

INSPECTION REPORT

BRICKHOUSE JUNIOR AND INFANT SCHOOL

Rowley Regis

LEA area: Sandwell

Unique reference number: 103936

Headteacher: Mr C. R. Hocknull

Reporting inspector: Mrs C. A. Field
9479

Dates of inspection: 11th – 13th June 2001

Inspection number: 230617

Full 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: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Dudhill Road
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West Midlands

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr P. Webb

Date of previous inspection: 14th July 1999

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
9479	C. Field	Registered inspector		<p>Information about the school</p> <p>The school's results and achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
8989	M. Romano	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
15414	D. Carrington	Team inspector	<p>Mathematics</p> <p>Information and communication technology</p> <p>Physical education</p> <p>Equality of opportunity</p>	<p>How well is the school led and managed?</p>
6752	J. Dickins	Team inspector	<p>English</p> <p>Geography</p> <p>History</p> <p>Religious education</p> <p>Provision for pupils with special educational needs</p>	
2818	G. Warner	Team inspector	<p>Science</p> <p>Art and design</p> <p>Design and technology</p> <p>Music</p> <p>Areas of learning for children in the foundation stage</p> <p>Provision for pupils with English as an additional language</p>	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is situated in the urban area of Rowley Regis and serves a large estate of local authority housing. A significant number of parents have found long-term employment difficult to secure. There are 177 pupils on roll: 106 boys and 71 girls aged between four and eleven years. A further 30 children attend the school's nursery: 19 full-time and 11 part-time. Most children's attainment on entry into school is well below average. A significant proportion of pupils leaves or joins the school during the school year. Over 40 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average. There are three pupils who have a statement of special educational needs; the proportion of pupils in school with special educational needs is well above average. The majority of pupils are from white European backgrounds but a small minority are of Black and Asian heritage. There are a very small proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school currently provides for two refugee pupils from Iran. The number of pupils on roll was in decline from 1997 but for the last 12 months has been rising. The school's mission is: 'striving to learn, improve and grow together'.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Brickhouse Junior and Infant School is an effective school that is successfully meeting its mission. The ethos is positive and is promoting a culture in which everyone believes he or she can do well. Academic standards are not yet as high as they should be at eleven years, but are moving in the right direction at a good pace because of the very effective leadership provided by the headteacher and his able deputy. Staff, many of whom have joined the school in the last two years, are united in the determination to work towards raising standards. Teaching is good overall and enables most pupils to do well, especially in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. The current cost of educating pupils is well above average and, because standards are still too low, the school is judged to provide unsatisfactory value for money. It is on the right track to give better value in the near future.

What the school does well

- Good leadership overall provides clear educational direction and a strong commitment to raising standards.
- Good teaching is enabling most pupils to achieve well.
- Pupils with special educational needs, those with challenging behaviour and those who are learning English as an additional language make good progress in school because of the effective way their individual needs are met.
- Very good attention is paid to pupils' moral and social development and this is assisting them to become responsible future citizens.
- The school has worked hard to bring parents on board as partners in education and is meeting with growing success.

What could be improved

- Standards are still too low in English, science and information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school, and in mathematics, religious education, geography and history at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The planned curriculum is not enabling the effective development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding across all the subjects they are required to learn, and the provision for ICT and religious education does not meet legal requirements.
- Teachers' assessments and their impact on planning, especially for high attainers lack precision, and managers have yet to make the most effective use of assessment data to set challenging targets for the school's improved performance.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

In 1997 the school became subject to special measures. In July 1999 Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) removed the school from special measures but found continuing serious weaknesses, specifically in pupils' attainment and the quality of teaching and assessment practice. All of these aspects have continued to improve under the leadership of the headteacher who was appointed just over two years ago. The school no longer has serious weaknesses and has made satisfactory progress in addressing other lesser areas for development identified, despite set backs caused by a high level of staff turnover. The school now has stable staffing and people who are ready for the challenges and opportunities that the next phase of improvement will bring. Pupils' progress in ICT has been hampered by computer hardware being stolen on two occasions and delays in staff training. The raising of academic standards continues to be the top priority for improvement and everyone in school is clear about how this is to be achieved. The school is judged to have good capacity to sustain an effective rate of improvement.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
English	E*	D	E*	E*	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	E	C	E	E	
Science	C	D	E*	E	

The above table shows that the school's results in English were very low when compared to schools nationally and to similar ones. Results in mathematics were well below average on both counts and in science very low when compared to all schools and well below those of similar schools. The school's performance was in the lowest five per cent nationally in English and science.

Pupils' performance in the tests for eleven-year-olds has been affected by various factors: high levels of absence and transfer between schools, well above average levels of special educational needs and the negative impact that unsatisfactory provision in the past has had on some older pupils' ability to achieve to full potential. The school is providing an effective education now, and standards are rising. Inspectors judge that current standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are well below average in English and mathematics and below average in science. This reflects steady progress over time, with some good learning in lessons enabling pupils to catch up with their studies. Boys out-number girls by two to one in the upper junior classes but there is no significant variation in the standards they are achieving or in their good enthusiasm for school. The school's rate of improvement in raising standards at Key Stage 2 is faster than the national rate.

Standards show significant improvement at Key Stage 1 as a result of the good improvement made to the quality of education since 1998. In the 2000 tests the standards achieved were well below average in reading, below average standards in writing and above average in mathematics when compared to schools nationally. Results were average in reading, above average in writing and well above average in mathematics when compared to similar schools. Teachers' assessments showed science standards to be well below average.

Children enter school with well below average levels of attainment at age 4 according to initial assessments made. In reading, progress is satisfactory with pupils reaching well below average standards by age 7. In science and writing, however progress is better, and by age 7 standards are below showing good progress from a well below average start. Pupils make some rapid progress in mathematics to achieve above average standards, largely because the school has increased the amount of practical work that pupils do. The work in pupils' books shows that throughout Key Stage 1 they make good progress overall.

The school has set realistic academic targets for future National Curriculum tests at eleven years, but could inject more challenge to take account of the growing number of pupils who could achieve at high levels

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are keen to come to school and enjoy their studies.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils show respect for one another and work and play together cooperatively. Five temporary exclusions were made last year and were fully justified.
Personal development and relationships	Good overall. Very good relationships support positively pupils' personal development. Too few opportunities are given to older pupils, however, to take initiative and manage appropriate aspects of their own learning.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory but much improved since the previous inspection and now just below the national average. The attendance and punctuality of a handful of pupils cause concern and the school is monitoring this carefully.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Teaching and learning are both good at Brickhouse Primary School. Pupils are willing and often enthusiastic learners. They work hard, concentrate well and become mature and sensible learners. The scrutiny of pupils' books showed that teaching and learning are equally effective in weeks outside the inspection. In the 63 lessons observed during this inspection, teaching was of satisfactory or better quality in 98 per cent. One English lesson in upper Key Stage 2 was unsatisfactory because of shortcomings in classroom organisation. In 51 per cent of lessons teaching was of good quality and in 14 per cent of very good quality. Teaching is good overall in the Foundation Stage but there are variations between the nursery and the reception class. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language is good and results in these pupils making good progress against individual targets. There are more strengths of teaching compared to areas for development, though expectations of what higher attaining pupils can achieve could be more consistent and the marking of pupils' work does not regularly show them how to improve their work. All teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well and this results in good conditions for learning in all classes and is a strength. Skills of literacy are given good attention, particularly in literacy hours, although more could be done to promote language use in other subjects such as history and geography. Numeracy skills are consistently well taught and pupils do well in mathematics as a result. Teaching and learning in ICT is currently unsatisfactory due to a paucity of resources. The practical aspects of a range of subjects are being well promoted at Key Stage 1, and as a result pupils are confident to 'have a go' at solving problems. The very best teaching and learning observed during the inspection was in the reception class and in Years 1 to 3. The features of this best practice have yet to be shared.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Unsatisfactory overall. The school provides a relevant curriculum by giving a high time allocation to promoting pupils' basic skills but this limits the time available to extend older pupils' learning effectively in some other subjects. The school is not meeting statutory requirements in its provision for ICT and religious education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils with special educational needs are identified early on, and are provided with good support by learning assistants and specialist staff to meet their specific targets, and on-going development.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Newcomers to the school have been given effective additional support that has helped them settle in well and make rapid progress in learning English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Satisfactory attention is paid to developing pupils' spiritual growth and cultural awareness. Very good provision for their social and moral development is helping pupils become responsible future citizens.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory overall. Staff know the pupils very well and are responsive to individual needs. There are very good procedures in place for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare. Inconsistent use of assessment to guide teachers' planning, however, results in higher-attaining pupils not always being set sufficiently challenging work.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Good. Parents have very positive views about the school and its popularity is growing as reflected in the increasing number on roll.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. Since his appointment in 1998, the headteacher has given a very strong personal lead to the ethos created in school and the educational direction. All serious weaknesses identified at the time of the previous inspection have been eradicated and the school is rapidly improving. There is a shared determination amongst staff to strive for improvement, and senior managers are now in a position to play a greater role in monitoring and evaluation.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors know the strengths and shortcomings of the school and play a helpful role in supporting the headteacher's drive for improved standards.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. A useful start has been made in collecting data to support target setting. Managers recognise the importance of comparing the school's standards and costs with those of other schools. They are alert to the requirements of best value in their decision-making and apply these principles soundly.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory overall. The level of staffing is satisfactory. Accommodation and learning resources are generally adequate but both require on-going upgrades. The theft of computer hardware has had a negative impact on the use of new technologies to support teaching, learning and school administration. Finances are efficiently managed but the very significant deficit budget (inherited by the current headteacher) is a key concern for managers. The plan to reduce the overspend is sensible, but monitoring is required to check that the school's improvement plan remains on schedule and is not unduly affected by restricted expenditure.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school, try hard and are making good progress. • Teaching is good. • Behaviour is good and pupils are helped to become mature and responsible. • The school is well led and managed. • Parents find the school approachable and there are strong home-school links. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistent homework practice. • The range of extracurricular activities.

A small minority of parents would like to see homework made more consistent and the range of extracurricular activities extended. The inspection team agrees with all of the views expressed by parents shown above.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. In 1997 the school became subject to special measures. In July 1999 Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) inspected the school and removed it from special measures but found continuing serious weaknesses, specifically in pupils' attainment. The school has given good attention overall to improving academic standards since the time of the previous inspection. The action taken can clearly be seen in the steeply rising results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 1. Less impact is seen at the end of Key Stage 2 in terms of test results because these pupils have not been enabled to learn effectively over a longer period of time and have not been able to catch up fully with basic literacy and numeracy skills missed when they were younger. The school's performance as seen against the national rate of improvement in raising academic standards is good overall. There are clear indications that this will continue, though more focus is now required on targeting potentially higher attaining pupils and to achieving more balance in the curriculum that has rightly been weighted in favour of English and mathematics thus far.

2. The standards attained by eleven-year-olds in the 2000 National Curriculum tests were very low in English when compared to schools nationally and similar ones. Results in mathematics were well below average on both counts, and in science very low when compared to all schools and well below those of similar schools. The school's performance was in the lowest five per cent nationally in English and science. The school's analysis of results shows that performance in both mathematics and science was hindered to some extent by the pupils limited literacy skills.

3. The school fell short of its target for English by 20 per cent. Half of the pupils who took the tests had special educational needs and performed at an appropriate level given their prior achievements. Eleven per cent of pupils were absent for the tests and eight of these were expected to reach a level 4, the national average in English.

4. Pupils' performance in the tests for eleven-year-olds is affected by various factors: high levels of absence and transfer between schools, well above average levels of special educational needs and the negative impact that unsatisfactory provision in the past has had on some older pupils' ability to achieve to potential. The school is providing an effective education now and standards are on the increase. The school's rate of improvement in raising standards at Key Stage 2 is faster than the national rate.

5. Inspectors judge that standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are well below average in English and mathematics and below average in science. This reflects steady progress over time for older pupils. Nearly two thirds of the current Year 6 has special educational needs. The reviews of individual education plans show that in the last two years pupils with special educational needs and behavioural needs have made some rapid progress in reaching their individual targets and in their personal development. Most pupils in Year 6 have caught up well on their studies, even though their achievements in tests are much lower than others of the same age. Boys out-number girls by two to one in the upper junior classes but there is no

significant variation in the standards they are achieving or in their good enthusiasm for school.

6. Children's attainment on entry to nursery is well below average, especially in communication, language and literacy. They get off to a secure start in the nursery where effective teaching by two nursery nurses assists most to make steady gains across all six areas of learning in the Early Learning Goals for children under five as set out in the recently published curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage. The very good provision made for children in the reception class ensures that they learn at a very brisk rate and there is a leap forward in their achievements. The majority of the children are still behind where they should be in language skills but in other areas they are on track to reach expected levels by the end of the reception year. Good attention is paid to promoting purposeful talk at every opportunity in the reception class, and the staff ask probing questions that seek to deepen the children's thinking skills and stimulate the expressive use of language. Such effective practice should now be extended across the whole of the Foundation Stage.

7. Pupils aged seven years achieved well below average standards in the 2000 National Curriculum tests in reading, below average standards in writing and above average standards in mathematics when compared to schools nationally. Teachers' assessments in science judged standards to be well below average. Standards were average in reading, above average in writing and well above average in mathematics when compared to similar schools. Pupils make some rapid progress in mathematics to achieve above average standards, largely because the school has increased the amount of practical work that pupils do. The work in pupils' books shows that throughout Key Stage 1 the majority of pupils make at least steady and often good progress in writing and science. Inspectors judge current standards to be just below average in English, above average in mathematics and below average in science at the end of Key Stage 1.

8. Inspection evidence shows that strengths in teaching basic skills ensure that most pupils make good progress in literacy and numeracy during their time at school. Throughout the school there has been a positive impact on the achievements of pupils from the successful implementation of both the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies. They have had relatively more impact for the younger pupils at present as, for them, this is the normal way to learn English and mathematics. For those in Years 5 and 6 the changes come on top of already established working patterns and so the impact is less.

9. Pupils' number skills are becoming sharp and most work with speed and accuracy during the numeracy hours. The strong emphasis given to practical mathematics and problem solving is paying dividends in infant classes, as the very good improvement in standards at the end of the key stage demonstrate. There is some good use of numeracy in other subjects, for example in design and technology where exact measurements were required in the design stage of making picture frames. In junior classes well-chosen work is enabling pupils to catch up on aspects of mathematics not learnt securely in the past and, from this firmer foundation, take the next step forward with confidence. Too little is expected of the higher attainers in Year 5 and 6 however, and this is one area for attention.

10. Pupils largely develop good reading habits and the increased involvement of parents, through the family literacy initiative for example, is proving beneficial to pupils' achievements. The school has spent much time and effort in supporting slow readers but has

not yet given the same regular attention to monitoring how well the very capable readers are developing higher-level skills. Pupils' writing skills in English books are clearly improving because of the good attention the school has given to extending this. Pupils are writing imaginatively and creatively at length and are clearly getting enjoyment from so doing. This was well demonstrated by a lower-attaining child in Year 3 who in his story-writing about the fox and the rabbit used words such as 'blushed', 'cackled' and 'shouted' to replace the use of 'said'. This is not consistently the case across the curriculum however. It was apparent from looking at a sample of pupils' books that little high-quality written work is being produced in geography and history, for example. In some older pupils' books work was scruffily presented too. Spellings are practised in most classes as a regular feature of morning registration time but many pupils are still mis-spelling key vocabulary. Pupils are attentive listeners and follow instructions well. They have less well-developed speaking skills. Pupils speak confidently and enthusiastically but what they say is limited by their vocabulary. This is one aspect of literacy that could be better promoted across the curriculum.

11. Pupils are making steady progress in science even though standards are below average at both key stages. The curriculum is well structured and good attention is being paid to promoting the investigative and experimental aspects of the subject. Teachers are providing interesting practical activities for pupils to *learn by doing* and this motivates good involvement and sustained concentration that is helping raise standards.

12. Pupils' progress in all aspects of ICT has been hampered by two thefts of computer hardware and delayed staff training. No direct teaching of ICT is currently taking place and there is little use of ICT to support pupils' work in other subjects. Standards at all ages are unsatisfactory in ICT and this is a key issue for the school to address. Standards in religious education, geography and history are satisfactory at the end of Key Stage 1 and unsatisfactory at the end of Key Stage 2 because too little time has been given to ensuring that pupils build up their knowledge, skills and understanding year on year. Some good work has been produced by pupils in all three of these subjects, particularly in Year 3 and Year 4 but this is not the case in the next two years. Throughout the school and across the subjects of art and design, design and technology and music, pupils are making good progress and standards are satisfactory. Standards in physical education are satisfactory at the end of Key Stage 2. No physical education was observed at Key Stage 1 so it is not possible to make a judgement about the standards being achieved by seven-year-olds.

13. The good additional support provided for pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language enables them to do well. Pupils with particular gifts or talents are sometimes set challenging work to do, though this depends to some degree on individual class teachers and is inconsistent. The next task for the school to tackle in its bid to improve standards is to set challenging targets for pupils in all years, especially high attainers. The school does not currently identify in its monitoring the progress made by higher attaining pupils. These pupils do not consistently make the progress they could, and there is good practice already in existence in setting targets that are reviewed and revised regularly for those pupils with learning difficulties; this practice could inform the work required to ensure that pupils at the other end of the ability spectrum are given a good deal in school too.

14. The targets set with the local education authority for the school's performance reflect its ambitions to continue to improve at a brisk rate and by 2004 (the current Year 3) it is

projected that standards will compare well with schools nationally. However, target setting is not yet used as part of regular assessment in all classes or to systematically support the achievements of higher-attaining pupils. Managers have the drive and determination to continue to make the raising of academic standards their *number one* priority and are ready to take the necessary action to iron out the inconsistencies that this inspection has flagged up.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Since 1997 the negative attitudes reported, and issues concerning unacceptable behaviour have all been given good attention. The introduction of the positive approach to behaviour management has resulted in pupils' being much more aware of the impact that their actions have on others. The school has maintained the good standard of behaviour reported by HMI in 1999. All parents who responded to the questionnaire that inspectors sent out feel that the school helps their child become mature and responsible, and almost all felt that the behaviour in the school was good. Pupils are well on their way to becoming responsible future citizens.

16. In the nursery, the children are naturally exuberant and sometimes quite noisy. Nevertheless, their attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory and they grow in independence and maturity because of the good attention given to this important aspect of their development. By the end of the Foundation Stage the children are confident and have high self-esteem. They have developed good work habits that support their successful learning, and are well prepared for their next stage of education.

17. Pupils of all ages are positive about their learning, are very keen and enthusiastic in all their activities and say that they like school. Their attitudes to school and work are good. Pupils respond well to the school's aims that are displayed in every classroom - 'striving to learn and improve and work together'. Relationships between pupils are very good and support positively their growing maturity and effective learning. They are respectful and tolerant as shown in the very positive way that newcomers to school are welcomed and helped to settle in to the routines.

18. Pupils are keen and willing learners. They sustain concentration and work with good application. In a Year 2 science lesson on plant growth, pupils volunteered and readily answered questions. They worked cooperatively and behaved well. They listened attentively to the teacher and carried out tasks quickly that enhanced their learning as a result. They enjoyed good relationships with the teacher and one another and this supported the enjoyment of the activities. The class had around a third of pupils with special educational needs, as well as an Iranian refugee and two pupils with English as an additional language. All of these pupils made good progress in the lesson and clearly enjoyed the experience. In a Year 6 lesson on the 24-hour clock, some pupils used a computer during the second part of the lesson to play a game that reinforced their learning about time. The pupils concentrated and collaborated very well. They worked without fuss, which enabled the teacher to give her attention to supporting other pupils in their studies.

19. Pupils generally show a respect for the resources they use. They collect them in carefully at the end of each lesson, and act as monitors for registers, lunchboxes, and the overhead projector used in assemblies. They show a good level of responsibility in their willingness to act as monitors and they respond well to the assertive discipline policy. Older

pupils are given jobs to do including producing a house newsletter termly and organising the audio-visual aids in assemblies. All pupils get the opportunity to perform in a production each year, which assists their personal growth. This year, for example, Year 6 are appearing in the 'Wizard of Oz'. Pupils are given the chance to develop leadership skills when they go on an outdoor education visit to North Wales or to Staffordshire, for example. A weakness in provision for pupils' personal development lies in the lack of opportunity for older pupils to manage appropriate aspects of their own learning.

20. Behaviour in the playground and around school is very good. Pupils are polite and courteous and they share playground toys and games. The school gives awards for positive behaviour or effort, and uses sanctions sparingly. Pupils' self-esteem is raised by the stickers and certificates which are presented in assemblies. There have been five fixed-term exclusions in the past year and this is above average. The school regards exclusion as very much a last resort and strives to minimise the exclusions as far as possible. When set against some of the challenging behaviour that the school is helping pupils to manage well, its record on exclusions is fully justified and demonstrates its strong commitment to being inclusive.

21. There is a noticeable absence of bullying in the school. Pupils say that it rarely occurs. This is a genuinely inclusive community where sexism and racism are not tolerated. Pupils show a respect for one another, which is a fundamental part of the school's aims.

22. Attendance in the school is currently unsatisfactory but improving. It is just below the national average. The attendance and poor punctuality of a handful of pupils cause concern as it affects their achievements. There are a few parents who give their child's attendance at school a low priority and the school is working hard to tackle this effectively.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

23. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is much improved since the time of the 1997 inspection and retains the strengths identified in the more recent HMI inspection in 1999. This is despite a high staff turnover and problems concerning recruitment. Seven out of eight teachers have joined the school in the last three years. The induction arrangements largely carried out by the deputy headteacher have been successful and morale is high. Teachers feel well supported in school and are united in their determination to raise standards. A positive feature that has supported improvement alongside the effective programme of staff development is the school's comprehensive teaching and learning policy that has raised expectations about what is to be taught and learnt. All teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well and this results in good conditions for learning in all classes and is a strength. The next step is for time to be made available for teachers to share the best of their practice in planning, assessment and teaching, so that pupils continue to receive the very best deal possible and everyone can play a full part in the next phase of improvement. Parents hold very positive views about the quality of teaching.

24. In the 63 lessons observed during this inspection teaching was of satisfactory or better quality in 98 per cent. One English lesson in upper Key Stage 2 was unsatisfactory because of shortcomings in classroom organisation. In 51 per cent of lessons teaching was of good quality and in 14 per cent of very good quality.

25. The good teaching overall is enabling willing and enthusiastic learners. Pupils work hard, concentrate well and become mature and sensible learners. Pupils enjoy their lessons and demonstrate that they can work independently and responsibly when required. The good learning habits that are now being built systematically ensure that most make good progress. Because lessons are profitable, younger pupils are building skills, knowledge and understanding at good rates and older ones are catching up well on their studies. This is having a positive effect on standards. Pupils have yet to play an effective role in assessing their own performance and this is an area for development.

26. Teaching is good overall in the Foundation Stage and enables young children to get off to a steady start in nursery, with their learning surging forward once they move into reception, because of the very good attention paid to their basic skills development by the deputy headteacher who teaches this class. Children in the Foundation Stage enjoy their lessons, they show good levels of independence and are eager to acquire new knowledge. They are taught to become effective learners and show good confidence in taking full advantage of the experiences being provided. The good team work in evidence in reception between the deputy headteacher and trainee teacher currently in school whom she mentors has enabled the children to be well prepared for their move to Year 1 next term.

27. Teaching is mainly good for pupils throughout the school: expectations are good overall and teachers have generally good subject knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. The management of pupils is a strength of the school and leads to purposeful and productive lessons. Very good relationships successfully underpin the positive ethos apparent in all classes and these are having a tangible impact on both teaching and learning. Teachers' lesson planning is satisfactory but there is potential for some to be better focused on ensuring that all pupils make the maximum amount of progress over their time at school, especially higher-attaining pupils. In the Key Stage 1 lessons observed there was more forward planning of tasks and extension work for higher-attaining pupils than was seen in Key Stage 2.

28. Very good lessons were observed in reception and in Years 1 to 3 and in a range of subjects including English, mathematics, science and music. The key features of these lessons included:

- very well-chosen topics with clear expectations of what it is anticipated will be learned, such as in a Year 2 literacy lesson where pupils delved into the story about 'Winnie the Pooh', and were asked probing questions by the teacher aimed at extending their knowledge and understanding of story-line and plot, whilst also deepening their understanding and use of the vowel phoneme *ie*;
- providing pupils with time and space for deeper thought and reflection, as in a Year 2 music lesson where a novel introduction by the teacher required pupils to 'pass on the message received from HQ' by clapping the correct 'message' (beat and rhythm), and then thinking about which musical instruments they might use to reinforce the message of the music both quietly and loudly;
- providing practical activities that take pupils on a journey of discovery, for example in a Year 3 mathematics lesson about shape and space. Lower-attaining pupils identified a series of regular shapes, drew them on paper and at the end of the lesson played a game that involved them dipping their hand into the 'magic handbag' and, without looking, describe to the others the properties of the shape they could feel.

These very good features of teaching result in a very broad and wide understanding being developed.

29. Teachers undertake generally effective day-to-day assessments though good questioning techniques and well targeted support. Most teachers mark work conscientiously but the use of evaluative comments to help pupils improve is variable. The most effective marking is in lower junior classes as demonstrated by the insightful comments written onto pupils' work that are leading to improvements. The setting of homework throughout the school is rather erratic and the headteacher is aware that the policy requires more consistent implementation. A growing number of parents have indicated their willingness to play their part in supporting homework.

30. A good balance is achieved in the various methods used to engage pupils in effective learning overall, though there is a narrower range of teaching methods used by teachers in the juniors. Some teachers are locked into an instructional teaching style that was observed to be successful in passing on knowledge to pupils, but often limited the potential for some higher attainers to develop their understanding and refine research and enquiry skills by finding things out for themselves. Pupils' progress slows down at such times (especially for high-attaining pupils) and results in a levelling out in standards, though progress is steady overall in at Key Stage 2 because teaching is more often effective than not.

31. Teaching is good in English, mathematics, science, art and design and design and technology and music throughout the school. Skills of literacy are given good attention, particularly in literacy hours, although more could be done to promote language use in some subjects such as history and geography. The substantial amount of time that some teachers allocate to English at Key Stage 2 requires review, as time for other subjects is being squeezed and it is not certain that the additional time is helping raise standards currently. Numeracy skills are consistently well taught and pupils do well in mathematics as a result. Teaching and learning in ICT is currently unsatisfactory due to a paucity of resources. The practical aspects of a range of subjects are being well promoted at Key Stage 1, and as a result pupils are confident to 'have a go' at solving problems. This focus is supporting some good teaching and learning in core subjects throughout the school but is less in evidence in other subjects at Key Stage 2.

32. Teachers make effective use of mental warm-up times to improve numeracy skills and they use sessions at the end of lessons well to assess pupils' levels of understanding. However, many do not keep a sufficiently detailed record of how well different pupils achieve on a daily or weekly basis. Numeracy skills are effectively integrated into many other lessons. For instance in design and technology and science, pupils use their mathematical skills very well to estimate, to measure accurately and to produce graphs. The use of these skills is enhanced further by the good challenges in lessons, especially in the way in which pupils are given problems to solve, for example in science. Literacy sessions typically begin with the sharing of text, and most teachers engage pupils' good working habits very early on by asking probing questions that stimulate thoughtful answers. It is usually the case that group activities are purposeful and productive times in which the majority of pupils get on well with their independent tasks. The practice of withdrawing lower-attaining groups of pupils for specific attention on building their phonological awareness is working effectively. The effectiveness with which high-attaining pupils are targeted for extended work is variable. Within planning there is currently too little reference to promoting literacy across the curriculum and this is an area for improvement. There is good promotion of technical vocabulary in most subjects and this is a positive feature. For example, in reception the children were taught *collage, sticky tape and masking tape* as some of the items they were working with to produce a picture of the fire engine that visited the day before. In some junior classes the opportunities for open-ended discussions are limited, however, by the readiness of teachers to accept one answer. The next step in developing pupils' literacy skills is to give emphasis to promoting opportunities for purposeful talk across the curriculum.

33. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language is good and results in these pupils making good progress against individual targets. Specialist teachers from the local education authority are supporting the

school well and their involvement with two refugee children has been significant in helping them both make rapid progress in English language acquisition. Some super work goes on by learning support assistants, who make a very valuable contribution to the development of pupils who find difficulty with learning. Pupils with special educational needs see themselves as good achievers because of the *can do* culture that the headteacher has successfully promoted. This self-belief supports pupils' confidence to have a go at things that are challenging. This approach is supporting their good progress in learning.

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

34. The curriculum overall is unsatisfactory because it lacks balance and does not fully meet statutory requirements. The school is very appropriately giving emphasis to English and mathematics because pupils start school with well below average achievement in these basic skills and require time to consolidate their steady acquisition of secure knowledge and understanding. The downside of this is that teaching and learning in some subjects, for example geography, history and religious education, are limited by the amount of time available. In Key Stage 2 classes, pupils are not being taught religious education weekly; this does not accord with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus and therefore statutory requirements are not met. Thefts in computer hardware have had a very significant impact in hampering the development of the curriculum for ICT. Staff are soon to start their training in new technology but cannot begin until replacement computers are provided. Pupils, many of whom are solely reliant on the school for learning about and using ICT, are not receiving their entitlement. The curricular provision for ICT is not meeting statutory requirements.

35. The school welcomes all pupils irrespective of ability, gender, ethnicity, material or social circumstance. It makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language. The school liaises very well with a range of educational, medical and social support agencies to provide an effective education for these pupils. Early assessment of needs and well-focused individual education plans ensure that pupils are given the support they require. Additional booster classes for English and mathematics and homework clubs, for example, have been set up to support pupils' progress. Older pupils who in the past have suffered from the school's unsatisfactory curricular provision are now being given a curriculum that is enabling them to succeed. The school has not yet given sufficient attention to ensuring that there is a consistent level of challenge and extension within the planned curriculum for potentially higher-achieving pupils. The initiative that involves six high attaining Year 2 pupils working with Year 3 pupils for all of their studies is a positive feature, however, and is working successfully.

36. The school is aware and inspectors agree that the time is now ripe for a review of the curriculum to ensure that statutory requirements are met, to take stock of what needs to be learned in each year, to re-shape where necessary and to look at how the cross-curricular dimension as set out in the revised National Curriculum can be built into future planning.

37. There is an effective curriculum for the children in the Foundation Stage. Planning for these young children already incorporates the Early Learning Goals for children under five as set out in the recently published curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage. Lesson planning is detailed and the children have access to a wide range of suitable activities and learning experiences which prepare them very well for studying the subjects of the National

Curriculum when they are ready. In reception, children are usefully experiencing the literacy and numeracy hours this term to help support their transition into Year 1.

38. In the last two years, subject policies have been systematically updated and appropriate guidelines have been incorporated into schemes of work as part of the review process. The appointment of curriculum coordinators has been ongoing as so many staff have been appointed in the last two years. All coordinators have written curriculum action plans and most have spent time monitoring resources and subject planning, though few have had opportunity to observe teaching and learning directly. Consequently, there are some inconsistencies, most notably in standards between the key stages in religious education, history and geography, in the quality of provision for higher-attaining pupils and the use of homework to support their learning.

39. Extra-curricular provision is satisfactory at Key Stage 2 where a range of activities is offered including football, netball, karate, cricket and cross-country. The school choir often entertains the community, appearing at local churches, homes for the elderly and a local hospice. A few parents expressed concern that some younger pupils are not provided with a range of activities after school. The school is aware of parents' views and is already in the process of developing activities specifically targeted at particular age groups. Very good use is made of residential visits to develop social skills, build self-esteem and enhance learning.

40. The school has given good priority to personal, social and health education and citizenship. This provision contributes strongly to the enthusiastic attitudes shown by most pupils. The programme of work is structured to ensure a sensitive but informative approach. Sex education and drugs awareness are taught within the science curriculum, whilst feelings, relationships and various other topics concerned with citizenship are taught through circle times, during religious education lessons and via assemblies. The school has forged satisfactory links with the community and with other local schools, which also make a useful contribution to widening pupils' experiences of the world in which they live.

41. Overall, the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. The pupils' spiritual development is enhanced in assemblies when pupils experience a sense of closeness to the natural world. For example, in one assembly they sang with feeling, 'I'm happy I'm me', thus reflecting on the uniqueness of individuals. There are opportunities to develop spirituality in religious education lessons, for example as in Year 2 when they made lists of special things that included friends and family, or as in Year 4, when pupils looked at signs and symbols used in the Christian faith. Pupils reflected well on the differences between the Celtic and Latin cross for example and learnt that crosses remind people of important issues and beliefs. They thought hard about what the round shape used in the Celtic cross might symbolise. One boy said it might be "the circle of friends that share in the Christian faith", whilst someone else thought it might be Jesus' face.

42. Some good opportunities are given for pupils to reflect on their actions, feelings and beliefs. In a Year 3 personal, social and health education lesson held on the school field, pupils were given two minutes to reflect on what it was like to sit on a cloud. When asked what they could see, one said, 'I can see all the world'. Assemblies are well planned, and pupils enjoy them; they respond well to the prayers and special atmosphere but are not always provided with sufficient time for reflection.

43. Pupils' social and moral development is very good. The school's aim to 'help children to take a responsible attitude to their schooling and have confidence in themselves' is well met in practice. Teachers involve the pupils in setting the class rules and focus on their need to recognise what impact their actions have on others. The pupils know what constitutes unacceptable behaviour, and they take pleasure in receiving their awards for good behaviour or hard work that are given out in assemblies. Regular opportunities for circle time are provided in all classes when such issues as 'conflict' are discussed, as they were in a Year 5 class where pupils said what problems they had had in school. Such discussions raise pupils' moral and social awareness well. All classes have an opportunity to perform in a drama production, and Year 6 have rehearsed 'The Wizard of Oz', ready for an imminent presentation to parents and community. This is an activity which contributes a great deal to the social development of the pupils, boosting their self-confidence. Pupils regularly work in pairs and groups, are socially aware and form very good relationships with one another. Pupils are given a number of jobs to do, which contributes well to their sense of responsibility and fits in well with the aims of the school. They are taught to be honest and trustworthy, and are often seen to tidy up resources, sports equipment and pick up litter. Each year group has a residential trip, and the school choir has sung at St. Giles Church and Brickhouse Christian Fellowship Church. Nursery children are used to working in small groups, where the teachers encourage them to share and work cooperatively with other pupils. Social and moral awareness are strengths of the school and result in pupils clearly understanding the difference between right and wrong.

44. The provision for promoting pupils' cultural awareness is satisfactory overall. Pupils have good insights into the community to which they belong and there is a strong sense of local identity. Art, geography, music and history all contribute to widening pupils' cultural horizons, as for example when Indian sitar music played by Ravi Shankar is presented for pupils to appreciate at the beginning and end of an assembly. Pupils learn about the cultures of the Vikings, Greeks, Romans and Anglo-Saxons, including researching one of these areas as a personal project. During religious education lessons, all pupils study several major faiths in addition to Christianity. Opportunities to learn about the cultural diversity of modern-day British society are less well promoted and this is an area for improvement.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

45. The school makes very good arrangements for the care and protection of its pupils. Parents are very pleased with the care their children receive. Pupils say they feel comfortable and confident when approaching their teacher or any other member of staff when troubled. The school follows the guidelines of the local area child protection committee and the headteacher has received appropriate training as the designated person for child protection matters. Staff are vigilant and aware of the correct procedures to be followed if they have concerns. The good attention to health, welfare and safety, and the caring atmosphere created that were reported on by the 1997 inspection have all been sustained.

46. The ways in which staff monitor the academic and personal development of pupils, and then offer appropriate support and guidance, are satisfactory overall. The strengths lie in the fact that class teachers know their pupils well, and support staff are particularly adept at meeting the needs of their designated pupils with well-focused individual education plans supporting on-going review. Effective use is made of the assessments undertaken when children first start in nursery to support planning for the Foundation Stage but limited use is

made of it to project the likely future achievement at seven and eleven years. The school has improved its systems for assessing pupils' attainments and progress since the last inspection, and now has a common approach across subjects, with the ability to track pupils' progress and take action to raise achievements in English, mathematics and science. However, assessment practice in other subjects and between teachers is inconsistent. When assessing pupils' work, teachers are more confident to draw on National Curriculum levels to help gauge the standards being reached, but it is clear that pupils are not always sure how well they are doing, or what they need to do to improve. Some pupils in Years 2 and 6 have been given personal targets to help them prepare for their National Curriculum tests, but this practice is not widespread throughout the school. There is still a weakness in the way in which teachers use assessment information to plan the next step of learning for pupils. This is particularly apparent in the lack of challenging work for the higher attaining pupils in some junior classes.

47. The school has an effective health and safety policy, with appropriate procedures for administering first aid, undertaking fire-drills, recording accidents and the safe storage of medicines. Risk assessments and safety audits are carried out by the premises manager, headteacher and a health and safety governor. Several staff have first aid qualifications, but only one of these is current, others have lapsed. Pupils say they feel safe at school and well looked after. Bullying is discussed with pupils in personal, social and health education lessons and in assemblies, and pupils are encouraged to speak to a member of staff if they are concerned about bullying, racism or sexism. Pupils say that incidents of these things happening are rare, and that they feel confident that any member of staff would deal effectively with an occurrence of this nature. They say they like school, and feel confident in the security it offers.

48. There are very good procedures in place for promoting good behaviour, supported by a clear and effective policy which is consistently implemented. This policy has clear rules of good conduct published in every classroom. Pupils know these rules and negotiate class rules each year. Some pupils have challenging behaviour and have been taught good strategies for managing this. There are very clear strategies for encouraging good behaviour via the reward system which is applied consistently by all staff. Opportunities to gain 'house points', or 'table points' are good motivators. Points awarded are added together to provide certificates which are presented in assembly. Pupils were observed to receive these awards with great pride.

49. The school pays very good attention to educational inclusion. Refugee children have received good support to help them settle in well and get off to a flying start in learning English and coming to terms with school routines. Pupils who do not speak English at home are given good educational support to help them work successfully in English and progress well. A large proportion of pupils have special educational needs and they are well supported. The school gives good attention to identifying specific needs early and establishing well-focused individual education plans that are regularly reviewed. Learning assistants and specialist staff are effective in their roles and assist these pupils in making good progress in their studies.

50. Attendance is very well monitored, with the secretary, headteacher and Education Welfare Officer working well together. The school has a comprehensive attendance and lateness policy. This is well used through letters and personal contact with parents. The school operates a computerised system which lends itself to effective monitoring, and this

highlights that attendance problems are only associated with a handful of families. The Education Welfare Officer acts as a link with the statutory agencies for families with attendance problems. The headteacher and his staff, through their knowledge of the pupils, keep a close watch on attendance. Holidays in term-time are a minor problem, and a small number of pupils are regularly late. The headteacher writes regularly in the newsletter about attendance and through specific letters to particular parents, encouraging improvement. The school awards an attendance cup to those pupils achieving 100 per cent. This is very challenging for some but reflects the school's ambition to strive for improvement.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

51. The school has built good links with parents and continues to work hard in making them even stronger. Weaknesses in the quality of information for parents that were flagged up by the 1997 inspection have all been improved. Parents responding to the questionnaire that was issued just before this inspection felt that the school expects their child to work hard and achieve his or her best, and 'find the school approachable' with good home/school links. The inspection team agrees with these views.

52. The school communicates well with parents. They receive a regular informative newsletter which gives details of school events. The prospectus is written in an upbeat, friendly style and contains useful information. The governors' annual report contains all the required information and keeps parents abreast of school improvement aspects. The headteacher is readily available to talk to parents and is particularly noticeable on the playground before and after school. He undertakes to give a response to a parent's enquiry within 24 hours. Parents are given good information about the curriculum through a newsletter every half-term so that they know what is to be covered. Parents of special educational needs pupils are given good information and most attend the regular review meetings. Parents receive an annual report in July, which they find useful as it reports on all subjects, but it does not pay enough attention to targeting a child's next steps in learning. Parents have the opportunity to come into school three times each year to see their child's work and discuss it with their teacher. They can also come in to assembly on occasions such as Christmas and for drama productions. These events and open evenings are well attended.

53. Homework is set regularly in the nursery and in Key Stage 1, with reading and mathematics work covered weekly. In Key Stage 2, practice is inconsistent, though satisfactory overall. Too little attention is paid to using homework as a vehicle for providing challenges for some pupils that could be pursued independently at home. Parents have rightly flagged this up as an area for improvement; the inspection team agrees and the school is prepared to make practice more consistent.

54. A growing number of parents are involved with the daily life of the school. There is an active Parent Teacher Association (PTA), which is supported by staff and raises money for school resources including playground equipment. It also contributes to resources and subsidises educational trips, providing refreshments for events in school. The PTA also provides funds for every child to have a present at Christmas. The response of parents to PTA meetings is limited, but they do come into school in large numbers for children's discos, the Christmas party and school productions. The school has held literacy and numeracy evenings which were well attended, and parents value the efforts the school makes. A number of parents work as midday supervisors and classroom assistants in the school, and around ten of

them act as classroom helpers, mainly in the nursery and Key Stage 1. They hear children read, work in the library and prepare resources, as well as accompanying pupils on trips. Several of those who give regular valuable help in school are grandparents. A stalwart group of parents come into school specifically to support pupils in Years 1 and 2 with reading. This is the 'enable' group, and the school has trained these parents over several years. In addition, another group of parents go to Rowley College to learn how to support their children with reading, ICT and other aspects of learning.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

55. Brickhouse Junior and Infant School is very effectively led and well managed. The school's rate of improvement is faster than seen nationally and all serious weaknesses reported on in previous inspection reports have been eradicated. Since his appointment in 1998, the headteacher has given a very strong personal lead to the ethos created in school and its educational direction. He has turned the school from failing to provide an acceptable level of education in 1997 to one that is improving rapidly, particularly where standards, teaching and learning are concerned. He gives very good leadership to the school, works tirelessly to appoint the right staff and to make things better for the pupils, and is determined and cheerful. These qualities are what make the school the effective place of learning it is today.

56. Accompanying the headteacher on this personal mission to build on strengths and eliminate weakness is the deputy headteacher. She is a very capable class teacher and also works in successful partnership with the headteacher to motivate and encourage all staff to strive for continuous improvements. She, like the headteacher, has very good insights into the successes and shortcomings of the school and has sensible ideas for the realisation of school priorities.

57. All teachers are committed to improvement and work hard to bring this about. The school development plan provides a useful vehicle for prioritising goals and setting out targets and the timescale for improvement. Within this, subject managers prepare subject action plans that contain the details for bringing improvement, though some of these, for example, geography, history and religious education are not sufficiently focused on the key priorities. As subject managers, their role is not as wide as that of colleagues in some other schools. This is because most have not yet had the opportunity to check and evaluate directly the quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum and rates of progress and standards in other classes. Most teachers have been in post only within the last two years and many have assumed subject management roles since then. What they have accomplished in the drive for raised standards is wholly acceptable so far. The case is similar for the senior management team who have only just been appointed and are embryonic in their leadership development. Collectively, staff understand the need for everyone to share the task of making improvements, and school priorities centre on ways to find out about practice, evaluate strengths and weaknesses and work to enhance the school's performance. Most staff are fully ready for the challenges that more responsibility for evaluating standards across the whole school will bring.

58. Governors know what the school does well and what needs improvement. They are well involved in the life and work of the school and are supportive and interested friends. Governors receive good quality information from the headteacher to assist them in the process of checking and evaluating school performance but are not yet calling upon the full range of data to help them in this work. Apart from ICT and religious education, governors ensure that the school meets its legal responsibilities and that it publishes all the necessary information.

59. A promising start has been made to the collection and interpretation of data to show how well pupils are doing. The headteacher analyses the results from a range of testing to show the achievement of individuals and groups. He sets targets that reflect likely achievement for the following year that are shared with class teachers. This target setting

takes good account of the value the school expects to add to the high proportion of lower attaining pupil's progress but is less demanding of the higher attainers. The school is not yet specifically targeting those pupils who may well have a chance of achieving at level 5 when they are eleven and this is a missed opportunity. Good use is made of national data to compare how well the school is performing against other schools nationally and locally, though less use is made of the data to predict the chances that different pupils have in attaining beyond the level expected. Current targets therefore are achievable but they do not reflect enough the value that the school will add to pupils' attainment. The inconsistent degree of challenge provided for higher-attaining pupils, especially in junior classes, is also holding back the achievement of even better standards. The available information about standards is increasingly being used to set targets for classes, groups and individual pupils. Systems of assessment are satisfactory in English, mathematics and science, but require improvement in other subjects. Thus, there is less consistency in tracking the progress made towards the school's targets and, therefore, knowledge about the necessary next step in learning is not as precise as it should be.

60. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have good understanding as to how well the school is doing in relation to other primary schools, whether locally or nationally. They make the necessary checks to ensure that the school is challenging and competitive. Other staff are not yet as confident about such matters although, overall, the school follows the guidance given in the principles of best value that include such checks.

61. The school has sufficient staff, learning resources and accommodation for the pupils' needs. Some of the resources are old and the buildings require much refurbishment and improvement, both indoors and out. Staff do not let the deficiencies prevent them from providing a good quality of education for the pupils. The caretaker and cleaners, for example, ensure that the buildings are kept clean and tidy and staff use resources well to support learning. The quality of support given by non-teaching staff in lessons is very good and ensures that the pupils they work with learn well. The theft of computer hardware on two occasions has resulted in there being too few resources available for the effective delivery of the ICT curriculum. The school is currently awaiting replacements. Staff training has been put back until this is sorted out. Meanwhile pupils are not receiving their full entitlement to ICT and so statutory requirements are not being met. This is a key issue for governors to attend to.

62. Notwithstanding the problems with ICT, the headteacher has made sure that there are adequate resources for teaching and learning and continues to do so. However, he is hampered in this by the state of finances. When he joined the school, the budget was well in the red. The governors had their powers to manage the budget reinstated by the local education authority in 2000 when it was £110, 000 in deficit. The school has a six-year plan to reduce this massive overspend that accrued during its time in special measures. The most recent internal audit by the local education authority shows that the management and control of finances meets the necessary requirements. Budget projections show that the deficit should be all but erased by July 2004 but, in the meantime, financial stringency will be ongoing and some harsh decisions about expenditure will be necessary. The headteacher and governors are prepared for such prudence and are determined to bring the accounts into balance without prejudicing the improvements already made to the quality of pupils' education or the pursuit of continued advancement.

63. Brickhouse Primary School has a bright future. It is improving rapidly and there is clear and good educational direction. However, its spending is well above average to educate each pupil and standards are not yet high enough. For these reasons, it does not quite offer satisfactory value for money, but the potential for continuing improvement is positive and the time when it will give a satisfactory return on the tax payers' investment is not far off.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

64. In their work to further raise standards and improve the quality of education at the school, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) Improve the standards pupils attain in English, science, ICT throughout the school, and in mathematics, religious education, geography and history at the end of Key Stage 2 by:
 - giving more focus to the development and promotion of communication, language and literacy skills in nursery;
 - establishing a programme for monitoring the progress of readers, including the more-able readers, and recording and reviewing their progress;
 - focusing on spelling, particularly the key vocabulary that pupils are required to learn in the subjects they study;
 - insisting on high quality presentation in all recorded work;
 - looking more creatively at how pupils' literacy skills can be promoted across the curriculum;
 - continuing to promote the practical and investigative elements of mathematics, ICT and science across the school so that pupils are enabled to build up independent research and enquiry skills as they get older;
 - establishing robust action plans for geography, history and religious education that guide prioritised improvement;
 - raising teachers' expectations of what older pupils are expected to learn in geography and history by looking closely at the requirements of the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus in religious education and taking account of this in the work set for pupils;
 - insisting that all lessons should set different and significantly challenging work for high-attaining pupils, that takes their thinking forward.

(Paragraphs: 6, 9, 10, 12, 27, 31, 57, 67, 72, 82, 86, 89, 91, 117, 118, 122, 131, 139, 141)

- (2) Undertake a review of the school's planned curriculum and time allocation to subjects to:
 - ensure that the provision for ICT and religious education meets legal requirements by giving all pupils a full entitlement to these subjects weekly;
 - ensure that the planned curriculum for ICT, religious education, geography and history takes proper account of the skills, knowledge and concepts to be learnt in every year, particularly at Key Stage 2;
 - enable teachers to give consistent attention in class timetables to providing pupils with worthwhile experiences in all subjects that enable the step by step development of pupils' learning, especially high attainers;

- plan the use of ICT to support learning in all subjects;
 - extend the resources available for ICT and review where these should be best located to provide all pupils with equality of access and opportunity.
- (Paragraphs: 12, 31, 34, 35, 38, 46, 61, 92, 117, 124, 127, 128, 132, 139)

- (3) Make better use of assessment and target setting by:
- evaluating how well different pupils achieve in their lessons and using this information consistently to set suitably challenging future work, especially for high-attaining pupils;
 - involving subject leaders in regular assessments of pupils' achievement against National Curriculum levels in the subject on which they lead;
 - setting challenging targets for every year group in English, mathematics and science that are regularly reviewed and adjusted upwards as necessary;
 - widening the use of targets specifically in teachers' marking and the pupils' annual written reports.
- (Paragraphs: 13, 14, 23, 29, 30, 52, 53, 59, 87, 98, 111, 140)

In their action plan governors should also give attention to the following minor issues:

- continuing the drive to improve attendance and punctuality;
- implementing the homework policy consistently;
- strengthening the role of the senior management team and subject leaders in monitoring and evaluation work;
- monitoring and evaluating the planned reduction in expenditure to meet the inherited deficit, to ensure that it does not unduly affect the school's targeted priorities and the costs associated with the action required by this report.

(Paragraphs: 22, 29, 38, 50, 53, 57, 62)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	63
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	21

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	14	51	33	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	24.5	177
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	77

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	73

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.4
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	12	8	20

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	13	15	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	65 (67)	75 (71)	95 (67)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	12	19	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	60 (67)	95 (71)	80 (71)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

NB: Where the number of boys or girls is fewer than 10 the individual results are not reported.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	17	10	27

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	8	11	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	30 (67)	41 (67)	59 (81)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	10	10	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	37 (52)	37 (63)	67 (74)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

NB: Where the number of boys or girls is fewer than 10 the individual results are not reported.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	1
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	168
Any other minority ethnic group	2

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.85
Average class size	25.3

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	98

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	30

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65

Number of pupils per FTE adult	10
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	5	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	440 375
Total expenditure	448 662
Expenditure per pupil	2 233
Balance brought forward from previous year	(109 000)
Balance carried forward to next year	(117 287)

Figures in parentheses indicate negative values

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	175
Number of questionnaires returned	20

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	60	40	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	65	35	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	40	50	0	0	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	45	35	15	5	0
The teaching is good.	65	35	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	60	35	5	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	30	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	30	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	55	40	5	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	60	40	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	50	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	35	25	0	5

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

65. The school has made steady improvement to the provision in the early years of education and is well placed to sustain improvement. There were underdeveloped skills in the personal and social areas of learning recognised in the most recent inspection report. The standards in language and literacy and mathematics were found to be below what would be expected by five years of age. The judgements made in these vital areas of development were balanced by standards in knowledge and understanding of the world, which reached the level expected. There were no judgements on standards in physical and creative development. However, progress was found to be satisfactory in all areas of learning.

66. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage comprises the nursery and reception class. Nineteen children attend the nursery on a full-time basis whilst a further eleven children attend either a morning or an afternoon session on a part-time basis. There are an additional twenty-eight children attending full time in the reception class. Children are admitted to the nursery soon after their third birthday and transfer to the reception class in the school year in which they become five. The school's assessment of the children's attainment on entry to the nursery shows that it is well below average in all areas of learning. By the time that children finish the Foundation Stage and transfer into the Year 1 class many are close to achieving the Early Learning Goals for children under five as set out in the recently published curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage. The children make good progress in this first stage of their education, largely because of the very good provision in the reception class that results in their learning leaping forward.

67. Teaching in the nursery is satisfactory overall. It is good in the reception class with some very good features. These very good features significantly occur in the communication, language and literacy and mathematics areas of learning. Staff in the nursery are coming to terms with the requirements of the Foundation Stage curriculum. They have had good leadership from the deputy headteacher who is also the reception class teacher. A key feature of the very successful teaching in the reception class is the high expectations that are in evidence in lessons and is reflected in the sample of work that inspectors scrutinised. Imaginative ways of presenting learning to children also support the rapid gains that are made in the last year of the children's Foundation Stage learning. There are some inconsistencies in the management of children in the nursery that do not always support the same high quality in learning that happens in the reception class. There is not the same high level of expectation for extending opportunities for purposeful talk. Nonetheless all staff are committed to giving the best possible deal to the children with whom they work through improving their classroom practice.

68. The management of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The early years coordinator is also the deputy headteacher, with a range of other responsibilities including leading on literacy. She works hard to ensure that the Foundation Stage stepping stones are understood and followed appropriately by the nursery nurse staff. The planning is done jointly with comprehensive input given to providing imaginative ideas to promote a wide range of learning opportunities. However, there is not enough opportunity for the coordinator to follow through and monitor accurately what is being achieved by children in the nursery. As a full-

time class teacher with other responsibilities there is no time allowed for her to carry out this vital role appropriately. The school has prioritised full-time release for the deputy headteacher next year so that she can spend more time supporting developments across the whole of the Foundation Stage.

Personal, social and emotional development

69. Provision for children's personal, social and emotional development is good overall and as a result they make good gains in their learning.

70. In the nursery, children are timid at first, and generally lacking in confidence, but are friendly. The nursery nurses are successful in providing an environment that is welcoming and helps these immature young children to leave their mums and carers without anxiety. The children register themselves present, find their *magic spots* on the carpet when they come into nursery and sit quietly and await instructions for the day. The staff work effectively at making the children feel safe and secure. They are enabled to enjoy working with one another through sand and water play, for example. They take turns to share out milk and biscuits and say 'Please' and 'Thank you' without being prompted. This improves their confidence because they concentrate very well on what they are doing

71. In the reception class the children were observed to work with good confidence in a variety of groups and collaborative partnerships that demonstrated the good progress they had made in their personal, social and emotional development. As the teacher and support staff work with children on writing tasks, other children sit together and work equally hard at tracing and jigsaw puzzle tasks. They exchange views on what they are able to do. They are generous in their praise of one another's efforts. They sustain their concentration well. They are confident users of the computer too and are keen to share their work with adults and visitors. Good teaching ensures that accelerated progress is being made in this latter part of the Foundation Stage. It also gives a firm indication that children will be close to achieving the level of personal development signalled in the stepping stones (these outline the progress expected in the Early Learning Goals) by the end of this term.

Communication, language and literacy

72. Children start school with well below average skills in this area of development. Most are very diffident about entering into long conversations with adults. Their responses to questions are limited and their vocabulary is narrow. This is recognised by staff who give due emphasis to supporting them and developing skills in this area in consequence. Children take the welcome that they are given by staff very happily. They listen carefully to names being called when the register is marked. Most find difficulty in replying in anything other than one-word answers. Staff are very patient with them in attempting to extend their responses but use limited strategies to stimulate purposeful talk. Too often closed questioning is used and this restricts the level of communication received. The children are much better served when they are working in a small group and the nursery nurse develops 'conversations' that enable the children to express their own views and ideas. The children sit comfortably on the carpet to share the contents of the large-sized reading book (known as the Big book). The book chosen during the inspection was about the firemen who were going to pay them a visit later in the day. The children listened carefully and most managed to sustain their concentration. They

showed that they were able to answer questions in full sentences but, because they were over anxious to do this, they lost the ability to listen with as much care to one another.

73. The experiences given to the children in the reception class are better targeted. They are often introduced more imaginatively to similar activities. They are paired as 'chatty partners' so that their talk to one another is well focused. They make use of whiteboards to build phonemes accurately. Listening skills are increased as their teacher forms the sounds and confirms the accuracy of their spelling attempts. The big book is introduced to them by identifying the author and illustrator through perceptive questioning. The enjoyment of books and reading is being entrenched in their minds because of the pleasure that they have in sharing books with their teacher. Some children are on track to reach the level expected by the Early Learning Goals at the end of this term but a significant minority are still behind where they should be in their language, literacy and communication skills.

Mathematical development

74. In the nursery the children work in groups as they begin to show their mathematical understanding. It is a good idea to work in groups because it helps their concentration levels. Most can chant their numbers up to five, some counting to ten and beyond. They colour-match objects to numbers and do play games to reinforce their understanding of numbers. In one observation the children discovered facts about capacity as they filled and emptied differently sized containers. They were well supported by the nursery nurses who worked with them when they used accurate mathematical language and demanded the same in the children's responses. Other children found out about depth as they experimented with different objects in the sand tray. The children's language was much more limited in talking about these objects. The third group worked with the other nursery nurse in a concentrated way, using number cards to add together. There was some reasonable accuracy in carrying out this task but this was not always successfully built on through extending their learning on similar tasks.

75. In the reception class children discover patterns in numbers as a result of the interesting way that tasks are introduced to them. Children's mathematical vocabulary is extended through purposeful questioning when they look at patterns in numbers in tens and units. Other groups draw and print patterns with accuracy, talking about the sequences and repetition they see. Most understand the concept of addition. They recognise and deal with numbers up to twenty with confidence. Evidence from their books shows that the most-able pupils can deal with numbers between fifty and seventy with reasonable accuracy. Staff work closely together with support staff being well briefed. Children with special educational needs benefit from the good level of support that is made available to them. Children move forward with speed in the reception class and make good progress. Most are close to achieving the Early Learning Goals by the time they enter the Year 1 class and a handful are already there.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

76. Children in the nursery begin to find out about their immediate world. They find out about special buildings in their town such as the hospital. Such work is made meaningful for them in their play area which is a hospital where appointments are made. There is less clear understanding of other buildings as the children could not recognise the school when shown illustrations of it. They noticed a bell tower and thought it might be a church. When their

suggestions were ruled out because it was not the answer the staff were looking for they become disinterested and lost concentration. It is this kind of activity in which the deputy headteacher can support training for the nursery nurses, to demonstrate how the children's responses can be capitalised on to deepen their knowledge, even if it takes the task a little off course. The children's knowledge is much better enhanced when they are given real life experiences such as the visit by the firemen. They were well prepared for the visit. They asked sensible questions and remained interested for a long time. So enthused were they by the experience that in one assembly where the headteacher was trying to put across a moral message and explain about 'coming up against brick walls in life', one child shouted out 'Get a big fire engine to knock the wall down!'. The passage of time is made meaningful for them through their study of themselves as babies and as they are now. This is done through the use of photographs and discussion with the nursery nurses. The children's technological awareness of the world about them is hampered by the fact that the current computer is not working, though use is made of the motorised computer known as the 'floor turtle'.

77. This lack of experience is overcome in the reception class where the computer is available to children. They use it with confidence. They are able to control the mouse and especially enjoy the interactive nature of some programs. Children are able to respond with competence to the tasks that the program demands. They also join in the experience of talking to the visiting firemen. They have great interest in exploring the fire engine. They are very aware of the different uses of some of the objects on the engine. They have prepared well for the visit by investigating the firemen's work beforehand. The questions they ask are equally sensible as a result of the research that they have done in advance. The opportunities to explore their world ensure that most are at the point of reaching the Early Learning Goals by the time they are ready to enter the Year 1 class.

Physical development

78. Children in the nursery are given ample confidence in this area of learning. The staff make good use of the school field in order to develop their safety skills appropriately. The children move on to the field and join in familiar singing games such as 'Ring-a-ring-of-roses' and 'The farmer wants a wife' to give them a clear understanding of safe position. The children then move on the spot demonstrating the control that is such an important part of knowledge of safety. In the immediate outside area the children are able to explore movement through using bikes and scooters. They do this with care and consideration for others. There is less control of the smaller physical skills, as children do not always use scissors with enough consideration for safety. They do, however, show their ability to cut with accuracy.

79. This is continued in the reception class but there is also good control of safety shown. There is not such good opportunity for children in the reception class to regularly make use of the outside play facilities enjoyed by nursery children. They do not yet have the space and large toys available to enable them to continue the development of physical skills. They do use the school hall to develop their knowledge of safety and space successfully. The children are less successful in reaching the Early Learning Goals in this area of learning because of the limits on the facilities available to them.

Creative development

80. In the nursery the children work in groups with the nursery nurse in experimenting successfully with paint. Children use tools made from wood to create thick, smudgy, straight and curved lines. These are very effectively made into a composite picture as the children work around a table on a large piece of paper. The scraping movements made with tools with straight edges are compared and contrasted with tooth-edged tools that create a wide range of different outcomes. The good interaction between the nursery nurse and the children helps them to understand the skills and techniques in the final pictures. The children join in singing with enthusiasm but have little skill in developing their voices as quality instruments.

81. In the reception class the children use their musical skills to much better effect. They know about long and short sounds that make a difference to the rhythms that are produced. They work cooperatively with the visiting teacher and their class teacher as they competently identify slow and fast tempos in their music making. There is a great deal of enjoyment as they sing 'Ten in a bed' and 'I jump out of bed, which are songs about the home. The children listen carefully to taped music. Actions are helpful to them in matching their voices to the music as is clapping of rhythms. Adults act as good role models in helping the children to work successfully as well as enjoyably. They work skilfully with paper to cut and stick as they create flowers. A good range of colours are used to create pleasing collages but the children know that other materials can be used to make collages equally successfully. The children are very close to achieving the Early Learning Goals by the time they begin in Year 1 in this area of learning as a result of the good teaching ensuring good progress.

ENGLISH

82. The standards currently being achieved in English by pupils in Years 5 and 6 are well below the level expected. The work of pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 indicates that about three quarters will achieve at the expected level at eleven years. This is an average profile. Pupils in both these year groups however, still have gaps in their learning and more needs to be expected of them.

83. At Key Stage 1 teaching and its impact on learning is good but there are still too many inconsistencies in teaching and learning at Key Stage 2 that are hindering pupils' achievements. These centre around curriculum planning, assessment and target setting and the lack of ICT to support work in English. The major successes in English are reflected in the good progress that the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs make and the few pupils who are learning English as an additional language. From its first inspection in 1997 the school has made good progress in improving English; progress since 1999 has only been satisfactory largely owing to instabilities in staffing.

84. Results in National Curriculum tests in relation to national averages still have a long way to go at both key stages, but at Key Stage 1 results compare well with similar schools. The picture is less positive at Key Stage 2 when results in 2000 were among the lowest five per cent nationally and when compared to similar schools.

85. The school fell short of its target for in the 2000 tests for eleven-year-olds in English by 20 per cent. Half of the pupils who took the tests had special educational needs and performed at an appropriate level given their prior achievements. Eleven per cent of pupils were absent for the tests and two of them were expected to reach a level 4, the national average. Unsatisfactory results in national tests at the age of eleven and work seen in pupils'

books owe much to the legacy of ineffective provision in the past and to the high level of mobility which means that a significant proportion of older pupils join the school at various times in the year.

86. Inspection findings indicate that standards are well below average by the age of eleven in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Pupils do not make consistent progress across the key stage. Higher-attaining pupils in particular do not make as much progress as they should because teachers tend to devote most of their time to lower-attaining pupils. Teachers often provide more work (rather than significantly different work) for brighter pupils who tend to complete the work largely unsupervised and so do not benefit from probing questioning to take their thinking further.

87. Pupils in the present Year 6 are positive and keen to work; those in Year 5 are less well motivated. Pupils in both year groups have many gaps in their learning. Nearly two thirds of the current Year 6 have special educational needs. Support staff are used very effectively to meet their needs and records show that in recent years these pupils have made some rapid progress in literacy and in their personal development. Boys out-number girls by two to one in the upper junior classes, but there is no significant variation in the standards they are achieving or in their good enthusiasm for school. The work set for the higher-attaining pupils in upper juniors is not challenging enough and the school now needs to focus on targeting their learning opportunities.

88. In 1999 HMI found that at Key Stage 1 reading and writing were both well below average but rising at faster than the national rate. Inspection findings and results in 2000 indicate that standards are close to national expectations in reading, writing and listening but speaking and spelling are below expectations.

89. Pupils enter the school with low levels of attainment in all aspects of English and make sound progress overall. But pupils make good progress at Key Stage 1 and satisfactory progress overall at Key Stage 2. Listening skills develop well but pupils' ability to speak at length, to discuss, describe and infer from text, information and events remains weak across the school. Many pupils' vocabulary range is very limited. They simply do not have the words to talk at length and in depth. In the best lessons teachers work very hard to make sure pupils learn and understand new words; this was seen to work well in a Year 2 literacy lesson, Year 3 geography and a Year 4 history lesson. But this is an area where staff need to work together to identify subject-specific words which all pupils need to learn. This weakness in pupils' vocabulary has implications for their ability to write well. The school is rightly investing a good deal of time and effort to improve the quality of written work and teachers constantly remind pupils of different ways to make writing more interesting. Some high-quality discussions between adults and pupils were observed to support improvement, well-chosen activities, and marking focused on improving writing, are supporting improvement too, though practice is variable. In Year 5 the teacher worked with a small group of pupils who found writing extended sentences difficult and their work improved. In Year 3 marking consistently drew attention to areas for improvement. Close examination of Year 3 pupils' books confirmed that their work improved in direct response to the precision of marking. However the school has yet to consider fully the opportunities for written work in subjects other than English. In some classes, notably Years 5 and 6, a considerably lower standard of written work was accepted from pupils in geography, history and religious education than was seen in their English books.

90. Pupils learn to read competently and most are technically proficient at reading. The school provides much high-quality, imaginative support for pupils who struggle to master reading and this is successful in improving standards. Pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language are well supported and make good progress. Their needs have been identified clearly, all staff who work with them are well prepared, pace is good and much is achieved in lessons. However the needs of the most-able readers are not well met. Although they read well there is no effective monitoring of their development of more advanced reading skills or to check that they continue to tackle challenging texts. Discussion with these pupils revealed that many had little interest in reading outside of school. They know few authors and those who named writers and books selected material that was undemanding.

91. Handwriting is often good because it is carefully taught, and most pupils take a pride in the presentation of their work. In Year 4, pupils are encouraged to look at each other's handwriting and offer advice on how it can be improved. This is a useful strategy to improve both writing and communication skills and pupils respond well. Some of the presentation in year 5 and 6 pupils' books is not as tidy, especially in geography and history where some work is scruffy. The school has identified the need to improve pupils' spelling and a number of different approaches were seen in use across the school. These need now to be evaluated and a decision made as to the way ahead for the whole school.

92. Overall, teaching is good and teachers and support staff work very hard, sometimes for more limited results than they hope for. There are a number of reasons for this. The school has successfully implemented the National Literacy Strategy and teachers have begun to interpret it in ways they believe are beneficial to their pupils, but the amount of time devoted to English varies considerably between classes. Providing extra time for writing is a useful variation but the school leaves too much to individual interpretation. For example, additional time has been identified to improve reading comprehension in upper Key Stage 2 but there has been no clear analysis of the problem, of pupils or procedures, or a clear understanding of how improvement will be assessed. Teachers prepare learning objectives for each lesson but these objectives are for the unit of work and need to vary for individual pupils. They are not related to National Curriculum levels and this does not help teachers or pupils know how close they are to achieving a level. In some classes pupils have targets which relate to the National Curriculum recorded at the front of their writing books. However teachers do not relate their marking to these targets and so an opportunity is missed to inform the pupils of how well they are succeeding and what they need to do next.

93. The raising of academic standards continues to be the top priority for improvement and everyone in school is clear about the need to do this. The subject leader who is also the deputy headteacher has a very good grasp of the issues facing the school, but needs time away from her full-time teaching responsibilities to influence developments throughout the school. The school plans to provide opportunities for this from September and is judged to have good capacity to sustain an effective rate of improvement.

MATHEMATICS

94. The attainment of the current Year 6 is well below that expected at the age of eleven. This is no different to the position in 2000. The close scrutiny of pupils' work shows that the current Year 5 class are likely to achieve well below the expected standards when they take their National Curriculum tests next year. However, the current Year 4 is on track for the expected standards in 2003 and Year 3 should achieve above the level expected in 2004. The improvements to standards and progress are working steadily through the school. This year, standards are at least at the expected level in each class from Years 1 to 4. The benefit of improvements has not yet been felt as much in Years 5 and 6, where standards are still well below those usually found. Older junior pupils now have a much better mathematical diet; skills and knowledge are improved to some degree but there has been relatively less time for improvement to take hold than for younger pupils who have always experienced effective teaching and learning.

95. Pupils have not always had the benefit of good teaching in mathematics. This much is evident from reading the 1997 inspection report. In that year, standards, teaching, progress

and the curriculum all had major weaknesses. By 1999, when Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools inspected the school again, much work had been done to improve shortcomings and teaching and learning were broadly satisfactory. School managers have worked continually to keep improvement on track and, today, mathematics can serve as a model in school for methods to raise standards, improve the curriculum and make teaching and learning more accomplished.

96. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests at the age of eleven, standards were well below those found nationally in mathematics. When put beside the standards found in schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, standards were also well below average. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels was very low last year and girls outstripped the boys in overall attainment. Again, these statistics disguise the fact that the improvement to standards in mathematics has been at a faster rate than found nationally.

97. Seven-year-old pupils attained above the level found nationally, and well above the level found in similar schools in the 2000 mathematics tests. Boys in particular have made significant improvement in their attainment in relation to the girls and there is now very little difference in the standards achieved by boys and girls. The proportion attaining the higher levels was good last year.

98. The attainment of the current Year 6 is well below that expected at the age of eleven. This is no different to the position in 2000. The close scrutiny of pupils' work shows that the current Year 5 class is likely to achieve well below the expected standards when they take the National Curriculum tests next year. However, the current Year 4 is on track for the expected standards in 2003 and Year 3 should achieve above average standards in 2004. The headteacher has made a useful start in tracking the progress that pupils make in each year but more staff need to be brought into this process. The overall targets set for attainment in mathematics by the school have been met, and exceeded. Revised targets that are demanding, but achievable, and which reflect the value the school expects to add to attainment in mathematics are the next step for managers to incorporate in their plans for further improvement in the subject.

99. These revised targets have yet to include greater demands on the higher-attaining pupils. It is evident that these pupils are not given work to tax them in some classes as a matter of course. It is equally evident from their work that they can rise to better things. The work currently on offer to higher attaining pupils in the juniors is insufficiently challenging for them. As a result, they fail to make sufficient progress. The school is becoming increasingly aware of this, and has plans to make better use of assessment data and tracking information so that work can be matched more precisely to their needs. There is a good sense of determination to do these things well and the prospects of continued improvement to standards look good.

100. Standards are rising mainly because the curriculum has been improved and then the quality of teaching and learning has risen too. The numeracy strategy has been introduced with considerable success and the sharper focus on knowledge, skills and understanding that this has brought is benefiting progress and standards. Teaching quality is good for the infants and the juniors. There are several strengths of teaching, including the management of pupils, the teaching of basic skills and the very good contribution made by support staff. This last strength is a central reason why pupils with special educational needs make the good progress

in mathematics that they do. Learning for all pupils is now more interesting, enjoyable and memorable. Pupils work hard and produce good amounts of work. They make good progress in the infants and juniors and show increasing maturity and responsibility in their learning.

101. The curriculum has been revised to include greater focus on investigation and problem solving. This has been successfully introduced in infant classes, where the work is stimulating, fun and relevant to the needs and interests of the pupils. At the end of the juniors, the work is still too heavily reliant on the use of textbooks and worksheets and does not have the liveliness of the work for infants. Thus, although older pupils do show satisfactory levels of responsibility, their independence as learners is not always encouraged enough.

102. The subject is well led and managed by an enthusiastic leader. She has not long been in school, but already has firm understanding of the things that remain for improvement. She includes better assessment, target setting and monitoring as the central priorities for the subject, and is right to do so. The need for pupils to have greater opportunities to review and evaluate their learning and for marking to show where improvement is due are two additional improvements that should be added to this list.

103. Mathematics is a success story for the school, though there are still things to be done. There is enthusiasm, willingness and good spirit to tackle what remains for improvement.

SCIENCE

104. Standards in science although below the level expected at the end of both key stages, reflect the good improvement from a very low level that has been made since the school's removal from special measures by Her Majesty's Inspectors in 1999. The school has continued to pay attention to raising the level of teaching in science. Good progress has been made in establishing a well-planned curriculum, providing the necessary training so that all teachers are confident to teach science and to focus very determinedly on promoting the practical aspects of the subject. Pupils are making increasing progress in science as they move up through the school because of these effective improvements and the good challenge given to them. This advancement has yet to fully show in the National Curriculum test results but work in pupils' books shows that standards are rising.

105. Teacher assessments last year showed well below the national level of attainment at level 2 or above but close to national average at level 3. Results of the National Curriculum tests in 2000 at the end of Year 6 were at the lowest level since 1997 when there had been an upward trend. There are compelling reasons for this. The year group comprised a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs most of whom had specific targets for improving literacy and an above average number of them had poor attendance. The level of mobility within the community also has an adverse impact on some pupils' ability to achieve to potential.

106. Although inspection evidence shows that attainment is still below average at the end of both key stages, there are a number of key improvements that are leading to rising standards. The provision of a more appropriate scheme of work has led to an effective emphasis being placed upon more practical activities. This makes learning more meaningful for pupils, particularly at Key Stage 1. Pupils are well engaged in science lessons in infant classes and earlier junior classes, and this is filtering to upper juniors too. Throughout the school, pupils' interest is well captured by the opportunities that they are given to experiment and investigate. Work in books shows a wide range of recording and lots of independence in so doing. The use of vocabulary is good – 'petal', 'stem' and 'environment' are used by seven-year-olds. They make careful observational sketches and relate these to work done in

class about different parts of a plant. The effective leadership of the subject, together with improved resource provision, has been provided by a well-informed and committed coordinator.

107. In infant classes pupils build upon the useful experiences that they have been given in the Foundation Stage. In a Year 1 lesson the whole-class discussion revealed that they have already had a clear understanding of the growth of plants. The previous week's experiment had been closely monitored by pupils. Pupils were able to assess what had happened with good measures of confidence. They responded appropriately to the written task of recording findings when plants have had water or not. Whatever the level of recording, they discriminate well what the differences are. In Year 2, pupils pay good attention to a fair test being established as they plant seeds. They clearly sequence what needs to be done with care. Pupils, including those with special educational needs make steady gains in understanding the processes of scientific investigation and this supports positively their developing scientific skills in experimentation.

108. Practical experiences are still the bedrock of continuing satisfactory progress in junior classes. Independent skills and group activities are well balanced in the investigations that are made by pupils. All classes continue to study the growth of plants but at different levels and with very different content in lessons. In Year 3 they consolidate their knowledge of plant growth as they consider why a plant has a stem. Pupils work independently and quickly, referring to earlier predictions. They use dye on a cut piece of celery stick to trace where it travels to overnight. One pupil wrote, 'Now I know that water is transported by the stem.' This approach was seen to motivate the pupils to discover more for themselves, reading up about plants and wanting to learn still more about the life cycle. Year 5 has real flowers to help them understand the cycle of plants with seeds being formed from the fertilised embryos. In Year 6 the emphasis is upon the ability of pupils to explain the whole process that they have been involved in from seed growth to seed dispersal. All members of a group have to accept the conclusions that have been drawn collectively about the fair testing of plant growth in different conditions.

109. Science lessons give pupils effective opportunities to learn. It was evident from the lessons observed that pupils of all ages enjoy science. The different levels of responses that they are expected to make as a result of effective planning supports all of them well in maintaining their interest. Good concentration in activities ensures good attitudes being developed. They learn to work together well, discussing ideas and listening to the opinions of others. This makes a valuable contribution to their language and social development. This is supportive of the satisfactory progress that is being made over time.

110. The quality of teaching underpins the improvement seen in science throughout the inspection. There are often imaginative introductions made to activities. In Year 1, for example, the teacher prepares a *scientific mission* that *came from headquarters*. This immediately captures pupils' interest because they open the envelope containing the task with curiosity and wonder. Teachers use well-distributed, open-ended questions that ensure that a large percentage of pupils are effectively involved in opening discussions. Work is well sequenced so that the pupils understand the logic of their learning. Good use is made of time targets that help to keep the pace of learning moving along at speed. Support is effectively deployed and the learning assistants make valuable contributions in helping those who need it with practical enquiries. Well-chosen resources support pupils well in carrying out tasks

successfully. Teachers monitor learning by informal means but have yet to keep a consistent written assessment record of the learning outcomes.

111. The well-informed subject leader has supported colleagues in developing the new scheme of work. She has developed resources to help staff to feel secure in their science teaching. Assessment practice has been developed to the point where it can now be used to track pupils' progress against the levels set out in the National Curriculum. The management of science is now shared with another staff member, which indicates the high priority that the school gives to developing the subject. There are realistic targets set for improving the school's performance in science that the headteacher has taken a lead in setting, though these take too little account of those who are capable of achieving at higher levels. There has not been enough opportunity for whole-school monitoring of the subject through direct observation in classrooms in order to raise standards further. The well-conceived action plan for science, which highlights monitoring and assessment as priorities, provides an effective platform on which the school can continue to build for improvement.

ART AND DESIGN AND DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

112. Standards in both subjects are at the level expected for seven and eleven-year-olds. This shows sustained improvement to the standards overall reported by the 1997 inspection. In both subjects good progress is made in infant and junior classes as a result of consistently good teaching. Interesting activities have been chosen by teachers to stimulate confident and enthusiastic learning. The techniques and skills of these subjects are planned jointly by the school. At the same time the discrete nature of the specific subject skills are not ignored

113. In infant classes in art and design, appropriate emphasis is being given to pupils' consideration of the design process. For example in Year 1 the pupils plan their design on paper and make revisions where necessary. They have effective understanding of the weaving process as they practise on paper before textile materials are used to provide a skilful end product. The pupils shade colours using different numbers of paints according to their level of skill. These skills and techniques are then successfully applied to pattern making. In Year 2 they create repeating patterns using the same techniques whilst at the same time enhancing numeracy understanding effectively. They use paper to make a collage that is then used to make a three-dimensional collage. The drawings of one another are supported by written descriptions linking their work to literacy. The knowledge gained from these studies is then used in design and technology lessons. They design and make a moving picture of a face. In order to do this successfully pupils make a simple lever mechanism with rotational movement created by a central pivot. This challenging activity is well supported through the work already done in studying one another's faces so closely in their art and design lessons.

114. The good teaching and learning in both subjects takes place because of the thoughtful and thorough planning. This is focused as a result of teachers' being securely supported by an appropriate and helpful scheme of work that builds pupils' skills step by step. In junior classes pupils continue to show good levels of concentration in both subjects. In art and design lessons in Year 4 they begin the design process before making thumb and coil pots. They make a prototype in modelling clay before transferring skills learnt to making a pot with clay. The success of this work is based upon the use of books to give ideas, appropriate tools being provided, and materials that are helpful to developing an accurate end product. In Year 6, knowledge gained in Year 2 is extended as different shaded papers are used accurately to produce a repeating pattern. This is possible only because pupils have designed and made their own template to provide the pattern. This building on skills and techniques is also put to effective use in design and technology work. In Year 3 there is a good example of the process

of design, make and evaluate as pupils make picture frames. They design their frames before accurately using hinges to provide the stand for their frames. Initial attempts are evaluated before final end products are made. This is made more meaningful for them because they bring in photographs of important people in their lives to put in the frames. These are then proudly displayed for everyone to see in their classroom. Making efficient money containers in Year 4 reinforces the process. This is imaginatively completed in Year 6 where pupils design, make and give a very clear evaluation of their learning as they produce very attractive slippers for a small child. Their evaluations are precise and valid as the pupils look particularly at the way the end product has been completed through the use of appropriate skills and techniques.

115. The good teaching in both subjects takes place because of the thoughtful and thorough planning. This is focused as a result of teachers' being securely supported by an appropriate and helpful scheme of work.

116. Both subjects are effectively managed by informed and enthusiastic leaders. The headteacher temporarily gives leadership to design and technology whilst awaiting responses to an advertised post. Resourcing is satisfactory for both subjects, which demand the use of consumable materials. These are well provided to ensure that the subjects retain a satisfactory profile in the school's provision of learning opportunities.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

117. The standards achieved by seven-year-olds are at the level expected, however the standards achieved by eleven-year-olds in both history and geography are below the level expected and are unsatisfactory. Very little attention has been paid to developments in history and geography over the last few years whilst the school has understandably focused on raising standards in English and mathematics. Since September, the school has made sound strides forward in teaching to the national guidance for geography and history provided, but has yet to establish a consistent approach to curriculum planning and on-going assessment opportunities. Too little time is given to geography and history at Key Stage 2 for pupils to cover in sufficient depth all that is required in the programme of study or to extend their learning. This is the key reason why standards at eleven years are unsatisfactory. The subject action plans in place to guide improvement lack a clear success criterion and there has been slippage in the time identified for action to be taken. For example, policies have not yet been reviewed, though useful work has been carried out in organising a central store of history resources and to a lesser extent geography. The next step is for the subject leader to audit exactly what is being taught and learnt in geography and history and to plan for improvement based on reliable and accurate information of what is actually happening in every year.

118. Teaching is good in the infant classes and results in pupils' making steady progress and achieving the level expected by the end of Key Stage 1. This positive picture is not maintained consistently throughout Key Stage 2. Some good work was observed in lessons in Years 3 and 4 and some satisfactory work was on display but evidence in books shows that insufficient work is recorded and too little attention is given to building pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills systematically. Overall teaching, standards and progress are unsatisfactory by the end of Year 6.

119. In the best lessons teachers engage the active involvement of pupils through lively methods, good questioning and imaginative use of resources. This was well demonstrated in a geography lesson in Year 1 where pupils considered the use of buildings in the local environment. They learnt the correct terminology to use in describing different buildings and explored positive and negative features concerned with land-use. In pairs pupils wrote about some of the local buildings and made good progress in learning more about the locality. In a history lesson in Year 2 about Florence Nightingale. Pupils were invited to become 'history detectives' and draft notes on the key events in Florence's life that they gleaned from watching a video. Pupils noted accurately that she was a nurse and helped soldiers get better during the war. They showed reasonable research skills as they used the information from the video and information books to write their own 'eye witness' accounts.

120. There are some good links between history work and literacy; for example in Year 2 where pupils wrote letters to Katie Morag, a character in the book they were studying in geography about the imaginary Isle of Struay. The letters demonstrated their ability to use information to form questions and helped extend their research and enquiry skills. In a Year 3 geography lesson pupils research skills were being well supported as they identified geographical questions that would help them find out about different climatic regions. They used terms such as 'tropical' and sub-tropical' correctly. As the lesson progressed it became clear that pupils had good basic understanding *about place, climate, distance and life-style*. In a Year 4 history lesson, pupils were excited at the possibility of examining artefacts to identify evidence about life in Egypt and because of good teaching knew they had to be able to point to supporting evidence for their claims. In discussion with the pupils about key events and people in Egyptian times their patchy general knowledge and limited use of subject-specific vocabulary to discuss their work were also apparent. History and geography are making useful contributions to pupils' cultural development but this is not planned for consistently and as such is a missed opportunity.

121. Work on display in school gives useful insights into the range of topics covered. For example, the sample of work completed in a Year 2 history topic where pupils wrote diaries in the style of Samuel Pepys that gave good first-hand accounts about the Great Fire of London. The well-presented pieces of independent research about the Vikings, Greeks, Romans and Anglo-Saxons, as a personal project researched during Easter this year by Year 3 pupils and the use of bar charts to present residents' views on traffic issues by Year 5 pupils as part of their local studies survey. Pupils' books from Years 5 and 6 revealed that very little work in geography or history had been recorded during the school year. The standard of work was lower than that seen in Year 4 and much of the presentation was poor. During the inspection, pupils in Year 5 were presented with some challenging material about water conservation but it was clear in discussion with them that few had the necessary grasp of wider conservation issues to make better than steady progress.

122. Lesson planning though satisfactorily drawing on national written guidance would be improved if teachers turned learning objectives into more specific learning targets for different groups of children. Teachers have yet to complete the evaluation boxes on their planning sheets more consistently and this would enable them to see more clearly which pupils are not achieving as well as they should and who needs to be provided with more difficult work.

123. The headteacher and staff have yet to identify the contribution that history and geography can make to pupils' education as a whole. In particular they have yet to understand how knowledge and skills developed in history and geography enhance learning in English, mathematics and science. They have yet to harness the enrichment that the use

of ICT can bring to learning in history and geography, particularly in providing a window on the diverse world in which people have lived, both past and present.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

124. Standards in ICT are below the level expected at the end of both key stages. In 1997, provision and standards in ICT were significant weaknesses in school. Following that inspection, the school improved the quality of resources and the curriculum for ICT and worked effectively to increase teachers' knowledge and confidence in the subject. By 1999 when Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools inspected the school again, ICT was no longer the weakness it once was.

125. Since 1999 the school has been subject to repeated burglaries, often targeting ICT equipment. Thus, just before the inspection, several computers were stolen or vandalised and once again the school's capacity to develop pupils' skills and knowledge was systematically halted.

126. During the inspection little use of ICT was seen. The Year 6 class made effective use of their computer to improve their time-telling skills in mathematics and the reception class used *Roamer*, a programmable robot toy, to learn about giving instructions to make machines work. They clearly enjoyed the experience and benefited from it, even though the children found it difficult to explain what they were doing. In both lessons, skills and knowledge were built effectively. However, it is not possible to judge standards and overall progress made in all classes because evidence is too thin.

127. The curriculum for ICT has been planned to cover all the necessary strands of the subject. However, the school is not able to deliver all the planned experiences because of shortages of equipment and software. This means that the curriculum cannot, and does not, meet the requirements of the National Curriculum to develop a full range of skills, knowledge and understanding. Likewise, the use of ICT across the curriculum is inconsistent. There are very few displays around school that include ICT elements and not much evidence of ICT (other than word processing) was found in the scrutiny of pupils' previous work.

128. Discussions with staff and pupils indicate that continuing staff training is necessary and that secure provision of the necessary resources is the central priority in ICT. School managers know these things and both the school and subject improvement plans clearly chart the steps the school is to take to ensure that pupils get a fair deal in ICT. The subject leader has only recently joined the school. She already has firm ideas of ways to take the subject forward, identifying the need for a well-structured programme of work through every class, better resourcing that enables equality of access and opportunity for all pupils and improved assessment as priorities. The management of the subject is in good hands and prospects for the future are positive. However, ICT remains a key issue for improvement.

MUSIC

129. Standards in music are at the level expected for both seven and eleven-year-olds. The strengths in music have been sustained since the time of the 1997 inspection when standards were reported to be satisfactory. Pupils are provided with a variety of worthwhile experiences in music and make good progress over their time in school. Good teaching which draws well

on the skills and talents of specialist staff enables pupils, including those with a variety of special educational needs, to achieve successfully. Music-making is enjoyed by everyone in school: assemblies are particularly joyous and uplifting occasions when the whole school sings together.

130. In infant classes, pupils listen carefully to the piano and taped music. They discuss with their teacher how they can develop their knowledge of rhythm. They gradually build up knowledge as they clap first and then clap and move at the same time. Marching movements help them to understand the difference that there is with slower rhythms. From this starting point they are able to sequence the use of instruments skilfully so that rhythms are built up naturally. They perform for one another with obvious measures of enjoyment. The pupils complete the cycle of learning about rhythm as they join in singing with aplomb to the instruments as they move around. At all times, as these skills are being developed, they are able to rely on their teacher as a good role model. They follow her visual indications of the way to move and to keep the beats that form the rhythms of 'The grand old Duke of York' and 'Over the mountain'.

131. In junior classes, pupils are able to build upon the skills that are already developed well. Class teachers and support teacher work together effectively to extend their performing and composing abilities. They make apposite choices in Year 3 in sequencing their performance and using the instruments as they tunefully perform 'Li'l Liza Jane in front of Year 6 pupils. In turn, pupils in Year 6 perform for children in the reception class to demonstrate the ongoing nature of performing successfully. Sound knowledge of what needs to be done in order to improve is effectively recognised by pupils. In Year 6 they are able to understand that pulse is based upon knowledge and understanding of notation and metre on understanding of rhythm. This level of understanding enables pupils to perform with skill.

132. Teaching is well planned by both class and support teachers. They work together successfully as a team to provide pupils with a good range of musical experiences. The fruitful nature of this is shown when pupils use skills learnt in lessons to sing with skill as well as enthusiasm in assemblies. Teachers use resources effectively so that instruments clearly support pupils' developing understanding of rhythm and beat. Pupils' enjoyment of music is shown by their good levels of concentration. They work together well and enhance their listening skills in order to improve performance.

133. The subject leader gives in an effective manner and gives good support to colleagues so that they are confident about teaching music. They can do this without the support of the peripatetic teacher but when working with her their skills are enhanced by the high quality example given to them. There is, however, insufficient monitoring of what is being achieved across the school through direct observation of lessons. There are good opportunities created for social and spiritual development being enhanced by music. In assembly time a good range of musicians are introduced to pupils. They are as diverse as Ravi Shankar, Scott Joplin and Purcell, so widening the horizons of the variety of music to be enjoyed. Socially so much depends upon cooperative work in music. Pupils respond very positively in this respect.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

134. Standards in physical education are at the level expected for eleven-year-olds. In 1997, standards and progress in physical education were at the level expected and teaching

and learning were satisfactory across the school. The strengths in physical education have been sustained since that time.

135. During this inspection, no lessons in physical education were observed in the infants. However, planning for the subject and discussion with staff indicate that pupils have the necessary opportunities to build skills and knowledge effectively.

136. Evidence for junior physical education is much stronger. By the age of eleven, pupils attain standards at the level expected for their age. Within this, there are strengths in games and improvement required in dance, as this is a relatively under-emphasised element of the curriculum. On the whole though, there is a consistent programme of experience, and skills and knowledge are built systematically. Year 6, for example, have effective teaching in tennis skills that enables them to improve the accuracy of their volley and speed of return. In Years 3 and 5, shared teaching of the whole group is improving skills and knowledge in athletics, as the expertise of the subject coordinator is shared with the younger pupils in this two-year class. In swimming, most pupils attain the required standards by the time they leave school. Across the school, pupils' ability to evaluate their learning and to suggest ways to improve is not as strong as in some other schools.

137. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the junior years. Some teachers are less confident when teaching physical education compared to other subjects, but all teach the subject and are determined that pupils should have the necessary experiences to achieve successfully. The coordinator has rightly identified that the provision of well-focused guidelines to assist planning is a priority for physical education and is working on the necessary document at present. A programme of staff training for all teachers is also planned for later this year as another means of spreading good practice.

138. Physical education is managed effectively by a committed, caring and hard-working subject leader. She has not yet monitored teaching and learning directly and does not have full knowledge of standards and progress. However, she is keen to move the subject on, recognising that assessment is another priority for improvement. She has enhanced the programme of extracurricular sports and games, and school teams have done very well in competitive matches against other schools, particularly in netball.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

139. Standards in religious education are at the level expected for seven-year-olds but are below the level expected for eleven-year-olds. Although religious education was a key issue for improvement in 1997 it has been low on the school's list of priorities as the drive has been for raising standards in English and mathematics and to pull the school out of special measures. The current provision is still unsatisfactory because too little time is available at Key Stage 2 to deliver the curriculum required by the locally agreed syllabus. At Key Stage 1 teaching is good, learning has improved and meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. At Key Stage 2 some good work is seen in the work of pupils in Years 3 and 4. There is only a very limited amount of work in Year 5 and 6 pupils' books and much of it is at a lower standard than in Year 4. Tasks are undemanding and pupils are allowed to present work to a much lower standard than is seen in their English books. The subject leader is aware of these deficiencies but has been unable to bring about improvement due to other pressures on her time and because of the subject's low priority in the school's development plan.

140. Teaching is good at Key Stage 1 because teachers have the knowledge and confidence to share personal experience with pupils and value and handle their contributions with sensitivity. Teachers make sure that lessons build on the everyday experience of pupils, which means they are gaining insight into the principles and rules by which to live. In a good lesson in Year 2 the teacher encouraged pupils to talk about what was special to them. She showed them a beautiful piece of glass that her mother had given to her. The pupils were in awe of the beauty and through the teacher's skilful questioning began to think deeply about what was special to them – mother, friends and family being most prominent. Pupils were keen to contribute and the teacher recorded their comments with sensitivity and respect. Good opportunity was taken to reinforce their speaking, listening and writing skills. In lower Key Stage 2, teaching is satisfactory and teachers are clearly providing a systematic programme of activities to promote pupils' knowledge and understanding in religious education. There is some good support for the development of literacy skills. In Year 4, for example, pupils wrote daily diaries as they retold the story of Easter. This technique worked well and stimulated some interesting responses with pupils making insightful comments.

141. Teaching is unsatisfactory overall at Key Stage 2 because it results in unsatisfactory progress at the end of the key stage. The time allocated to the teaching and learning of religious education is well below the expectations of the syllabus and this is one of the main reasons why progress is being hampered, but also teacher expectation is not high enough. In Year 6 books in January this year, pupils wrote about Moses, first sequencing the story and then in the first person writing an account about his life. The next recorded work was in April and covered the Easter story. Such a time delay works against pupils' building their knowledge and understanding step by step. Religious education can provide excellent opportunities to improve pupils' speaking skills and written work and to make effective use of ICT, but these are not currently promoted sufficiently by some members of staff. The headteacher and subject leader, have yet to identify the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus, review the timetables and existing provision to identify strengths and weaknesses. A new scheme of work has yet to be produced which reflects the contribution of religious education to the wider educational experience of pupils. The action plan in place to steer improvement in religious education is not sufficiently focused on prioritising targets that will enable statutory requirements to be met swiftly and this requires attention.