

ERRATUM

Page 14, paragraph 1.

The third sentence should read “In both 1998 and 1999, attainment was well **below** the average.”

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST. MARY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

Kilburn, London

LEA area: Brent

Unique reference number: 131418

Headteacher: Mr. P Campbell

Reporting inspector: Mrs Jane Wotherspoon
22199

Dates of inspection: 6th-10th November 2000

Inspection number: 225332

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Canterbury Rd Kilburn London
Postcode:	NW6 5ST
Telephone number:	020 7624 1830
Fax number:	020 7372 4932
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Reg Dozie
Date of previous inspection:	Not applicable

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Jane Wotherspoon 22199	<i>Registered inspector</i>	Geography; History.	The school's results and achievements; How well are the pupils taught?
Bob Miller 9619	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Pupils' attitudes and behaviour; How well does the school care for its pupils? The school's partnership with parents; The use of financial resources.
Raminder Arora 16773	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Equal opportunities; Provision for English as an additional language.	Opportunities for pupils' personal development.
Jeremy Collins 27736	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; Design and technology; Art and design.	The curricular opportunities offered to the pupils.
Brian Fletcher 20457	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics; Music; Special educational needs.	Staffing, accommodation and resources; Assessment.
Michael Raven 3961	<i>Team inspector</i>	Provision for pupils in the foundation stage; Information technology; Physical education.	How well is the school led and managed?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mary's is a Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided primary school in the Diocese of Westminster. It was formed in January 1998 from the amalgamation of the separate infant and junior schools on the same site. It is much larger than average with 415 full-time and 29 part-time pupils. Boys outnumber girls though not greatly overall, although in some classes the imbalance is significant. The school roll has been falling and the number of teaching staff has been reduced in the last year. The governors are currently seeking to reduce the number of pupils admitted each year. A mix of races and cultures is represented at the school, including a small number of refugees and travellers. About half the pupils are from ethnic groups, mainly African or Caribbean in origin. The school receives additional funding (the ethnic minority and travellers achievement grant – EMTAG) to raise the achievement of these pupils, and to support some of the 10 pupils who are in the early stages of learning to speak English. The school serves an area of socio-economic deprivation, which is reflected in the figure of 40 per cent of pupils who are entitled to receive free school meals; this is above the national average figure. Nearly a third of pupils have been identified as having special educational needs. This is above average, as is the number of pupils who have Statements of Special Educational Need. Attainment on entry to the nursery is well below that found in most schools. In particular, pupils have weak skills in communication, language and literacy.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. It has strengths in several areas. The standards pupils reach in English, mathematics and science by the age of 11 are similar to those found nationally. Since their starting point is low, this represents consistently good progress in learning. In comparison with schools having similar features, pupils' achievement is well above average. There are weaknesses in the quality of education provided in the foundation stage (Nursery and Reception) that require immediate attention. Teaching is good in Key Stages 1 and 2; teachers have high expectations of pupils. Good leadership and management have led to a good level of improvement since amalgamation. The school provides good value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Pupils make good progress, especially in English, mathematics and science;
- Provision for pupils' moral development is very good;
- The school provides a good level of care for pupils;
- Pupils' behaviour is good, and they get on well with each other;
- The headteacher provides clear direction for school improvement;
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good;
- Teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 is good.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- The quality of education for pupils in Nursery and Reception;
- Standards in music in Key Stage 2;
- The provision of a wider range of learning opportunities, to develop pupils' independence in learning, to increase their creative and cultural experiences, and to stimulate other interests through extra-curricular activities;
- Attendance levels, and the punctuality of some pupils;
- The management and organisation of the support funded through EMTAG.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

St Mary's Primary was formed in January 1998 from St Mary's Infant and St Mary's Junior Schools. It has not been inspected before as a primary school, but both schools were inspected previously. Following amalgamation, the governors devised an action plan to address the issues identified in the separate inspections, some of which were common to both schools. Since then the school has made good improvements in key areas, such as improving the quality of teaching, standardising methods of assessing pupils' attainment and using the information when planning activities, and raising the standards achieved by pupils.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				<i>Key</i>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
English	D	E	C	A	<i>well above average</i> A
mathematics	B	C	C	A	<i>above average</i> B
science	A	D	C	A	<i>average</i> C
					<i>below average</i> D
					<i>well below average</i> E

The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard at the age of 11 has risen slowly but surely in recent years. Improvements have been most noticeable in English. In comparison with that in similar schools, pupils' performance has been consistently above or well above average in the last three years. Standards seen during the inspection are similar to those achieved by most pupils at the age of 11, in all subjects except music. In the year 2000, the test results of pupils aged seven were better than in previous years, but they were below those achieved nationally in reading and writing and well below in mathematics. Although the proportion of pupils who meet the expected levels is similar to the national figures, few

pupils exceed the levels expected. The standards seen during inspection were similar to those found in most schools in all subjects. Pupils in nursery and reception classes have weak communication skills. They do not make enough progress in language and literacy and are unlikely to meet the standards expected by the end of the reception year. Most are on course to meet the early learning goals in other areas of learning.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are keen to learn and do well at school. Good levels of concentration and effort are features of many lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school, and very good in assembly. Good order is maintained at all times.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between pupils are good. Parents are confident that pupils are well integrated, and they are. More ways could be found for pupils to be involved in the life of the school and to show independence in their learning.
Attendance	Figures are below those achieved nationally and are unsatisfactory. However, figures are similar to those of schools in the local area. A significant minority of pupils are late each morning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good overall. In 94 percent of all lessons seen, teaching was satisfactory or better, including 56 per cent good or better. It was very good in 14 per cent and excellent in three percent. In 6 per cent of lessons teaching was unsatisfactory or poor. The quality of teaching in English, mathematics, and science is good, so pupils make good progress in these subjects. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well in Key Stages 1 and 2, where the needs of all pupils are met well. However, many teachers lack confidence and expertise in teaching music. A particular strength of teaching is the very good management of pupils and the high expectations that teachers have of pupils' behaviour and work rate. Pupils are interested and well motivated, showing good concentration, and this helps them to learn at a good pace. In the foundation stage, pupils are happy and settle well to school life but the management and organisation of activities does not always stimulate their interest and enhance their learning. Weaknesses in teaching occur consistently in the foundation stage, where opportunities are missed to develop pupils' communication, language and literacy skills.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Teachers have worked hard to implement successfully the national strategies for literacy and numeracy.. Provision for science and information and communication technology (ICT) is good, but aspects of music and art need strengthening. Provision for extra-curricular activities is poor. Planning for the foundation stage is sound.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good provision ensures that pupils make good progress. Pupils with behaviour difficulties receive good support to help them conform to the school's expectations.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory provision is made for pupils in class and in withdrawal groups. The school needs to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its organisation of the available support, to make sure that this is more closely targeted to pupils' needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision for moral development is strong and social development is good. Assemblies are a highlight of the school's provision for spiritual development but opportunities in the curriculum are missed. Cultural development is sound but could be strengthened further to focus on a wider range of cultures reflected in society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school looks after pupils well. Health and safety has improved since the last inspection. Pupils' academic and personal development are monitored well. The monitoring of attendance is very good and is beginning to have an impact on reducing absence.

The school promotes sound links with parents, who appreciate the welcome they receive if they have concerns or problems. The school provides a good level of information to parents but does not consult them about their views.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good leadership by the headteacher sets high expectations for school improvement. All staff are committed to raising standards. They work together well in teams.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are well informed and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their role in strategic planning is developing satisfactorily.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school compares its performance with that of similar schools to evaluate its success. Key subject co-ordinators lead curriculum reviews and formulate action plans to address the areas needing improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Sound. Funds are targeted towards key areas for development. Good use is made of the funding allocated for pupils with special educational needs. The school seeks to gain value for money when planning the budget.

The number of teaching staff is adequate for the school's needs but the school would benefit from additional support staff, particularly in the reception classes. In the light of decreasing income, governors need to review staffing levels and deployment. The accommodation is satisfactory and well looked after. The quality of learning resources is sound overall and this reflects a great improvement.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff are approachable and listen to parents' concerns;• Behaviour is good;• Teaching is good and the children make good progress;• The school expects pupils to achieve their best;• Their children are happy at school;• The school helps pupils to become mature.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are too few activities outside lessons;• The numbers of pupils in some classes are too high.

The inspection team endorses the positive views of parents. It agrees that the school could do more to provide a stimulating range of extra-curricular activities. Teachers make satisfactory use of homework to extend pupils' learning. Some parents expressed concern about the progress of pupils in the large classes in Years 3 and 4. The school has taken steps to provide additional support, and inspectors have no evidence from the work seen to suggest that the progress of these pupils is hampered by the class size.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Baseline assessment of pupils' attainment on entry to the reception classes shows that few pupils are achieving what might be expected for their age. This is a similar picture year on year. In both 1998 and 1999, attainment was well the average. In 2000, the baseline figures are below those of the local authority. Language and literacy skills are particularly poor. In all areas, girls are achieving better results than boys.
2. The progress of pupils under six in communication, language and literacy is unsatisfactory because they do not have enough focused activities with adult intervention to develop their language skills. Progress in all other areas of learning is satisfactory and most pupils are on course to meet the early learning goals at the end of the foundation stage, at the end of reception year.
3. Overall, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are rising gradually year on year. When account is taken of pupils' low starting point they are making good progress over time. In comparison with those of similar schools, standards are very good.
4. Results in Key Stage 1 tests in 2000 were an improvement on those of 1999, which in turn were an improvement on 1998. The proportion reaching Level 2 was similar to national figures in all three areas: reading, writing and mathematics. However, fewer pupils exceeded expectations to attain Level 3, and so, overall, standards were below the national average in reading and writing and well below average in mathematics. In comparison with those of similar schools, standards were above average in reading and writing and average in mathematics.
5. At Key Stage 2, test results improved overall on those of 1999. The improvement in mathematics results was similar to that found nationally, but there were significant improvements in English and science, both at the expected level, Level 4, and at the higher level, Level 5. Overall, standards in all three subjects were similar to those achieved nationally. Standards were well above the average achieved by similar schools.
6. In both key stages there are slight variations in the results of boys and girls. At Key Stage 1 girls tend to outstrip boys in all three areas. At Key Stage 2, the picture is more complex, with boys sometimes doing better than girls in mathematics and science. In 2000, girls did better than boys in all three subjects. However, the gap between standards in reading and writing was not as large as that found nationally. Indeed, more pupils, both boys and girls, achieved the expected standard in writing than the national average. This is testament to the school's good focus on improving writing, particularly for boys. The school uses information supplied by the local authority to analyse achievement by different ethnic groups, but in some cases numbers are small and the figures should be viewed with caution. Variations in the attainment and progress of boys and girls and of pupils from different ethnic groups were not significant features of lessons during the inspection.

7. Pupils who learn English as an additional language are disadvantaged initially until they reach a satisfactory level of competence in English. The school needs to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its organisation of the available support, to make sure that this is more closely targeted to pupils' needs. Pupils make satisfactory progress with sound support from staff, and once competent they make good gains in line with that of their peers. Indeed, by Year 6, some of these pupils are among the higher attainers.

8. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress over their time in school through well organised and focused support, both from teachers and from support assistants. This is especially so in literacy and numeracy, where the targets in pupils' individual education plans are well written so that pupils, themselves understand what they are trying to achieve. Pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties are given sensitive support so that their learning and that of others is not disrupted. The content of their targets and ways of achieving them are closely defined.

9. The standards seen during inspection were, in the main, broadly in line with national averages in all aspects of English at the ages of 7 and 11. Pupils are on course to meet the school's targets. In mathematics, the majority of pupils attain the levels expected for their age, and an increasing proportion of pupils in both key stages are beginning to achieve at the higher levels. In both mathematics and science good attention is given to developing pupils' investigative skills, and this is enhancing their ability to apply their knowledge to problem solving.

10. Pupils' speaking skills are weak at the beginning of Key Stage 1, and pupils need much encouragement to contribute answers. The good focus on subject-specific vocabulary plays an important part in the good development of pupils' oral skills. In Key Stage 2, pupils' vocabulary is extended further, and they begin to use complex and grammatically accurate sentences. In class discussions, most pupils competently explain their ideas and methods of working. However, there are few planned opportunities, such as drama and debate, to enable pupils to speak at length and to use a variety of expression and vocabulary.

11. There is a strong emphasis in Key Stage 1 on teaching and learning letter sounds and blends, which pupils use to work out unfamiliar words in their reading and writing. By Key Stage 2, pupils read an appropriate range of reading material with increasing fluency and accuracy. Home-school reading is well established and has a positive effect on pupils' interest and attainment. Pupils have little experience of using the school library, which is due to be substantially refurbished and reorganised. As a result, their independent research and study skills are not well developed. Standards in writing are broadly average in both key stages. Letter formation is taught well and pupils begin to practise letter combinations and common spelling patterns. The most able seven year olds show a good understanding of the sequence of events in a familiar story. The range of writing is extended well in Key Stage 2, but there are few examples of sustained story writing in the work of the oldest pupils. Pupils are mainly competent at spelling and punctuation. Handwriting is neat but not consistently joined.

12. In mathematics, pupils know by heart the number facts appropriate for their age. They use mathematical vocabulary correctly in response to the emphasis placed on this by teachers. They explain how they work out calculations mentally, and begin to use what they know to help them solve everyday problems. In science, pupils learn to carry out increasingly complex experiments with due care to safety; they develop sound scientific knowledge from across the breadth of the curriculum and use this to make predictions. They observe their results carefully and record these neatly and accurately.

13. Standards in other subjects are mainly in line with those found nationally. The school took the opportunity to reduce curriculum content to create as much time as possible for developing literacy and numeracy, and this affected several subjects. Opportunities in art are too narrow, being restricted mainly to painting and drawing. In music, standards are below those found typically in Key Stage 2. Pupils have too little opportunity to be creative and to compose music. This is because many teachers lack the knowledge and confidence to teach music to the prescribed level and so rely on commercial tapes. Although the standards seen in the current Year 4 are sound, the geographical knowledge and skills of the oldest pupils in Year 6 is patchy, reflecting past content. Many subjects are currently being re-established to meet the latest changes to curriculum requirements.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. There are good attitudes to learning, good behaviour and open, friendly relationships between pupils, and these have a beneficial impact on their achievements.

15. The pupils' attitudes are good both to their learning and to the school itself. Those parents spoken to before and during the inspection agree that their children enjoy coming to school. The pupils, especially those at Key Stage 2, arrive at school with some enthusiasm and look forward to the day's activities. Lessons start promptly, and where they are stimulating they lead to a positive response from the pupils. This has a strong impact on their learning and is a strength of the teaching at Key Stage 2. There is, in most lessons, an air of purpose, and the pupils show a willingness to learn. Some of the younger pupils at the foundation stage listen to their teachers carefully, try their hardest and persevere with quite difficult tasks. However, a significant number in one reception class are inattentive, owing to ineffective teaching methods.

16. The pupils' behaviour is good both in and around the school, and this is a strength of the school. Parents' views reflect inspection findings, with 89 per cent of the parents who returned the inspection questionnaire confident that the behaviour of pupils is good. Most pupils are clear about how to behave, through the clear teaching of values as part of their personal and social education. They are polite and well mannered to visitors. Those pupils who do experience difficulty in conforming to the school's expectation of consistently good behaviour are helped to modify their behaviour. There are currently no exclusions, which is an improvement on the previous year when there was one fixed-term exclusion.

17. The pupils understand and value others and have good relationships with each other. They get on well with the adults in the school whom they obviously respect and see as good role models. They work together sensibly and harmoniously when given opportunities in lessons. Lunchtimes and playtimes are orderly, pleasant, social occasions where the pupils can confidently eat, play and enjoy themselves. There was very little inappropriate behaviour and no bullying, racism, sexism or unkindness observed during the inspection. Although the school has procedures to deal with such incidents, pupils and parents alike are confident that these are used rarely.

18. Whilst a number of pupils are engaged in helping staff during the lunchtime period, and on other occasions such as acts of collective worship, there are very few, if any, other opportunities afforded to them to show initiative and take personal responsibility or for independent learning. This is an area that has been identified by the school as one for development.

19. The school's attendance rate at around 92 per cent is unsatisfactory. The rate of authorised absence at 7.4 per cent is well above the national average. Punctuality is unsatisfactory with around 5 per cent of the school population arriving late on a daily basis, which disrupts the start of the day. These figures have, however, improved consistently over the past three years and compare favourably with those of other similar schools in the immediate area.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

20. Teaching is good overall. It was satisfactory or better in 94 per cent of lessons and good or better in about 60 per cent. However, this overall judgement masks the fact that teaching was unsatisfactory in the foundation stage (Nursery and Reception). Weaknesses occur mainly in one reception class where most of the unsatisfactory teaching was seen.

21. In the nursery, teaching is satisfactory. Pupils are provided with a satisfactory range of opportunities to promote their social, emotional and personal development. Pupils are encouraged to make independent choices about activities and these are balanced appropriately with teacher-focused activities. However, too often opportunities are missed to develop pupils' poor language skills. This is because there is too little direct adult intervention at times, such as during role-play.

22. Weaknesses in the organisation and management of pupils in one reception class undermine the sound lesson planning. All foundation stage teachers have received training in the new changes to the curriculum and have a sound awareness of the expectations of the curriculum. Teachers pay appropriate attention to planning to meet the Early Learning Goals. They plan together as a team to ensure some measure of continuity for pupils, but the planned activities are not always realised successfully. In one reception class, the teacher is successful in engaging pupils in conversation and providing activities to promote the development of language. Teaching is mainly sound in other areas of learning. However, in both reception classes, teachers sometimes plan too many activities, which they find difficult to manage on their own. The absence of regular, trained classroom support in the reception classes is a factor in inhibiting pupils' learning.

23. In the nursery, a potentially useful new system for recording assessment has been devised to match the stepping-stones in pupils' progress towards the early learning goals. Teachers do assess pupils' attainment at various times and keep detailed notes on what pupils can and cannot do. However, this process is not used well enough when teachers are planning specific tasks that will develop pupils' communication, language and literacy skills.

24. In Key Stages 1 and 2, teaching is good, and some instances of very good and excellent teaching were seen during inspection. No lessons were judged unsatisfactory in Key Stage 2 and just one unsatisfactory lesson was seen in Key Stage 1. Teaching is consistently good in English, mathematics and science and accounts for the good progress that pupils make in these key subjects. The consistency in quality reflects the school's emphasis on developing teachers' confidence and expertise in these subjects.

25. Staff have embraced the principles of both national strategies well, and they are well embedded in daily practice. Across the school, teachers have a good understanding of how to teach reading and writing, and the skills of literacy are taught well. In the younger classes, teachers successfully promote oral language development and use suitable methods and strategies to develop good listening. Numeracy skills are taught well, and there are some opportunities in other subjects. Interesting activities capture pupils' imagination and help them to apply their knowledge to everyday problems. There is a good focus on giving pupils opportunities to apply their knowledge to solving problems. There is a good emphasis on developing specific subject vocabulary so that pupils learn to become confident in using mathematical terms. In science, a significant strength in teaching lies in the promotion of investigative work, which capitalises on pupils' natural curiosity. Pupils respond very purposefully.

26. Assessment practice is rigorous in English, mathematics and science and is one of the key factors in the pupils' good levels of achievement over time. Teachers are good at asking the right kind of questions to check that pupils understand what has been introduced and to extend pupils' thinking. Pupils are eager to contribute and listen very well to one another's ideas. Teachers know their pupils well, and this means that they can adapt tasks in such a way that pupils can achieve at their own level of ability. This is particularly effective in meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs in literacy and numeracy. In science, their needs are often met through additional support or through the careful grouping of pupils so that they can learn from each other. The marking of pupils' work is generally helpful. In the best examples, teachers make constructive comments and give suitable guidance to pupils on how to improve.

27. Other subjects of the curriculum are taught soundly. Teaching is good in information communication technology (ICT) and in physical education (PE) it is satisfactory in art and design, design and technology, geography, history and music. There are some weaknesses in teachers' knowledge and confidence in music, and they rely heavily on using commercial tapes as the basis for lessons. This restricts the development of a full range of musical skills.

28. Lessons are well planned, with a good mix of whole-class, group and individual work. Lessons are often organised so that pupils work co-operatively in groups, especially in science, and this gives them valuable opportunities to learn from each other and to value others' ideas and efforts. Teachers make sure that pupils know what they are expected to learn and how this links with what they have learnt previously. Lessons often begin with a brief round up of the previous lesson before beginning on new learning. Weekly plans are

evaluated and teachers make notes on which pupils have achieved what was expected and which have not. Sometimes, lessons are adapted from one day to the next if pupils have not grasped what the teacher intended; this was seen during inspection in a literacy session in Year 4. All lessons are well organised and managed to maintain a good pace to learning and to make the most of the time available. Resources are used well to support learning but pupils would benefit from more regular, planned opportunities to use computers in the classroom to practise their skills independently; at present, lack of resources inhibits progress in this area.

29. Particular strengths are seen in teachers' management of pupils and in their high expectations of them. Good behaviour is a firm expectation that is met in most lessons. On occasion the management of pupils is over directed and restricts opportunities for pupils to become independent learners. In just one lesson, where teaching was unsatisfactory, the management of pupils was not strong enough. Young pupils became restless and lost concentration mainly because they had been sitting listening for too long. Good relationships between adults and pupils are based upon mutual respect. Teachers use praise well to promote pupils' self-esteem and to foster their positive attitudes to learning. Pupils respond with eager interest, contribute well, and make consistently good progress in acquiring new skills and knowledge.

30. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is particularly good in the withdrawal groups. Planning is detailed, thorough, and relevant to the needs of the individual pupil. The progress towards the achievement of the targets is very good. Records are carefully kept. Most learning support assistants are trained, and all those observed are good and caring teachers. Their work could be strengthened with opportunities to work more closely with the teaching staff in planning and assessing activities. On occasion, support was not used to the best advantage because assistants did not know how they were to support pupils until they arrived in the classroom. At present there is no system through which assistants can maintain their own records, of the work they complete with pupils, or of the progress pupils make.

31. Homework is used soundly to reinforce the skills taught at school. In particular the home reading scheme is reinforced consistently and many parents are dedicated to helping their children at home. This has a beneficial effect on the development of pupils' skills.

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

32. The school provides a satisfactory range and quality of learning opportunities that promote pupils' intellectual, physical and personal development soundly; improvements could be made to the provision for creative development.

33. The curriculum for children in the foundation stage (Nursery and Reception) is planned satisfactorily to meet the requirements of the new Early Learning Goals. In most areas of learning the school provides a satisfactory range of activities designed to prepare the youngest children for the next stage of education. Sound provision is made to promote pupils' personal, social and emotional development, with regular opportunities to share, take turns and develop personal independence in the choice of activities. Improvement is needed in the important area of communication, language and literacy. In particular, opportunities for adults to engage pupils in talk need enhancing in order to develop pupils' skills in communication. Satisfactory provision is made for the other areas of learning.

34. The balance of the curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2 has been, rightly, weighted towards improvements in literacy and numeracy, and the time allocated to other subjects has been reduced in the past two years. Both national strategies have been implemented with a good level of commitment and rigour. There has been a concerted effort to improve pupils' standards in writing, and this emphasis is beginning to pay dividends. In addition the school has maintained a good focus on science and has improved provision for ICT since amalgamating in January 1998. Other subjects are now being re-established following curriculum changes that became statutory from September. The school is adopting units from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority schemes of work, but care is required to ensure that the selection offers opportunities to cover a full range of skills. At present, links between subjects are not fully explored. Weaknesses in the breadth of the music and art curriculum result in a narrowing of the creative and cultural provision for pupils. Some degree of breadth is achieved through visits, including a residential week for Year 5 pupils, and visitors to the school. For instance, there is a visiting artist who raises the pupils awareness of the history of art, and a number of well known pop groups who act as role models in highlighting the success of black members of the community. However, the level of enrichment through lunchtime or after-school activities is poor. This restricts opportunities for pupils to perfect skills or discover new interests.

35. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is sound, with some previously well-established activities being developed into a new scheme of work. Visits from the police deal with aspects of citizenship, and the school nurse has an effective role in sex education with pupils in Years 5 and 6. She also advises the school on policies for drugs education and liaises with Health Workers for the under fives. Some parents volunteer to work alongside teachers and learning support assistants by giving valuable help in the classroom. The school has satisfactory links with local primary and secondary schools and with the local college, which places students at the school. There are also many church-related activities, which involve pupils.

36. Lessons are carefully planned and structured to cater for the needs of all pupils. Sensible adaptations are made to tasks for pupils who have special educational needs, and an appropriate level of challenge is set for pupils who are more able. Pupils from different ethnic groups are fully integrated in activities according to their ability. A clear distinction is made between pupils in the early stages of learning English and those with special educational needs, though they are often grouped together physically in order to provide them with adult support. The school is aware of gender and ethnic differences in pupils'

performance and takes appropriate measures to counter this. As a result, boys' standards are rising steadily. Pupils with special educational needs have good quality individual education plans (IEPs) and receive good support from class teachers and sometimes from the co-ordinator for special educational needs. When groups are withdrawn from lessons, this process is carefully planned and managed so that pupils do not miss the same lessons.

37. Since the last inspection the amalgamated school has improved its practice in developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. The ethos of the school is very positive in terms of its expressed aims and in its practice. It is founded upon the caring relationships seen at all levels in the school community. The school's philosophy, code of conduct and a series of experiences and activities effectively promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. The sense of family encourages pupils to reflect on their actions and those of others.

38. The provision for pupils' spiritual understanding is satisfactory. It is effectively linked to school assemblies and opportunities for pupils to engage in personal reflection. In the daily assemblies and at other times of the day, pupils are given time to reflect on their own beliefs, values and experiences. Assembly themes offer good opportunities to enhance spirituality through thought and prayer. The assembly led by Year 6 pupils to celebrate Remembrance Day was handled sensitively in an understated way that was quite moving. However, the school is not making the most of opportunities to explore the spiritual dimension of the curriculum in areas such as art, drama, music, science, poetry and literature.

39. The provision for moral development of pupils is very good. The school effectively teaches the values that distinguish right from wrong. Good attention is given to the reinforcing codes of behaviour and sharing positive values. The pupils respond positively, enjoying their work and showing care for the school and for each other. Teaching and support staff provide good role models that encourage pupils to behave courteously. Pupils are well disciplined and understand what makes an orderly school. As a result, the school is a calm and orderly place despite the fact that a significant minority of pupils have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Behaviour seen during inspection was good and this is testament to the success of the school's very good provision. Moral values are well taught through stories, for example *Goodnight Mr Tom*, as well as through hymns and discussions. Pupils are well rewarded for best work and good actions in the assemblies.

40. Good provision is made for pupils' social development through daily life, the curriculum, and local educational visits. The school has a secure environment in which pupils feel cared for. Pupils are encouraged to relate well to each other and, as part of the general ethos of the school, there is harmony between pupils of all different cultural backgrounds. When provided with appropriate opportunities, pupils carry out responsibilities with confidence. There are monitors given responsibilities for different things at break times, for example looking after younger pupils. Pupils are encouraged to show responsibility for their own environment and the area around school. Pupils participate in a number of charities supported by the school. Good social interaction is also achieved through promoting equal opportunities within the school. The quality of relationships between adults and pupils is very good.

41. The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. It is promoted through curriculum opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of their own cultural traditions and practices and the key features of other groups in the school and local community. It is also developed through visits and visitors to the school, such as those who visited during 'Black History Month'. However, the opportunities to highlight festivals of other major religions of the world, or to promote multicultural activities in art, dance, drama and music, are more limited. Pupils regularly visit the local church, but visits to other places of worship such as the mosque, the temple or the synagogue are not a feature of the school's current provision but are planned for the future. The school promotes respect for the cultural diversity reflected in the school community but opportunities to develop pupils' awareness of the way of life of people from other cultures is not as strong. As a result, pupils' appreciation of the richness and diversity of culture in the wider world is less well developed. Displays around the school do not reflect the multicultural diversity of wider society. Provision of multicultural resources and social and cultural links with the wider community are limited, as are opportunities to involve visitors from other local faith communities.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

42. The school cares for its pupils well, and this area is a strength that is commended. The daily care provided by the school is outlined in the prospectus given to all parents, who are justifiably confident that their children are happy and well looked after at school. Overall, the school's procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic performance and personal development are good. Well kept records provide a secure foundation for raising standards and a source of good information for parents. Staff know the pupils and their families well.

43. There are effective health and safety measures in place to ensure that pupils' welfare is maintained. Site security has been improved and regular checks are carried out on all electrical and fire equipment. Risk assessments are made of the school premises at regular intervals and fire drills are carried out. The procedures for child protection are sound and well understood by all staff. There are close links with outside agencies, including the school nurse.

44. The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good and there is effective liaison with the educational welfare officer, who visits the school regularly. Registers are kept in accordance with statutory requirements and this is an improvement on the previous inspection of the Infants school. Absences are followed up promptly and reasons sought from parents and carers. The school is at pains to point out to parents the importance of regular attendance and is slowly but surely beginning to improve the attendance rate. The poor punctuality of some pupils is an area of concern, which the school tries hard to counter by pointing out to families the detrimental effect on pupils' learning. Positive measures are taken to promote regular and punctual attendance.

45. There are good procedures in place to monitor and promote good behaviour. The rules and code of conduct are widely displayed around the school and are well understood by pupils. All staff fairly and consistently apply rewards and sanctions. The school's behaviour policy is effective in eliminating oppressive conduct and is reviewed at regular intervals. Additional support, through initiatives such as 'Place to Be' and 'Place to Talk', are effective

in counselling pupils with emotional and behaviour problems. Many pupils have gained benefit from this service and their performance in school has improved significantly. Behaviour issues are discussed with the headteacher, where necessary, and parents are contacted at an early stage so that they can be involved in any corrective action. There are proper strategies in place to deal with any incidents of verbal or physical bullying, but from the observations of the inspectors and the comments of the pupils, such incidents are extremely rare.

46. Arrangements for the care of pupils with a wide range of special educational needs are good. Staff plan activities for these pupils well and give strong and consistent support. Parents are pleased with the level of care given. Pupils who have English as an additional language take a full part in all activities. Teachers and support staff help to ensure that these pupils have full access to the curriculum and that they are able to communicate with other pupils and adults. Owing to staffing problems, the local authority has been unable to provide dedicated support for travellers' children.

47. Assessment procedures are good. Good systems are in place to collect information on individual pupil's attainment in classes. For example, tests and other assessments are carried out at regular intervals in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and provide a good record of progress. Records move through the school with pupil and provide a very good basis for planning. In mathematics, for example, a prediction sheet completed in every year allows the pupils' progress through the curriculum to be monitored and deficiencies to be remedied. At the end of the year, teachers make a further overall assessment of pupils' achievements in preparation for the annual report to parents. Assessment in the foundation subjects is not as good as that in the core subjects. For example, there is no formal assessment in physical education or music. Assessment does, however, feature prominently in the school development plan, and all subjects will be brought into line by the end of the year.

48. The results of the statutory tests (SATs) in Year 2 and Year 6 are carefully analysed and are used to set school targets and to identify groups of pupils who need extra support. Work is in hand to provide pupils with individual targets against which their progress may be measured. The school analyses the results of the tests by gender and ethnic groups and is in a good position to plan for the future teaching of all groups.

49. Assessments and reviews of the progress of pupils with special educational needs take place regularly, often with parents present. Subsequent work is planned in the light of information gained. Assessment arrangements meet the recommendations of the national Code of Practice and include detailed attention to the needs of pupils with statements of special need. Further work is required to ensure that the arrangements for assessing the needs and progress of pupils with English as an additional language, travellers, and underachieving pupils are as good as those for pupils with special educational needs.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50. The school enjoys a satisfactory partnership with parents. Over 90 per cent of the parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire, and those who attended the formal meeting, consider St Mary's to be a good school. They were positive about many aspects of the school's work. In particular, parents appreciate the school's efforts to promote pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes. Parents know that they will be welcomed when they come to school with a concern or problem and are confident that they will be listened to. A significant minority of them, however, do not consider the school to be providing an interesting range of activities outside lessons. The inspection team found this to be the case and agrees with the parents' concerns.

51. The school provides good quality information for parents. There are opportunities for parents to meet informally with staff on a daily basis, and they much appreciate this contact. In addition, a formal meeting is held each term to discuss their child's progress. The annual written reports of pupils' progress are well written and provide helpful information to parents in understanding the areas where their child needs to develop. The sections on English, mathematics and science are particularly detailed and comprehensive. Parents receive an annual report from the governors, and this is both informative and comprehensive. There is good, regular, communication from the school on such things as curriculum matters, as well as a user-friendly newsletter. This has enabled parents to give better help with their child's education at home. This support is most effective in the area of reading and can be seen in the regular entries in the home school reading diary of most pupils. However, the number of parents helping in the school is minimal, and despite the school's efforts this still remains an area for development. The school does not regularly survey parents for their views or consult them on decisions that may affect their children. For example, the school's decision to reorganise pupils in Years 3 and 4 into classes of 35 was made without any consultation and is now a source of concern for parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

52. The headteacher provides good leadership and management. He has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and of the main priorities for improvement. He is capably supported by a deputy headteacher and a large senior management team, who share appropriate delegated duties for the day-to-day management of the school. The amalgamation of the former infant and junior schools into the new St Mary's Primary School has been well managed. The good leadership and management contribute positively to the improving standards, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and in information and communication technology. The headteacher and other staff with management responsibilities, such as the deputy headteacher, carry out a systematic programme of monitoring and development of teaching. Despite weaknesses in teaching in reception, the quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspections.

53. The subject co-ordinators in English, mathematics and science undertake regular subject reviews through monitoring the quality of teaching and the standards achieved. Weaknesses are identified and used to formulate subject action plans. This information is reported regularly to the headteacher and the governing body. Other subjects are co-ordinated soundly with the exception of music, where there is a lack of guidance and support for teachers who lack confidence and expertise in teaching music, particularly in Key Stage 2. This affects pupils' attainment.

54. The school has an appropriate set of aims, which includes an aspiration to high standards and equality of opportunity for all pupils. The school's commitment to equality of opportunity for all and good relationships is reflected through all its work. This is seen especially in the way in which the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and those from ethnic groups are fully integrated into all aspects of school life; their social and learning needs are well met. The governing body, headteacher and staff share a clear and realistic commitment to improving standards and this is bearing fruit. Their clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses means that they are well placed to make further improvements in the quality of education provided and the standards achieved.

55. The school development plan clearly identifies a realistic number of appropriate priorities for school improvement. For example, planned developments in the foundation stage curriculum for nursery and reception pupils, and for other subjects of the curriculum,, are timely. Priorities are carefully costed, and intended outcomes are clearly identified. The governing body's role in planning for school improvement has been improving steadily since the creation of the new primary school. All governors are invited to contribute along with staff in suggesting issues for the school improvement plan. The governing body is well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the school and about issues for improvement. For example, governors are aware of the need to improve boys' writing standards, and language development is an important element of the development plan. Another key area is the implementation of a policy for performance management, based on national guidelines; the school is well placed to meet performance management requirements by the end of this year.

56. The school's educational priorities are supported soundly through the school's financial planning. However, the decline in pupil numbers has resulted in a reduced budget, and governors have had to make some difficult choices about staffing. Two teachers left and were not replaced, although there remain sufficient, suitably qualified and experienced teachers for the number and age group of pupils. However, there are large classes in Years 3 and 4, which are a source of concern to parents. Additional support staff have been engaged on a temporary basis to offset the impact of large classes in the short term, but governors are aware that the long term staffing situation requires constant review in light of the declining budget. Following amalgamation, governors' priority was to appoint a deputy headteacher without class responsibility, to aid the smooth running of the school. However, this non-teaching role will be increasing difficult to maintain. The number of support staff is not sufficient to meet the needs of all pupils who need help. In particular, the support provided for the two reception classes is too infrequent to meet the language needs of these young pupils. However, learning assistants who help pupils with special educational needs are well deployed and have a beneficial impact on pupils' learning. The office staff provide efficient support for the smooth running of the school and give a warm welcome for parents and visitors.

57. Funding from the ethnic minority achievement grant (EMTAG) is used to provide a satisfactory level of support for pupils from ethnic groups and for those who speak English as a second language. The school has had direct responsibility for managing this area since April this year, but prior to that the school received no additional funding or support for these pupils from external sources. Teaching and support staff have not been trained in strategies for teaching English as an additional language but give a satisfactory level of support under the guidance of the special needs co-ordinator. The school has identified which pupils will receive support but this is not closely targeted to their individual needs. The school is yet to apply a rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluating the impact of its provision. Funding to support pupils with special educational needs is used well. Good support ensures that these pupils make good progress in meeting their agreed targets. The area is well managed and organised with well-established procedures.

58. Financial control and day-to-day management of finances are good. The administrative officer makes effective use of computerised systems to provide budget information to the governing body. The finance committee meets regularly to monitor spending but tends to rely on the headteacher to prepare draft budgets. The most recent audit of the school's financial management made minor recommendations that have, in the main, been carried out satisfactorily. The principles of best value are being considered when planning expenditure.

59. The school has less money to spend this year, so the provision of learning resources has been carefully and judiciously controlled. Resources are satisfactory overall, although the large classes in Years 3 and 4 sometimes stretch available resources to the limit, particularly in subjects like geography and history. However, there is sound provision for visits and fieldwork. Resources are well managed and appropriate to the needs of the curriculum. Most materials are in satisfactory supply and there is an effective policy for the renewal of equipment. The new computer suite is a very good resource and is well used to enhance the computer skills of all pupils. By contrast, the computer provision in the classrooms is unsatisfactory; computers are old stock and insufficiently used as a support for independent learning. The library offers generous accommodation for a wide range of texts. The school plans to review the stock of fact and fiction books with due regard for multi-cultural provision and to plan a timetable of regular class use.

60. Accommodation is satisfactory throughout, though some rooms are quite small. Accommodation for physical education and information technology is good. The school's accommodation is bright and clean. It is well maintained and provides a good environment for learning. The playground areas are just sufficient and there is a satisfactory range of play equipment for nursery children. There are stimulating displays of pupils' work in the classrooms and reception areas. Overall, the effective management of the school's accommodation and learning resources has a positive effect on the standards attained by the pupils.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

61. The school development plan has already identified the need to improve aspects of the curriculum, which changed with effect from September 2000. The school should continue its drive to raise standards in basic skills. The following are key areas for future development:

- Improve the quality of education provided in the foundation stage (Nursery and Reception) by:
 - * raising the quality of teaching;
 - * increasing the focus on developing pupils' skills in communication language and literacy, and the planned opportunities for this development;
 - * providing additional trained staff to support pupils' learning.
(Paragraphs: 2, 13, 20 – 22, 33, 56, 63, 69)

- Raise pupils' attainment in music in Key Stage 2 by:
 - * providing a broader range of activities that develop pupils' skills;
 - * developing teachers' confidence and expertise in music.
(Paragraphs: 27, 53, 128, 131, 132)

- Broaden the range of learning opportunities offered to pupils by:
 - * providing more opportunities that promote creative and cultural development across the curriculum, but particularly in art and music;
 - * giving pupils, especially older pupils, more opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning;
 - * providing a programme of extra curricular activities.
(Paragraphs: 13, 18, 29, 34, 104, 108)

- Continue with efforts to raise attendance figures and to improve pupils' punctuality.
(Paragraphs: 19, 44)

- Improve the organisation, monitoring and evaluation of the provision funded through the ethnic minority and travellers achievement grant (EMTAG).
(Paragraphs: 7, 49, 57, 72)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	89
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	36

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	14	39	38	5	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR-Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	15	415
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	163

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR-Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	8
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	127

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	42

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	33
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	27

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data 1999 / 2000	7.4
National comparative data 1998 / 1999	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000	37	36	73

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	32	30	35
	Girls	31	28	32
	Total	63	58	67
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	85 (82)	79 (81)	92 (85)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	32	35	36
	Girls	28	32	31
	Total	61	67	67
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	82 (78)	92 (74)	92 (78)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	34	25	59

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	24	22	26
	Girls	22	21	23
	Total	46	43	49
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	78 (65)	73 (67)	83 (71)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	19	22	21
	Girls	22	22	23
	Total	41	44	44
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	71(43)	76 (56)	76 (55)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	67
Black – African heritage	74
Black – other	25
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	4
White	202
Any other minority ethnic group	8

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	1	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes:

YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	17.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.4
Average class size	28

Education support staff:

YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	275

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	30

Number of pupils per FTE adult	7
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999 / 2000
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	£
Total income	1098344.00
Total expenditure	1144354.00
Expenditure per pupil	2451.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	125010.00
Balance carried forward to next year	79000.00

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	444
Number of questionnaires returned	116

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	73	23	3	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	56	36	7	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	39	7	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	50	39	5	3	3
The teaching is good.	61	35	3	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	57	30	8	1	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	72	25	2	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	28	0	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	52	42	1	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	59	29	5	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	57	34	3	2	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	25	30	23	5	16

Other issues raised by parents

Some parents were concerned about the number of children in the classes in Years 3 and 4

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

62. Children enter the nursery at the age of three with **personal, social and emotional development** which is below that typical of children of this age. They are satisfactorily encouraged to develop their confidence and the ability to sit quietly and concentrate. In the nursery, for example, regular 'circle time' activities give the children the opportunity to listen to others and to learn to take turns at speaking in a familiar group. In Reception, children are encouraged to listen quietly and take turns fairly, for example putting up their hands and waiting to be asked to talk about a story they are sharing, such as *The Three Little Pigs*. Children are helped to form good relationships with others, for example through many good opportunities to work as part of a group. This is seen, for example, in Reception, when children share the large construction equipment sensibly and co-operate in making the three little pigs' house. Children are helped to understand the difference between right and wrong, and they know, for example, that it is wrong to take something being used by another child and that it right to share fairly. From their earliest days in the nursery children are encouraged to have personal independence. They take themselves to the toilet, although a few of them need help to do so. They wash their own hands before snack time and are learning to put on their own aprons for painting and water play, often helping one another. They independently choose an activity when they come in at the start of sessions and get on by themselves. Their developing independence skills are built upon satisfactorily in the reception classes. As a result of the sound provision made for them in the nursery and in the reception classes, the children are on course to meet the early learning goals for personal, social and emotional development by the end of the Foundation Stage.

63. The children's skills in communication, language and literacy are poor when they enter the nursery at the age of three. Many children are reluctant to speak, and much of their communication is in single words or is non-verbal. Speech is often indistinct and a significant minority of children, especially boys, are identified as needing speech therapy. Too little is done to develop children's communication and language skills. For example, children's role-play is too often not supported by adults and opportunities to develop their communication skills are missed. This is to be seen, for example, in the nursery and in one of the two reception classes, where children play in the role-play areas for extended periods of time without any adult intervention. Although there are some appropriate opportunities for children to listen to and respond to stories, songs and rhymes, children in the nursery and in one of the reception classes do not listen well, and there is much fidgeting and inattention as the teacher reads a story. Children start to link sounds with letters as they learn the sounds that 'straw' and 'bricks' begin with in the story of *The Three Little Pigs*.

64. Most children in reception understand that print carries meaning. They know how books 'work' – that we read from left to right in English and from the top of the page to the bottom. Most reception class children can read some words from their reading book but fewer than half of them recognise the 20 words needed to read the first books. Most of the children know the names of the letters of the alphabet and some of their sounds. They use the pictures in books to help them read the words, but few use the letter sounds to help them read. In the nursery, children start to recognise their own name and by the time they leave the

reception class most can write their name without help. They write their name to label work they have done, such as their paintings, producing letters which are for the most part recognisable and generally correctly formed. Because staff miss too many opportunities to develop communication and language skills, children do not make enough progress and they are unlikely to meet the early learning goals by the end of the Foundation Stage.

65. When the children join the nursery at the age of three their **mathematical development** is below that which is typical of children of this age. In the nursery, they start to learn to say and use numbers, for example as they find the numbers one and two in a number book. They learn number rhymes, such as *six yellow ducklings* and start to learn to count numbers below ten. In reception, they learn to sequence the numbers one to ten. Most can do this successfully, and about three quarters of the children can sequence beyond ten, to 20 or 25. They use numbers as labels for counting, and most count reliably from one to ten. Children create and talk about simple mathematical patterns, for example as they thread beads and make repeating prints. They build upon this in reception, where they create repeating patterns using a variety of different shapes and colours on cards. Most classify two-dimensional shapes by simple criteria, such as the number of sides and corners. Children make satisfactory progress in their mathematical learning and they are on course to meet the early learning goals by the end of the Foundation Stage.

66. Children start school with **knowledge and understanding of the world** which is less well developed than that of most children of their age. In the nursery and in the reception classes they have many suitable opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding. They investigate the properties of many made and natural objects, and compare properties such as hardness and softness, for example when looking at and handling shells, leaves, sponge, stones and wood. They use magnifying glasses to look closely at some of these objects and to compare similarities and differences. In the nursery, the children collect and closely examine fallen leaves, observing how they look and feel. Children develop a sense of time as they talk about the past and the future, for example talking about what they did at the weekend. They visit the local environmental studies centre and look at varying habitats, such as swamp and woodland. They visit the local park. There are many good opportunities in the nursery and in reception for the children to use a range of objects to build and construct, for example as they make the three little pigs' house in connection with the story. Children in the nursery and in reception make good use of technology, such as the computer and tape player and headphones, although they do not always use the tape player sensibly to listen to number rhymes and stories. Children have some limited opportunities to learn that people have different ways of life when, for example, dressing up in clothes from other cultures and through listening to stories. As a result of the sound provision, the children make satisfactory progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world and they are on course to reach the early learning goals by the end of the Foundation Stage.

67. Children enter the nursery with **physical development** which is below that typical of children of this age. Although their large muscle control and development is normal, they have poorly developed small muscle control and co-ordination. There are plenty of good opportunities in the nursery and in reception for the children to develop the latter as they thread beads, cut, stick, paint, model and build. They handle tools such as scissors and glue

spreaders with increasing control and safely. The children learn to move confidently and safely in their regular daily sessions of outdoor play, when they slide, climb and ride the large wheeled toys. The sound provision for physical development enables the children to make satisfactory progress, so that they are on course to reach the early learning goals by the end of the Foundation Stage.

68. The children's **creative development** is below that typical of children of this age when they enter the nursery. They are given many good opportunities to explore colour, texture shape and form, for example as they paint and model with play dough and clay, using a good range of modelling tools to cut, shape and join materials. When they start in the nursery most children are unfamiliar with materials such as clay and they can be reluctant to use it because they think it is mud, which is dirty. The children work with paint, using brushes and their fingers, and also blow and spray paint. There are good regular opportunities for the children to explore sounds, for example as they sing at 'circle time' in the nursery and play the wide range of untuned musical instruments. They develop their imagination through role-play and through listening to stories. They respond with fascination to the different smells and tastes of the things they cook. Sound provision for creative development means that the children are on course to reach the early learning goals by the end of the Foundation Stage.

69. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory overall in the foundation stage, with just over two lessons in ten judged to be unsatisfactory or poor. This standard of teaching is concentrated mainly in one class. Staff have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the early learning goals for pupils in the foundation stage. Much work has been done recently to modify weekly and daily planning to meet the new requirements. However, at present, teachers are in a period of transition as they seek to adapt their practice to match the latest recommendations. The teaching promotes most of the early learning goals satisfactorily, but communication, language and literacy are not well enough taught. Too often, in the nursery and in one of the reception classes opportunities are missed to develop the children's language and communication skills. This is a serious shortcoming of the teaching, particularly as these children come to school with poor language skills. Too often, children are left to take part in role-play with little or no adult intervention, and so this important opportunity to develop their communication skills is missed. There is too little dedicated focus on developing language in two of the three Foundation Stage classes and too little is expected of the children. As a result, the children do not reach the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy by the end of this stage. Too little skilled adult help is available in the reception classes to support children's learning, especially in communication and language skills.

70. Children are managed well in the nursery and in one of the reception classes and this makes a positive contribution to their personal, social and emotional development. In the other reception class children are not so well managed and some unsatisfactory behaviour is tolerated. The support staff available in the nursery are effectively deployed and support children's learning well, for example by joining in role play to help develop the children's language and communication skills. Staff in the nursery gather and record helpful information concerning children's attainment and progress, and this information is passed on and maintained by reception teachers. This helps them to plan suitable work for the children, although too little use is made of this information to meet children's language needs.

ENGLISH

71. Standards in English at the age of 7 and 11 have improved significantly since the new school was formed in January 1998. Test results have gradually risen over the past two years and the school did well to exceed its targets for 2000. Results in the 2000 national tests show that the standards at the age of seven were below average in both reading and writing. Although the proportion attaining the expected level, Level 2, was similar to the national figures, few pupils achieved the higher level, Level 3. This means that when the average is calculated the school's results were below average. However, results were well above the average achieved by similar schools. At the age of 11, the pupils' results were similar to those achieved nationally and well above those of similar schools. Girls have consistently achieved better than boys in annual tests and this was the case in 2000. However, the gap between standards in reading and writing was not as large as that found nationally. Indeed, more pupils, both boys and girls, achieved the expected standard in writing than the national average. This is testament to the school's focus on improving writing, particularly for boys.

72. The standards seen during inspection, in the main, mirror these results and pupils achieve standards that are broadly in line with national averages in reading, writing, speaking and listening at ages 7 and 11. Pupils are on course to meet the school's targets. From a low starting point, these standards are evidence of very good achievement over time. When pupils enter the school, they lack confidence in speaking, and their listening skills are generally weak. Reading skills are not well developed and very few pupils have the required pencil control to enable them to write clearly. These limitations are addressed with consistently good teaching over time, and this enables pupils to make good strides in learning. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress over their time in school through well organised and focused support. The progress of pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory. While suitable efforts are made to identify pupils' specific language needs, the limited specialist support for this purpose is not targeted closely enough to meet the needs of pupils at the early stages of English acquisition. Once these pupils have acquired a basic competence in English they begin to make more rapid gains, in line with other pupils.

73. For younger Key Stage 1 pupils, small group work provides opportunities for adults to act as good language models and to encourage pupils to express themselves clearly. Focusing on specific language structures is a key feature of this work. In later years, the level of language use develops rapidly and there are many confident and articulate children by the end of Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2, pupils' vocabulary is extended further and they begin to use complex and grammatically accurate sentences. Pupils' own reading, and the teachers' use of good subject-related vocabulary in class discussions, plays an important part in this development. Most pupils know how to explain in interesting ways their opinions and ideas about stories and extracts from books. However, a significant number of pupils, particularly in Year 6, are reluctant to interact and make active contributions to class discussions. Although day-to-day oral and literacy experiences reinforce pupils' skills, there are few planned opportunities, such as drama and debate, to enable pupils to speak at length and to use a variety of expression and vocabulary.

74. Given the limitations of the pupils' skills on entry to the school, they do well to attain satisfactory standards in reading. There is a strong emphasis on the teaching and learning of letter sounds and blends. In Key Stage 1, average and below average pupils have a good grasp of letter sounds to help them tackle unfamiliar words. Most pupils make expected progress as a result of an effective combination of direct teaching of phonics and other support aimed at developing pupils' sight vocabulary. Pupils with special educational needs are identified early and embark on well-structured literacy programmes, with realistic short-term targets.

75. The books read by pupils in Key Stage 2 are appropriate to their interest and level of attainment. The range of reading material is extended as the children move through the school, and more able readers are able to choose books freely. Pupils read with increasing fluency and accuracy. Most pupils talk about favourite authors with discernment, but their critical appreciation of a range of books is limited. While lower attaining pupils still interpret their reading literally, a few average and higher attaining pupils show a growing understanding of figurative language. Most pupils find it difficult to identify meaning beyond text and appreciate the subtleties of humour in good quality children's fiction. Pupils develop regular use of dictionary and thesaurus in most classes. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are developing the skills of skimming and scanning and make meaningful notes. However, few pupils understand how books are arranged in libraries and how 'contents' and 'indices' can point the way to specific information. A few pupils are able to use non-fiction books to locate and retrieve information within the classroom, but the independent research and study skills of the majority are not fully developed. This is mainly due to a lack of experience in using the school library to develop these skills. Most pupils make satisfactory use of their reading skills in subjects such as history.

76. Pupils make frequent references to reading at home. The process of home-school reading is well established and has a positive effect on pupils' interest and attainment. The guided reading sessions, which are skilfully structured, enhance pupils' progress in reading. Teachers keep satisfactory ongoing reading records to identify weaknesses and to target pupils' learning.

77. Standards in writing are broadly average in both key stages. In Year 1, all pupils are taught the skills of letter formation well as they begin to understand the sounds of particular letters. Throughout Key Stage 1, letter combinations and common spelling patterns are stressed. The most able seven year olds write very well. They answer all questions related to the story of *Elmer* and rewrite the story of *The Jolly Witch* showing a good understanding of the sequence of events. By the end of the key stage, most pupils have mastered these skills and are beginning to think about the overall structure of their writing, such as the setting, characters and plot when writing stories.

78. In Key Stage 2, the scope of writing is extended well. Pupils write for a range of purposes, including narrative, description, letters, instructions, play-scripts and newsletters. Competence in spelling and punctuation is now well established. By age 11, pupils are introduced to the main features of specific genres, for example writing reports and autobiographies. Although a minority of pupils still strive to express themselves clearly in

writing, most pupils, and the higher attainers in particular, are able to interpret poetry and comment sensibly on texts that they read. However, there are not enough examples of sustained story writing with good attention to developing characters and plot. Standards of handwriting are sound. Most pupils write neatly and many develop their own personal style, but the majority do not consistently use a joined script.

79. The teaching of English is good overall, with some very good features, and this promotes consistently good learning over time. In Key Stage 1, one good, one excellent and two very good examples of teaching were seen, but in one lesson teaching was unsatisfactory. In Key Stage 2, there was no unsatisfactory teaching. In four fifths of lessons teaching was good. Teachers across the school have a good understanding of how to teach reading and writing. They make sure pupils know what they are expected to learn and how this links with what they have learnt previously. The principles of the National Literacy Strategy have been implemented effectively. Lessons are well planned and organised with a good mix of whole-class, group and individual work.

80. In the younger classes, teachers successfully promote oral language development. They talk with pupils in an adult style, encouraging them to extend their vocabulary and use complex forms. In a Year 2 lesson, teaching was exceptional, with pupils actively involved in learning to use sequencing words in a story. Most teachers in both key stages use suitable methods and strategies to develop good listening and improve pupils' concentration and the pace of work in most sessions. They capitalise on pupils' interest in the subject, and this makes a good contribution to learning. Most pupils are attentive, eager to answer questions, and join in class discussion, where they express themselves clearly. The management of pupils' behaviour is very good, and in general pupils behave well and concentrate on their work. Only in one lesson, pupils became restless and lost concentration mainly because they had been sitting for too long before the lesson started.

81. In Key Stage 2, teachers set appropriate standards for the majority and maintain a good level of support for pupils with special educational needs. Teachers know their pupils well. They have good relationships with them and encourage good manners and social skills. The marking of pupils' work is generally helpful but there is scope for extending the good practice of teachers who make constructive comments and give suitable guidance to pupils on how to improve their work. Literacy skills are promoted satisfactorily in English lessons and across the curriculum, such as when pupils are reading and writing about events of the past in history and explaining and recording conclusions of scientific experiments.

82. Pupils with special educational needs receive effective support from teachers and adult helpers. They leave the room for short intensive lessons with the special needs co-ordinator, where specific language skills are practised and reinforced. This good quality support boosts their self-esteem as well as enhancing their skills.

83. The management of the subject is good. Through a systematic programme of monitoring the literacy co-ordinator is well aware of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning. The procedures for assessing pupils' progress are good and the need to analyse the results of all tests in order to set individual targets has been recognised. Useful additions have been made to resources in classes to support the implementation of the literacy strategy. However, the school library has insufficient books of good quality, both fiction and non-fiction, and is under-used at present. The development of the library is highlighted in the current school development plan.

MATHEMATICS

84. The results of the 2000 national tests, at the end of Key Stage 1, show that the percentage of Year 2 pupils reaching Level 2 or above (90 per cent) was broadly in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 or above (10 per cent) was well below average. Overall, pupils' attainment when compared to all schools was well below average but broadly in line with the average for similar schools. Inspection evidence supports the results of the national tests. The majority is attaining at the national standard, with an increasing proportion attaining at the higher level.

85. The results of the 2000 national tests, at the end of Key Stage 2, show that the percentage of Year 6 pupils reaching Level 4 or above (73 per cent) and the percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 or above (27 per cent) was broadly in line with the national average. Overall, pupils' attainment when compared to all schools is average but well above the average for similar schools. The inspection findings confirm the results of the national tests. Most pupils are attaining at least the national standard, and a substantial proportion are attaining at the higher level.

86. By the end of Key Stage 1, at the age of seven, most pupils know by heart the multiplication tables for 2, 5 and 10. They add and subtract two digit numbers with ease and know how to quickly halve and double numbers. Teachers encourage them to use what they know in order to solve every day problems. For example, pupils combine different coins to make twenty pence and know how to calculate the correct change from a simple purchase. There is a good focus on reinforcing correct mathematics vocabulary so that pupils use the language of mathematics to help them to understand what they are doing. They use terms like 'less' and 'more', 'odd' and 'even', when describing number patterns and sequences. They know about two dimensional and three dimensional shapes and correctly name the shape from a description of its corners and sides. Pupils measure classroom objects by hand span and compare with metric measure. Many pupils confidently tell the time from analogue or digital clock faces.

87. By the end of Key Stage 2, at the age of 11, pupils have a secure grasp of place value and the four operations of number. They understand and use factors and multiples, and know about prime numbers. Pupils are able to name all kinds of triangles and know how to fit them together to make a pattern. Pupils in Year 6 are able to solve quite difficult shape puzzles and then use the correct language to describe the solution. Pupils conduct experiments in throwing dice and coins and illustrate the results on colourful bar charts. They know about probability and games of chance, and some are able to predict outcomes. Teachers make a commendable effort to emphasise the application of mathematics to solving practical problems and puzzles.

88. Pupils make good progress in both key stages, and by the end of Year 6 a good foundation has been laid for mathematics in the secondary school. Pupils' progress is enhanced by daily practice in mental calculation and the revision and application of number facts. However, occasionally the mental and oral work at the beginning of the lesson is not as crisp and stimulating as it might be. Teachers regularly check pupils' understanding by asking them to explain their thinking and, in so doing, confirm their learning. Pupils with special educational needs are given very good support in small withdrawal groups, although

in the large classes, in Years 3 and 4, they cannot always get help when they most need it. Generally, these pupils make good progress towards the achievement of their personal targets. Numeracy skills are used soundly in other areas of the curriculum. In history, pupils correctly place historical events on a time line. In design and technology, they accurately measure the materials needed in construction, and in information and communication technology they prepare databases and spread sheets.

89. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Of the lessons observed in Key Stage 1, three-fifths were good or better; one was excellent. The remainder were satisfactory. In Key Stage 2, seven-tenths were good or better. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. The excellent lesson was very clearly and sequentially presented so that the pupils understood exactly what they had to do. They responded with eager interest, contributed well, and made very good progress in acquiring new skills. All lessons are well organised and managed to maintain a good pace to learning and to make the best possible use of the time available.

90. Planning is firmly based on the principles of the National Numeracy Strategy, which has been implemented consistently by teachers. Interesting activities capture pupils' imagination and help them to apply their knowledge to everyday problems. For example, pupils apply their knowledge of how to calculate the area and perimeter of plane shapes when deciding how many tiles are needed to cover the kitchen floor. All teachers maintain a good record of what pupils know, understand and can do. This assessment is rigorous and is one of the key factors in the pupils' good levels of achievement over time, because teachers make sensible adaptations to tasks to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities.

91. Relationships are very good and are based upon mutual respect. Teachers' expectations are high and pupils rise to the challenges they are set. Teachers use praise well to promote pupils' self esteem and to foster their positive attitudes to learning which consistently underpin the teaching of mathematics. Pupils thrive and prosper in this environment. Very good displays of pupils' work in the classrooms and corridors stimulate learning and act as aids to pupils' mathematical understanding. Resources are well used to support learning, but pupils would benefit from the regular, planned use of computers in the classroom to practise mathematical skills independently. The rudiments of information technology are, however, well taught in separate lessons.

92. The subject is very well managed, with imagination, energy and commitment. Continuity from one key stage to the next is being established. The co-ordinator's role in monitoring standards and reviewing the effectiveness of teaching is well developed, although there is a need to share regularly the very good practice evident in many classrooms. Objectives for further improvement are well set out in the school development plan. The school has set suitable targets for future attainment.

SCIENCE

93. Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2000 were broadly in line with the national figures. Results of National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2000 were in line with the national average but well above average when compared with those of similar schools. In both key stages, test results were better than those of 1999. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection in the area of scientific investigations. This aspect of the curriculum is emphasised strongly throughout the school and has a beneficial impact on pupils' general understanding of scientific concepts. The standards seen during inspection were in line with what might be expected for pupils' ages. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress in lessons and over time.

94. Currently, pupils in Key Stage 1 make good investigations into the properties of different materials. In Year 1, pupils ably sort material by simple characteristics such as 'soft', 'hard' and 'shiny'. In Year 2, they discover and make very good comparisons of materials that can be stretched, bent and twisted into different shapes. Pupils clearly understand that materials can change in shape temporarily or permanently. Teachers place a strong emphasis on teaching pupils to observe and record what they see in a structured format. This is giving pupils a good foundation in methods of recording their observations.

95. Pupils in Year 3 in Key Stage 2 are similarly pursuing a comprehensive study of materials and their properties. This includes good investigative work on the force of magnetism and discovering which materials are attracted, which are repelled, and which do not react to at all to a magnet. In Year 4 pupils continue the good investigations of the properties of materials by finding out which ones make good conductors of electricity. Pupils show good skills in recording their data, and understand well that a fair test requires only one change in the components involved in an experiment.

96. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are currently investigating the properties of solids, liquids and gases, and show a good understanding of the differences found in these elements. The pupils in Year 5 learn well how a gas has no set volume and will expand to fill whatever space is available to it. They also show a good understanding of how gas can flow, by pouring carbon dioxide over a candle to extinguish it. Pupils in Year 6 are discovering which solids dissolve, and they come to good conclusions about the solubility of different solids, after filtering the mixtures they have made. The pupils then record their findings clearly on neatly drawn tables. Throughout the key stages pupils make good predictions and compare the outcomes well, and all show a clear understanding of the principle of fair testing in experiments.

97. The quality of teaching and learning is good in both key stages, with some examples of very good and excellent teaching. Overall, teaching was good or better in seven out of ten lessons.

98. This is a marked improvement since the previous inspections of the two separate schools, when teaching was considered only as satisfactory. Pupils' learning reflects the good teaching, as a result of the pupils' high level of commitment and a great interest in the experiments, which the teaching presents to them. A significant teaching strength lies in the promotion of investigative work, which capitalises on pupils' natural curiosity and to which the pupils respond very purposefully.

99. The very good and excellent lessons seen in Key Stage 1 stress clear scientific language to enhance pupils' vocabulary. Teachers have high expectations in this area and the pupils rise to the challenge very positively. In Key Stage 2, the very good teaching is characterised by skilful questioning which draw a great deal of information from the pupils, who are very eager to contribute and who listen very well to each other's ideas. Pupils speak up well and are happy to explain to visitors how they approach their investigations, thus showing a good understanding of their own work.

100. Investigations form the backbone of the good teaching, and this keeps the pupils constantly focused on their work. Teachers know the subject well and this ensures that new knowledge is explained accurately. Pupils reflect the high expectations of their teachers by the careful and accurate work in their books. They work efficiently and quickly to keep pace with the teaching. Lessons are often organised in such a way that pupils work co-operatively in groups, and this gives them valuable opportunities to learn from each other and to value others' ideas and efforts. This was frequently noted during investigations where pupils ensured that each one in the group played a full part and shared in the experiment. There were instances, however, where pupils found this challenging.

101. Pupils' learning benefits significantly from their mathematical skills and especially from their literacy skills in speaking and listening, and writing. In some years, pupils have used computer programs to produce bar charts, line graphs and pie charts to present the data from their experiments.

102. The science co-ordinator provides good support and guidance for colleagues.

103. Documentation of good quality guides teachers' planning and teaching, which is monitored regularly. Very good resources are well managed and organised to assist the smooth running of lessons. Assessment procedures are very good and inform future planning. There are effective tracking documents which give teachers immediate knowledge of a pupil's achievements and of which areas need to be developed or reinforced. The school's emphasis on developing pupils' investigative skills in tandem with their knowledge is beginning to pay dividends in the improvement in standards achieved.

ART AND DESIGN

104. Standards within the narrow sample of work seen are similar to those found in many schools. However, provision for art is unsatisfactory insofar as it does not offer enough opportunities for three-dimensional work. Nor is pupils' understanding of a range of artists and different artistic styles given sufficient focus. This results in the subject making a limited contribution to pupils' cultural development. These areas were highlighted in the previous inspection, and the school has done little to address them or to make any improvement. Outside expertise is sometimes used to extend the range of pupils' experiences, through invitations to local artists. The amount of time allocated to the subject, at one half an hour per week, is minimal and restricts the pupils' creative development. The time is often blocked in one half term, and this limits continuity of skills development, especially for young pupils.

105. At Key Stage 1, Year 1, pupils make good use of colour in their paintings of their favourite stories and show expression and control in their brush work. There is also some satisfactory cross-curricular work where pupils use geometrical shapes to produce an abstract human form. Self-portraits in pencil show real emerging skills in observation, which gives expression to the final result. Year 2 pupils show considerable awareness of scale as they produce drawings well matched to the size of fragmentary pieces of photographs used as a stimulus.

106. At Key Stage 2, Year 3 pupils' observational skills are very well focused by the successful life drawing and muted painting of the full figure, which are reminiscent of Picasso's earlier works. There are also some effective textiles made with wool wound around card, to reflect abstract atmospheric pictures and photographs. There is an interesting display of very controlled paintings where Year 4 pupils reflect their journeys to school in an abstract fashion similar to Aboriginal paintings. Year 5 pupils have produced some lively 'talking textiles'. Pupils in Year 6 are not due to do any art until the spring term.

107. Evidence from current and past work, and from teachers' past planning, indicates that teaching and learning are satisfactory within the range of the curriculum provided. The two lessons observed during the inspection, both in Key Stage 1, were of good quality. The teachers observed were very secure in the subject and worked closely with the pupils to encourage, make suggestions, and identify improvements. They had high expectations of the pupils, whose learning reflected this both in their commitment and in their understanding of what they had to do. Pupils with special educational needs were well supported, as were pupils with English as an additional language, and together with their peers they made good progress. Good opportunities were provided for pupils to appreciate the work of their peers.

108. Co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory. There has been training for staff on the new curriculum and more is planned for the future. The Quality Curriculum Authority's guidelines are now being used as a basis for planning. The co-ordinator has some ideas for developing the subject, especially cross-curricular links, and has hopes of developing an art room. However, much remains to be done to re-establish the subject and to address deficiencies in the breadth of provision.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

109. The standards seen at 7 and 11 are similar to those found in many schools. In Key Stage 1, pupils show developing skills in joining, fixing, and choosing and adapting materials for their purposes. For example, Year 1 pupils satisfactorily join paper cones in order to make witches. Year 2 pupils have made wheeled vehicles from selected scrap materials and these are very well assembled and painted. The pupils have clearly discovered the need for axles. They draw their designs satisfactorily and make simple evaluations using a structured format prepared by the teacher. Pupils in Year 2 are also engaged in food technology, for example baking biscuits, and show good learning in the area of food hygiene.

110. Pupils in Year 3, at Key Stage 2, are working on packaging and have produced some well-made packets and boxes, which are colourfully decorated and are accurately made. Pupils make good use of their mathematical skills in measuring, and write up their evaluations very well and neatly. Year 4 pupils are using the knowledge gained from science to design different switches for controlling their electrical circuits to produce lighting for a Christmas crib. The pupils write up their experiments well and see how they can improve on them. Biscuits are also on the menu for Year 5 pupils! They measure the ingredients carefully and work very well together as a team, as there are not enough mixing bowls for the class. They write up their recipes carefully and show a good understanding of the need for hygiene.

111. The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There were some lessons in which good quality planning clearly identified objectives that were well met. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection, since teachers now have a good grasp of the required elements of the subject and these are clearly transmitted to the pupils. The pupils are very enthusiastic in lessons and very committed to getting a good result. However, lack of resources hampers learning at times. Pupils make satisfactory progress, including those with developing English skills or special educational needs. Provision for design and technology is satisfactory and all aspects of the subject are taught soundly. Satisfactory opportunities are provided for pupils to work independently to pursue their own ideas, and select materials and equipment to accomplish individual projects. Good attention is paid to opportunities for pupils to evaluate formally their finished product, and this gives them much pleasure in their achievements. Pupils' social skills are enhanced as they work together in a group. Good oral assessments are made as groups of pupils offer suggestions for improving ideas and celebrate the success of others.

112. The subject is led effectively by a knowledgeable co-ordinator who provides good support and guidance for colleagues. The new updated policy takes account of the new curriculum guidelines, and planning is monitored to check that continuity in learning is ensured. There are sound assessment procedures, which inform future planning.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

Geography

113. Standards seen in written work in Year 2 and in lessons in Year 4 were sound, and broadly typical for pupils' ages. The knowledge and understanding of pupils in Year 6 was patchier, and the quantity of recorded work in Key Stage 2 from the previous year was slight. This patchiness reflects some lack of consistency in developing pupils' skills, knowledge, and understanding during the past two years, when statutory requirements for geography were relaxed and a reduced curriculum was offered.

114. Pupils in Year 2 are developing a sound knowledge of the vocabulary associated with the physical features of a place when describing the imaginary Island of Struay. They know that this place is very different from their home. They are able to express opinions about a place and what makes it attractive. Higher attaining pupils convey their knowledge through writing, and lower attaining pupils through drawings and diagrams; both are successful.

115. Pupils in Year 6 recall, with some excitement, a trip to Rotherwick, where they measured the rate of flow of the stream by dropping in sticks and timing how long they took to travel a measured distance. They are clear about the marked contrast between the peaceful countryside environment experienced here and the traffic and noise of their local area. Their memory of studying the Caribbean in Year 4 is quite limited. Their general knowledge of the physical and human features of the British Isles is sound, but knowledge of significant places in Europe and the World is not well developed. Pupils are not confident in using atlases to locate places. Their awareness of environmental issues is satisfactory, and this is related to their own lives and the locality in which they live.

116. The quality of teaching seen in lessons in Year 4 was sound, with some good features that promoted good learning in aspects of geography. Of note was the careful way in which teachers reinforced and emphasised key geographical vocabulary. As a result, pupils gained confidence in using terms such as 'mountains', 'coast', and 'bay' when describing the physical features of St Lucia. It was clear that these pupils were gaining a good grounding in learning geographical processes.

History

117. Throughout the school, standards in lessons and in pupils' current work are broadly typical for their age. Evidence from a slim sample of pupils' past work indicates that standards have improved this term.

118. Pupils in Year 2 show, through answering questions about Florence Nightingale, that they are beginning to recognise the differences between the lives of people now and in the past. This is due to the careful reinforcement and constant questioning by teachers, who check pupils' understanding and challenge any misconceptions they may have. Higher attaining pupils begin to make satisfactory comparisons between Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole. By Year 6, pupils use a variety of sources to draw conclusions about how ordinary people were affected by events such as 'the blitz'. They use evidence from eyewitness accounts to summarise what they have found out, and enjoy questioning the school caretaker about the main features of life after the war and in the fifties.

119. In all year groups, pupils are developing a good factual knowledge of periods of history, which average and higher ability pupils can recall from previous years. For example, pupils in Year 5, making comparisons between the lives of rich and poor children in Victorian times, were also able to make comparisons with the lives of children in the Tudor times.

120. Teaching is consistently sound and occasionally good in Key Stage 2. Both lessons in Key Stage 1 were taught very well. Question and answer is used effectively in all lessons to check pupils' understanding and to build on pupils' answers to get them to think. In all lessons pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are naturally curious and interested in history, and teachers capitalise on this enthusiasm. Teachers ensure that pupils are able to communicate their historical knowledge and understanding, by adapting tasks for pupils and giving them opportunities to present information in different ways. This means that pupils

with special educational needs or those learning English as an additional language are not prevented from participating in history because of weaknesses in literacy skills. This was a notable feature of lessons in Years 2 and 3. In Year 5, a similar effect was achieved by carefully arranging pupils in mixed ability groups so that they could learn successfully by supporting each other. Such adaptations are not always made in lessons, as can be seen from pupils' past work.

121. There was little evidence that teachers make use of artefacts to promote historical enquiry, and few are available in school. This weakness is redressed to some extent through visits to places of interest such as Hatfield House, where pupils can see objects in their correct context. By and large, pupils' knowledge of sources of evidence is not as strong as their factual knowledge. However, in a lesson in Year 6, pupils were beginning to draw distinctions between the different types of sources available to the historian. For example, in recalling factual information about the Ancient Egyptians studied in Year 4, these pupils recognised that the pyramids, tombs and hieroglyphs are primary sources of evidence which give clues to the way of life at that time.

122. Both history and geography are led satisfactorily by the co-ordinator. The subject policies and guidance have been updated in preparation for the changes to the curriculum required from September, and the school has adopted units of work from the Qualification and Curriculum Authority schemes of work. The time allocation is currently at the minimum recommended by the scheme, particularly in geography, and will need to be monitored carefully to ensure that the planned balance of skills, knowledge and understanding is realised in the time available. Neither subject has been the focus of development during the last two years while the school's priorities have been firmly based on improving provision in literacy and numeracy. The school plans to redress this situation during the coming year. Resources are well organised and used soundly to promote pupils' interest, but there is scope for more use of information and communication technology in both subjects.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

123. Standards in information and communication technology have improved since the amalgamation of the infant and junior schools, and they are now typical of those found nationally at the ages of 7 and 11. The introduction of the information and communication technology suite has had a positive impact on standards, as has the training for teachers, which has improved their competence and confidence.

124. By the time they are seven, pupils log on to the computer and confidently open the program they want to use. They use the mouse competently to manipulate images on the screen. For example, when using an art program, pupils successfully use the mouse to select different drawing and painting tools, such as the 'pen' and the 'spray can', and produce pictures on the screen. They amend and delete pictures they have created. Pupils make some use of information and communication technology to support their learning in other subjects of the curriculum, for example using word-processing for some of their work in English. However, the computers available to pupils in classrooms are outdated and have limited appropriate software to support learning across the curriculum. This aspect of the subject is therefore not as well developed as it might be.

125. By the time they are 11, pupils successfully use information and communications technology to solve problems. For example in mathematics, they enter data into a spreadsheet to calculate the area and perimeter of a rectangle. They are competent and confident in their use of the mouse and the keyboard; they save their own work and retrieve it later. There are some satisfactory examples of the use of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning in English, mathematics and science. Pupils word process written work, analyse data they have gathered in mathematics lessons, and present the results of investigations they have carried out in science. However, the machines available in classes limit the range and frequency of opportunities to use ICT skills in other subjects.

126. The teaching of information and communication technology is good. Teachers have a generally sound knowledge and understanding of the subject and this has been helped by the school's participation in an appropriate programme of training. Classes are managed well and this helps pupils to behave well, pay attention and concentrate, so promoting good learning. Some good use is made of support staff to help pupils learn, especially those who find learning more difficult. An example was seen in Year 2, where six pupils were receiving extra help to open a computer programme and select 'painting' tools. There is a good new system for assessing pupils' attainment and progress in this subject, which was just coming into use at the time of the inspection.

127. The subject is well co-ordinated by a knowledgeable member of staff, who gives good support to teachers. Appropriate national guidance has been adopted to inform the teaching and this is effective in helping teachers to know what to teach, when and how, and in ensuring the smooth progression of pupils' learning as they move through the school.

MUSIC

128. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment is broadly in line with that which is expected nationally. Progress is satisfactory. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment falls below the national expectation, and although progress in some lessons is satisfactory, progress over time is not, as pupils do not have access to the full music curriculum. At both key stages pupils sing very well. This is particularly evident in assembly where they show sensitivity to the words of the hymn. Pupils sing enthusiastically and with enjoyment. They sing with clear diction and phrase well, and they have a good awareness of rhythm and tempo.

129. It was possible to observe only one lesson in Key Stage 1. This was at the end of a long and wet day and pupils were not at their best. Pupils selected percussion instruments and demonstrated long and short sounds. Pupils enjoyed the activity but had some difficulty in deciding which sounds were long and which were short. They made some progress during the course of the lesson. The planning for other lessons shows that pupils learn about pitch and demonstrate what they know by playing different notes on a chime bar. Pupils accompany themselves as they sing.

130. In Key Stage 2, pupils listen to Tubular Bells and clap the rhythm. They sing folk songs and develop a sense of repeated rhythmic patterns. Pupils recall and demonstrate playground games from different cultures and historical periods. They dance and sing with energy and enthusiasm, and in the process learn about the importance of dance and music. Pupils listening to a recording of *Bugsy Malone* tapped out the dance rhythms and sang the choruses. They learn about ‘crescendo’ and ‘diminuendo’ and, in small vocal groups with a conductor, show that they understand the meaning.

131. Overall, the quality of music teaching is satisfactory. It was good in one lesson, which was imaginatively and enthusiastically taught and made use of the pupils’ playground culture. Most teachers are not wholly confident in teaching music and rely heavily upon commercial tapes, which limit the creative experience and the opportunities for pupils and teachers to work together. Teachers manage the pupils well but teaching methods are rather static, and this sets limits on progress and the range of activities. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to listen to music and to perform, usually by singing. Other activities, such as composing and appraising music, are not part of the regular curriculum. Pupils do not keep a record of what they do, and the quality of their classroom work is not formally assessed.

132. The subject is not well managed and does not have a high profile in the school. The school is introducing a new scheme of work which, when fully implemented, should provide a greater degree of continuity and breadth in pupils’ learning, but at present there is too little guidance and support for teachers who lack confidence and expertise. Pupils in Key Stage 2 have the opportunity to learn to play the keyboard, and at the end of each term all pupils take part in regular musical productions that are well supported by teachers and much appreciated by parents. The school also sends a choir to the Brent music festival, and various visiting musicians show the pupils that music is rewarding and fun. The environment is well set for the further development of classroom music.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

133. By the time pupils are aged seven, standards in physical education are typical of those found nationally at this age. For example, in gymnastics lessons pupils explore different ways of travelling from space to space on the floor without walking. They successfully transfer these movements, such as sliding and rolling, to the large apparatus. They move with safety and good body control. In dance lessons, the youngest pupils express moods and feelings in response to music, for example expressing fear, anger, happiness and sadness through movement and facial expression.

134. By the age of 11 standards are also typical of pupils of this age. Swimming is taught in Year 5, and pupils are on course to be able to swim at least 25 metres by the time they leave the school. In dance, pupils move in a variety of different ways in response to music, for example moving like an astronaut, a dancer or a footballer. They express different moods and feelings and successfully build a sequence of movements, which they develop, improve and refine through practice. Good use is made of the expertise of a visiting specialist teacher.

For example, pupils in Years 3 and 5 learn some of the skills appropriate to playing traditional team games, as they throw and catch small balls and practise relay skills. The oldest pupils develop attack and defence skills relating to the playing of traditional games such as netball. They learn to use different techniques for passing a ball, such as the chest pass, the shoulder pass and the bounce pass. They co-operate well together in teams to attack and defend the goal.

135. The teaching of physical education is good overall and this helps pupils make good progress in their learning. Teachers manage pupils well and this promotes good behaviour and means that pupils pay attention and concentrate well on developing their physical skills. In the best teaching, seen for example in a games lesson in Year 6, teachers make good use of pupils to demonstrate their good performance. This encourages the rest of the class to try harder to improve what they do, and so raises standards. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject is secure and there is particularly good expertise in games and swimming lessons, where specialists are involved in the teaching.

136. The subject is capably co-ordinated and the schemes of work ensure that teachers have good guidance on what to teach, how and when. Planning is helpfully monitored to check for the smooth progression in pupils' learning as they move through the school. There is an appropriate policy for the teaching and learning of physical education, and this has been updated to take account of the revised National Curriculum.