils of different abilities, so that all pupils make good progress. Pupils are aware of what they are going to learn by the end of the lesson and over time because teachers encourage them to think, at the beginning of the lessons, about the learning targets that have been set and, at the end, how well they have been met.
78. Teachers' marking is effective as it helps pupils to improve their work. For example, teachers sometimes require pupils to reflect on their mistakes rather than provide them with the answer. This extends pupils' learning well by ensuring that they use the range of strategies that they have acquired.
79. The curriculum has improved since the time of the last inspection. It now has a positive impact on enabling pupils to reach high levels of attainment. This is because sufficient regard is given to teaching all aspects of mathematics and to developing pupils' problem-solving and investigative skills. Lesson planning is very effectively based on the National Numeracy Strategy and teachers build pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding well during lessons and over time by incorporating a good balance of teacher talk and pupil activity.
80. In the minority of lessons where teaching is satisfactory, there is sometimes a temporary loss of lesson pace while teachers try to ensure that all pupils are listening carefully. In one lesson, for example, the teacher did not give clear instructions, and she did not realise that a small minority of pupils were not carrying out the task with a clear understanding that they were required to subtract rather than add. This temporarily slowed the progress of these pupils.
81. Pupils' attitudes to mathematics are good and pupils of all ages, abilities and backgrounds behave well. They usually listen well, want to find things out, and work co-operatively with one another in group tasks.
82. Other subjects make a satisfactory contribution to pupils' mathematical competency. For example, pupils develop a sense of chronology in their history work through the use of time lines, and use geometric shapes when 'conducting' in music lessons. Information and communication technology is used by pupils to organise and show data in bar graphs and pie charts, but its use has yet to be fully extended to impact significantly on pupils' progress in mathematics. Teachers sometimes take the opportunity to develop pupils' numeracy skills effectively during registration times. For example, in a Year 1 class, the teacher asked the pupils, 'What sort of sum do we do if we want to find out how many pupils will be in school at lunch time, when we know that twelve are having school dinner and eighteen are having a packed lunch?' However, these opportunities are not planned and learning is often incidental.
83. The co-ordinator manages the subject well. She has fostered the development of teaching effectively through observing teachers, providing demonstration lessons, training teachers and support assistants, and effectively involving the numeracy governor in her work. These measures have contributed well to improving the school's provision and, in turn, raising



standards. The use of resources has improved since the last inspection, when they were under-used and insufficient for the higher attaining pupils.

## SCIENCE

84. By the time the pupils leave the school, standards in science are well above average. The teacher assessments show that almost all pupils in Year 2 are on course to achieve the expected level and about half to attain the higher level by the time they leave the school at the end of this year. This shows very good improvement since the last inspection, when standards were broadly average. In 2000, 97 per cent of the pupils achieved the expected Level 2 – above the national average – and 46 per cent attained the higher Level 3 – well above the national average. A similar percentage of pupils attained Level 2 at Elmlea Infants compared with similar schools, but many more reached the higher level. There are now sufficient opportunities for pupils to extend their abilities in experimental and investigative science and this is an improvement since the last report.
85. Learning is good. This shows an improvement since the last inspection when pupils made satisfactory progress over time. Due to very good teaching in Year 2, the progress made in that year group is better than in Year 1. By the age of seven, pupils have very good observational and investigative skills because of the emphasis given by the infant teachers to this aspect of teaching and learning. For instance, pupils in Year 1 identify similarities and differences in Christmas socks made from different materials. They describe these accurately using terms such as 'smooth' and 'stretchy' and understand the need to select materials that will be fit for their intended purpose. In Year 2, pupils continue to make comparisons based on careful and more detailed observations. They make sensible predictions, appreciate the need for a fair test, and agree investigation procedures that will give a fair and accurate result. At the end of an experiment, pupils compare their results with their predictions and provide explanations for the outcomes of their investigations. Good examples of this were noted in the pupils' work about which paper was the most absorbent and would mop up spilt paint most efficiently. In both year groups, the pupils are building up and extending their knowledge and understanding of other aspects of scientific learning, including living processes, electricity, light, sound, and forces. They use a good range of appropriate subject specific words.
86. Teaching is good. It is very good in Year 2 where two very good lessons were seen. Teaching builds well on pupils' existing knowledge and teachers use questions skilfully to check and extend pupils' understanding. There is a good amount of practical work and an appropriate balance of instruction, explanation, and pupil activity across all aspects of science. Tasks encourage discussion and involve pupils of all abilities and backgrounds. For example, in the Year 1 lessons seen, the pupils were able to test for themselves which Christmas sock would stretch sufficiently to hold all of the presents. Lessons are well presented and well organised, with resources always to hand. Teachers are confident, and their level of subject expertise is good. In the one unsatisfactory lesson seen in Year 1, there was over-direction by the teacher and some pupils lost interest because they were not fully involved.
87. All teachers emphasise the importance of using accurate scientific terminology and make pupils aware of safety issues, for instance with regard to water on the floor. Teachers and support staff effectively guide pupils with special educational needs, so that these pupils make good progress in lessons. Where less able pupils find it difficult to record their ideas and findings, teachers make good annotations on their work, reflecting the information learned and the progress made in the pupils' thinking. This is later used effectively to ascertain what pupils have learnt. However, teachers seldom use this information to adapt the learning task for pupils' different abilities. This prevents even greater progress being made by pupils, particularly the more able.
88. In Year 1, science is taught as one of a number of activities taking place at the same time. Whilst the teachers focus on the groups doing science, there is inevitably some interruption

and disruption from other children in the same classroom. This distracts teachers from their main task and sometimes disrupts an important line of questioning. Where the teaching is particularly good in Year 2, there is a real sense of fun and excitement in science lessons. The teachers are enthusiastic and hold the pupils' attention well. There is a good exchange of ideas between pupils and teachers and great involvement by all concerned.

89. The subject is very well led and managed. There is a very experienced and knowledgeable co-ordinator for science, who has worked hard to prepare a suitable scheme of work which meets the requirements of the new National Curriculum. She gives a great deal of help and advice to less confident colleagues. In addition, she has written and implemented a separate health education policy and scheme of work, the remit of which covers not only pupils but also staff. Her efforts have won a 'Schools for Health' award. She does not monitor and evaluate the teaching of science in classrooms, but does look at pupils' books and teachers' planning and checks that the scheme of work is implemented. This gives her some idea about what is going on in the school.
90. The curriculum relates well to science in everyday life. Good emphasis is made on a healthy way of life, including an awareness of the dangers of drugs' misuse. Children learn about their bodies as part of their study of living processes. The school makes good use of the grounds it shares with the adjacent junior school. There are opportunities for pupils to 'pond dip', and a copse is used for environmental work. Presently, the use of information and communication technology in science is under-developed, but with the advent of the new computers, the school plans to improve this situation. Visits to outside environmental areas and the zoo enrich the science curriculum further.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

91. The attainment of seven year olds is better than that expected for their age and pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve good standards in art and design by the end of Year 2. This is because good teaching in Year 2 in particular builds pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding effectively, in a systematic way, during lessons and over time. What is particularly successful, is the way pupils are asked to look back in their sketchbooks at their previous achievements and 'try to do better this time'. This makes pupils aware of their own learning and drives them to do even better.
92. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers in Year 2 have good subject knowledge and use demonstration well to show pupils how, for example, to create the correct line when drawing a sprig of holly and to get the curve of the twig just right. Good emphasis is put on the skill of observation. Pupils know that they need to look for at least one minute before they start to draw, and that often the time spent looking will exceed the time taken drawing. This makes them realise that accuracy and the precision of detail is vital. Clear explanations encourage pupils to look, for example, at how the leaf grows out from the twig and that it is 'not just stuck on'. Because of the good guidance they are given throughout the lessons, pupils draw accurately and choose colours carefully to draw things precisely as they are. Well-focused praise gives all pupils the confidence to 'have a go' and consequently, pupils enjoy their work and talk very enthusiastically about what they are doing and have done. They show a good sense of proportion when drawing, for example, faces, and attention to detail, when sketching leaf veins.
93. The teaching seen in Year 1 was satisfactory. Art is taught at the same time as a number of other activities, however, including science. This means that the teachers are unable to pay a lot of attention to pupils whilst they are working, tending to concentrate on the science group in particular. Nevertheless in the one lesson seen, pupils' learning was satisfactory, but more rapid progress could have been made if the teacher had been able to spend more time with them.

94. Pupils enjoy a satisfactory range of art and design experiences, including three-dimensional work. They visit a local art gallery and they look at the work of different artists, such as Monet and Van Gogh, displayed around the school. They study art from other countries, for example Aboriginal art, and use computers confidently to make patterns and pictures. Pupils use art to support their work in other subjects such as English, mathematics and science. For example, they illustrate stories of The Gunpowder Plot in Year 2 and The Rainbow Fish in Year 1, and they draw seasonal pictures, such as the very effective 'winter' pictures displayed at the time of the inspection in the entrance hall.
95. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have risen and teaching and learning are better than they were. This is because the co-ordinator is effective in her leadership and management of the subject. She has done well to maintain the profile of art within the school's curriculum despite the national focus on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The school has implemented a new scheme of work, which lists the skills, knowledge and understanding to be taught and suggests activities through which this can happen. Because of this, staff are clear about what they are to teach and when they are to teach it and this in turn ensures pupils are set progressively more challenging tasks over time. The subject co-ordinator keeps a watchful eye on what is happening around the school, mainly through looking at pupils' work, and identifies relevant areas for further improvement, such as staff training to ensure that sufficient three-dimensional work goes on.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

96. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve above expected levels in design and technology by the time they leave the school aged seven. This shows good improvement since the last inspection when standards were broadly average and the subject was relatively under-valued, with little teaching and learning of design and technology going on. There were problems with the shared teaching accommodation, which have been successfully dealt with through the partitioning of classrooms. The subject co-ordinator has worked hard to raise and maintain the profile of the subject within the school's curriculum. She has held information evenings for parents and training sessions for staff, and has excellent direction for the future. She leads and manages the subject very well and has a good understanding of what goes on around the school from talking with pupils about their work, helped by being a Year 2 teacher, and a clear knowledge about what needs doing next.
97. Pupils experience a good range of designing and making. Photographic evidence shows that in the past, pupils have made puppets with moving joints, designed boats that will float, and designed and made a suitably secure home for an imaginary (small) animal or creature. They draw what they intend to make, label their designs, and list what they will need. Pupils' learning is good because teachers challenge pupils' designs by writing comments or questions on their work and the pupils write replies once they have thought about it. For example, a Year 2 teacher wrote on one pupil's design, 'These people are sitting, how are you going to do this?' and the pupil wrote back, 'Bend pipe cleaners and put card to make them stand up'.
98. Pupils have very good communication skills and this helps them to talk about what they are doing and why. They explain changes they are making, for example, to their models of Nativity stables. They have excellent evaluation skills and know what they need to do to improve their work. They talk knowledgeably about, for example, how they are going to make their figures stand up by using cardboard strips, pipe cleaners or pieces of wood saying, for example, 'I might not stick with my plan because I can think of another way to make people stand up'. They write and then follow step-by-step instructions to make, for example, a breakfast-making machine in Year 2 and textured pictures of the Nativity in Year 1.
99. Pupils enjoy their work and have very good attitudes to learning. Pupils in Year 2 talk excitedly about making robots in the past out of cardboard boxes. Pupils of all ages use a range of tools

and have a good awareness of safety issues involved in, for example, using glue guns and woodwork tools. They generate their own ideas extremely well and are creative in their work.

100. Not enough teaching was seen to make a judgement on the quality of teaching overall. However, what was seen in Year 2 in particular was very good. In one lesson, for example, pupils used a wide range of materials including wood and fabric to make Nativity stables. They explained excitedly about what they were doing and offered very impressive evaluations of how to improve their designs. In a lesson seen in Year 1, pupils were cutting out different textured fabrics to make 'feely' pictures. They achieved some satisfactory results, but teaching influence was limited because other subjects were being taught at the same time on which the teaching was focused. Displays show good quality work of three-dimensional angels in Year 1, and the designing and making of 'survival kits' in Year 2.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

101. By the time pupils leave the school at age seven, they are reaching standards in geography that are in line with national expectations. These standards are similar to those reported at the time of the previous inspection. All of the pupils make satisfactory progress in the development of geographical skills as well as in their knowledge and understanding about the world in which they live. In Year 1, pupils learn basic mapping skills and are competent in using a simple key and symbols. They write about and draw pictures of people, for instance the fireman and vet, who help the community. Through a visit to a nearby farm, they learn about one way in which land is used and the different buildings that are needed in such a setting. In Year 2, they study hot and cold places around the world and learn about how different animals survive in these conditions. They use geographical words accurately, such as 'hemisphere', 'flora', and 'fauna'. The pupils show a concern for the environment in their conversations, particularly with regard to rain forests. They know these are the homes of endangered species of animals as well as important for the quality of life of local people. Both year groups use the well-organised geography trail in the school grounds to good effect, including opportunities for Year 2 pupils to carry out appropriate fieldwork. Good e-mail links have been made with children in places as far away as Indiana, Texas and Fiji. However, there are insufficient opportunities for Year 2 pupils to carry out focused local studies and to use these to compare and contrast their own locality with one place that has a different environment. There is a lack of improvement since the last inspection in this respect, when this aspect was seen as under-developed. Although pupils know about atlases and globes, the mapping skills introduced in Year 1 are not extended to a sufficiently high level in Year 2.
102. It was not possible to see sufficient geography lessons to make a judgement about the quality of teaching. However, discussions with pupils, teachers' planning and work in pupils' topic books show this to be at least satisfactory. Year group planning ensures that pupils in parallel classes are taught the same curriculum. Throughout the school, there is little evidence in topic books that work in geography is matched to pupils' individual abilities, however. This means that the lower attaining pupils do not always successfully complete what they are asked to do. Teachers usefully annotate the pupils' work and keep an ongoing assessment sheet of skills that have been covered. Good links are made with other areas of the curriculum, including information and communication technology and history. Geography is used well to promote learning in literacy and pupils, for example, produce careful, extended pieces of written work, for instance about rain forests. Visits, for example to the local zoo and Bowood in Wiltshire, enrich this area of the curriculum.
103. This subject is effectively led by an experienced co-ordinator. The school has recognised the need to adapt its planning to meet the requirements of the new Curriculum 2000 and is intending to raise standards still further. The co-ordinator has recently attended two useful in-service training courses about using the local environment and contrasting areas to support teaching and learning in geography. The new draft scheme of work to be introduced in the summer contains much more Year 2 work based on the locality of the school, including local

services and an extension of mapping skills. It contains a valuable list of geographical words to be introduced to the pupils in both year groups. A useful portfolio of representative samples of pupils' work has been started as a future reference. There is an insufficient number of appropriate globes in all classrooms and pupils are using a collection of rather well-used atlases.

## HISTORY

104. Seven year old pupils reach standards in history that are in line with the expected level for pupils of their age, and higher than those reported at the time of the previous inspection. It was only possible to observe one history lesson during the inspection, due to the emphasis on geography at this time. Judgements are based on evidence in planning and pupils' topic books, and an interview with a group of Year 2 pupils. Pupils make satisfactory gains in learning the skills needed for historical research, as well as in their knowledge and understanding of a suitable range of famous people and past events.
105. Year 2 pupils have a good recall of the main events in Captain Scott's attempt to be the first man to reach the South Pole. They are developing a sense of the passing of time by placing other, similar, expeditions in order. Pupils use sources of information, including photographs, Scott's diary, and contemporary newspaper reports to learn about historical events. Their use of information and communication technology is more limited. They are beginning to recognise why certain people, such as Captain Oates, acted in the way he did and express feelings about his bravery in walking off to die in the snow. Pupils also know a little about other historical figures, for instance Guy Fawkes, and why his contemporaries acted as they did. Their understanding of how their own lives are different from those of people in the past, particularly through the use of artefacts available in the school, is under-developed. Those pupils interviewed talked with real excitement about how, in Year 1, they had made visits to Bowood House and Blaise Castle Museum. In all classes, the pupils benefit and learn effectively through the use of well-planned educational trips to such places as the local Georgian House and Chepstow Castle.
106. There is insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement about teaching in this subject. In the one Year 2 lesson seen, the quality of teaching was excellent. The teacher displayed very good knowledge of the subject. She taught in such an enthusiastic way that pupils could not fail to learn from the very wide range of resources and information provided. The pupils made very good progress in their understanding of the facts about Scott's expedition and this spurred them on to produce high quality written work. Learning was confident and purposeful, and many pupils reached a higher standard than that expected for their age. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, but throughout the school, there is little evidence in topic books that work in history is matched to pupils' differing abilities. Teachers usefully annotate the pupils' work and more formal assessment recording systems are being developed. Good links are made with other areas of the curriculum. Pupils spend a great deal of time in some history lessons producing extended pieces of written work.
107. The subject is effectively led and managed. The subject co-ordinator has worked hard to improve the quantity and quality of artefacts, which were both raised as issues in the last report. However, due to a limited budget for history, most of the artefacts are borrowed rather than owned by the school. Two good displays in the entrance hall show some of this new provision. The pupils have sketched particular items from Victorian times, and made guesses about their original usage. The school recognises the need to adapt its planning to meet the requirements for the new Curriculum 2000. The co-ordinator has identified historical topics, particularly in Year 1, which will accord more closely to the new national scheme of work for the subject. These new proposals are designed to ensure that pupils have more opportunities to recognise the differences between their own and other people's lives through a study of, for example, houses and toys.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

108. By the time the pupils leave the school, their attainment is in line with that expected for pupils of their age. Pupils gain a satisfactory range of skills across all areas of the subject as they move through the school. They develop familiarity with the computer keyboard and 'mouse', use listening centres with increasing independence, and learn to programme floor robots competently. By the end of Year 2, pupils use computers for communicating ideas in the form of pictures and text that they then save and later print. Most pupils can retrieve their saved work independently. They edit their written work by correcting spellings and they talk about alternative methods of communication such as handwriting and hand-drawn pictures. They have a good understanding of e-mail and appreciate that it, and the telephone, is quicker than post. They plan and command to make things happen, such as when programming a floor robot.
109. Pupils' responses to working with the computer are consistently good and pupils of all ages have very good attitudes to work. This helps pupils to concentrate hard, promoting their progress well. Pupils are confident in trying suggestions made by the teachers or support assistants and they enjoy investigating art functions, such as 'spraying', when drawing on the computer.
110. Teaching and learning are sound. Little direct teaching was seen during the inspection. Teachers have adequate knowledge and understanding of the subject. They teach pupils how to use new programs and support them effectively when they encounter difficulties. Teachers have positive relationships with pupils, ensuring that they behave well. They make good use of classroom support assistants, whose good relationships with the pupils enable them to encourage the development of skills well. Teachers and support assistants teach pupils correct terms such as 'icon', ensuring that they learn the appropriate vocabulary for the subject. Teaching effectively encourages pupils to 'play and find out', and this fosters pupils' growing confidence well.
111. Teachers use information and communication technology satisfactorily to support pupils' work in other subjects, for example, data handling in mathematics and using computers to produce final versions of their writing. In history, they write newspaper reports about Scott's visit to the Antarctic and they develop their awareness of other countries through exchanging e-mails with schools abroad.
112. At the time of the last inspection, the school had insufficient computers and some resources were under-used. The school now has an adequate number of computers. However, the incompatibility between some of the school's hardware and software curtails the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum. The unreliability of some printers exacerbates this. The co-ordinator is effective, but as yet she has not observed teaching in the subject in order to share strengths and to identify and deal with areas for development.

## **MUSIC**

113. Above average standards in music have been maintained since the last inspection because teaching and learning are good. In particular, the whole-school music lesson seen during the inspection was excellent because it incorporated the teaching and learning of a wide range of skills. The teaching was lively and snappy and the experience was invaluable to pupils because it showed them how teachers work together effectively and encapsulated the ethos of the school in terms of the team spirit and 'togetherness' that permeates its work.
114. Pupils experience a good range of opportunities to perform, compose, listen, and appraise. Because of effective teaching, pupils of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities sing extremely tunefully and with very good diction, maintaining the beat and rhythm of the songs well. They

understand the need to 'get the right tune and give expression'. They have favourite instruments, name them correctly, and play them confidently. They particularly enjoy the expressive nature of music and talk animatedly about moving to music in dance lessons and painting what they feel whilst listening to music in art lessons. For example, they moved around the hall to 'winter' music pretending to winter spirits who touched objects and turned them to ice. They drew snow falling and robins flying in art, and wrote, 'In my mind I could see Santa Claus giving out presents'. There are no musical activities at lunchtime or after school, but visiting musicians and music workshops broaden pupils' experiences further.

115. Teachers value pupils' musical contributions during lessons and, by referring to the pupils as 'musicians', give status to the idea that everyone can compose and perform music. Their use of subject words in their lesson introductions, instructions, and explanations enables pupils to explain precisely what they are doing and learning. Consequently, when talking with a group of Year 2 pupils about their work in music, their responses were good. They talked enthusiastically about recording a school tape and about how they compose music and record it using symbols so that they can play it later. In one particularly good Year 2 lesson seen, the teacher focused questions well to extend pupils' learning, asking, for example, 'How many different sounds could you hear at any one time in that piece of music?' The probing questions and explanations that followed made pupils think about the way music can be made up of different layers of sound – particularly when the teacher referred to a previous science lesson during which pupils had explored the texture of different fabrics. This helped pupils with the idea and increased their understanding well of building up a musical composition using several layers of different sounds to create musical imagery.
116. Pupils have good attitudes to music, including those pupils with challenging behaviour, who join in the lessons and are suitably interested in what they are asked to do. Pupils of all ages work together well in pairs and small groups, composing music to play to their classmates. There is some evidence of music promoting learning in other subjects, such as exploring sound to support work in science and using mathematical shape cards to direct who plays what and when. These links are unplanned and incidental, however, and do not always help to develop pupils' understanding. For example, squares, triangles, circles and rectangles were used in one Year 2 lesson, but this did little to develop pupils' shape recognition, as they already knew these shapes.
117. The co-ordinator for music leads and manages the subject satisfactorily. She knows what is going on around the school through supporting colleagues with curriculum planning and reading pupils' progress reports. She does not observe teaching and so does not know what goes on in lessons. This means that she has a limited impact on making further improvements to teaching and learning or raising standards.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

118. A range of physical activities was seen including dance, games, and gymnastics. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 2, their attainment in physical education is above national expectations. This is because the pupils have good control and co-ordination in their movements, such as when remembering, reproducing and exploring sequences of action. Pupils understand some of the benefits of exercise, such as the way it affects the heart. All pupils explore basic skills imaginatively, for example when investigating twisting and curling. They know about the importance of warming-up their muscles prior to physical activity, and they have a strong awareness of safety issues. However, their skills in talking about and evaluating their work, and that of others, are insufficiently developed because they are given too few opportunities to do this.
119. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well structured to promote the systematic development of pupils' skills, and this ensures that lessons move at a good pace, with purposeful learning. Most teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and they

manage them very well, effectively ensuring their safety and promoting good behaviour. Teachers carefully explain to pupils what they want them to learn and this involves pupils well in their own learning. One Year 2 lesson was particularly effective because the teacher had a clear view of what she wanted the pupils to achieve and communicated this effectively to them, ensuring that the shared intentions were translated into good development of skills. Strong encouragement to investigate, and good use of praise, fosters pupils' imaginative response well. Teachers encourage pupils to celebrate improvements in their performance, for example by watching other pupils, and this engenders good attitudes to the subject, including a desire to improve. Teachers do not always incorporate into their lessons sufficient opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own and others' performance by talking. As a result, pupils do not always have the information from such evaluations to help them to plan more accurately what they will do next, and so improve their performance.

120. Sometimes lessons are too short to develop learning effectively. For example, the 20 minute dance lesson in Year 1 did not allow enough time for pupils to learn new skills, practise them, and consolidate them.
121. The subject is effectively led and managed. The co-ordinator has some opportunity to observe teaching in order to share effective practice and identify areas for development, and she is supported well by the deputy head teacher who shares her expertise in dance teaching through demonstration lessons for colleagues. Since the last inspection, the school has successfully addressed the lack of resources for the subject.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

122. By the time the pupils leave the school, their attainment is in line with the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus. This shows an improvement since the last inspection when attainment was below the expected level and the subject was not secured within the timetable.
123. Pupils have opportunities to study some of the beliefs and traditions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Year 2 pupils speak quite knowledgeably about the festival of Eid Ul-Fitr marking the end of Rhamadhan and of the significance of Mecca to Muslims. They are able to retell some Biblical stories such as the miracle of the loaves and fishes and of Jesus healing the sick. Pupils in Year 2 have a very good knowledge of the events surrounding the first Christmas and are able to empathise with the different characters concerned, for example, saying how Mary might have felt when told she was to have a baby or why King Herod was so worried about the birth of Jesus. They understand a few of the beliefs central to all religions, with their ideas about what it is to be a 'good' Christian or Muslim developing satisfactorily.
124. Too few lessons were observed to make a judgement about the quality of teaching. In the lessons that were seen, teachers created an atmosphere in keeping with the lesson objectives, for example, by the lighting of candles, the sensitive handling of pupils' thoughts in 'circle time' about the meaning of Christmas, and the skilful use of questioning during the reading of a Biblical story. This gave pupils the confidence to speak and express their opinions as well as hear the views of others. The school has made good use of parents and members of staff who follow other religions. Artefacts have been donated and demonstrations and talks given showing, for example, how prayers are conducted by Muslims.
125. These improvements have been largely brought about by the implementation of a new scheme of work produced by the subject co-ordinator, who leads and manages the subject well. Although still in draft and subject to review and modification, it provides a good balance of the different areas of learning required. In addition, the subject is now on the timetable for all classes although some allocations of time are too short and not sufficient for the full development of ideas.



